

A MAN FOR ALL (BUILDING) SEASONS



Back in 1994, Art Burdick made one of the best decisions of his life. But we will get to that later. Let's go back a few more years to start this story.

"Back when I was a boy," Robert Reyes relays, "my dad owned a rock quarry. It was located on 100 acres, and John Jay High School now sits on part of what used to be our land. At the time, as the middle child of 10 children, we simply did whatever chores were required of us in the business by our Dad. I, by age of 10, had become a very skilled heavy equipment operator. Over time I learned the trades of drywall, concrete finisher, pool plasterer, roofer, carpentry, and masonry. One day, when I was 12 years old, I got very upset with my dad and decided to go get a job elsewhere. So I met with a man and demonstrated my 'awesome heavy

equipment skills". Our story teller laughed when he recalled "And that man said 'Yes, you're good. But you're ONLY TWELVE! Get out of here!'" He also laughed when remembering that although no one in the family knew one thing about farming, goats, cattle, or anything else, his dad had them all on that 100 acres. "You learn quickly when you have to!" he said.

Why is this story important? Because those early years, and the skills piled one on top of the other, is part of what has made Robert Reyes into the man he is today.

Art and Pam Burdick, and Burdick Homes, celebrated Robert's 23rd year with the organization and huge mile marker of building his 150th home in The Dominion – a beautiful new home for Charlie and

Lorraine Sapp. A huge and wonderful party that included all the Burdick homeowners currently living in homes Robert superintended. And it was a large party. Robert even jumped up on the stage with the band and serenaded all his Burdick homeowners with a song.

Back to 1994 -- I asked Robert about his first meeting with Art. He relayed the story "I was working for Japhet Construction, and had been there for about a year. One day, a window salesman, who sold both Japhet and Burdick, mentioned to me that Burdick was looking for a super. So, I interviewed and I could tell Art and I were simpatico right then. Art hired me, and a few weeks later when I started my job, he and Pam had left for a two week trip to SPAIN! I took that as their full trust that I could and would do a job that met their high standards. Full trust. I've appreciated that ever since."

In his years with Burdick, Robert has kept mainly a Dominion focus. However, as needed, he has also handled homes being built in Anaqua Springs and Huntington at Shavano Park. I decided to speak to some of his clients and hear their experiences when working with Robert.

First I spoke with Ed and Nancy Kelley. They worked with Robert starting in early 2014. As Ed and Nancy reflected back on this time, one word seemed to crop up regularly. In Nancy's words it was "Patient". He always had all the time for me I needed. Patient with everyone. He was very thoughtful and proactive. If he saw me making a choice he thought might be a problem, he never beat me up about it – instead he would patiently explain why it might be an issue and always left the decision up to me. In fact, I hear people talking about how stressful building a home can be. I can't help but think "Not if you had worked with Robert Reyes."

Ed continued by sharing that he felt that Robert "really worked to make our home exactly what we wanted. He had no hidden agenda, no corner cutting – even when he maybe could have. He gave Nancy good hints that turned into fantastic advice. In one instance, Robert had to figure out how to

work some 'magic' for us. No one else could figure it out. All other experts said it couldn't be done. He looked at it and looked at it. It took a bit of time, but Robert figured it out! He managed to do that 'magic!'"

Both the Kelley's concur that Robert "isn't an 8-5 kind of guy. He works and interacts with clients in the way that works best for them, and he is willing to say what he needs understood as many times as needed to make sure us clients 'get it!'"

I then spoke with Siobhain Buckley. She told me "We bought our home when it was a few years old. It had been built in 1996 for the Parade of Homes and had won all sorts of awards. Once we decided to purchase it, Robert and the whole team got together to work through the things that were needed. I always knew that no problem was too big for Robert -- he would simply show up and get it done. In fact, he is an amazing man."

Again, as with the Kelley's, Siobhain's word for Robert was 'patience'. "He has learned to deal with every kind of issue there is. You and I may think our problem is bigger and harder than any other one, but to Robert it is more a case of "been there and done that... and I'll get you through this one, too." As she continued, she added "He knew I was the meteorologist on Channel 4, so it became a running joke that if anything went awry, I might send lightning bolts his way. That always generated a lot of laughs between us."

When I talked to Robert, I didn't mention any of this to him. Instead, I asked "What is your trick to being patient?" Robert responded in a way I hadn't expected. "We in the homebuilding business are trusted with people's homes and projects. Their HOMES. These are projects that many of them have been building and creating in their minds for years and years. I can't learn those desires and wishes in a few meetings, a few days, or a few weeks. It takes time to really listen and learn those details from your clients. Listen. Listen. Listen. Without that, the finished homes wouldn't be the dream they've all had."

At one time during the housing boom, Robert was responsible for carrying more than 12 houses at one time. While that sounds like a lot, when he was doing tract housing, he would have maybe up to 45 homes. But, he said "When you are working with high level homes, there is no way anyone can carry a load like that without problems. That being said, that period of time required a lot of observation, a lot of communication, and taught me to always plan, plan, plan." "Then," he continued, "came the bust of



2008 and 2009. Not only had the housing market and stock market turned down, but Southwestern Bell left the area and left many, many homes for sale at rock bottom prices. But unlike some builders who shuttered everything and stopped working, Burdick Homes just continued to work on the homes under construction, even those that weren't custom, and we all made it through in high style. Homes at this level simply have to be finished regardless of the circumstances. Art understands that and did so even though it was hard financially for him."

Robert has some other 'sides' to him you may not know about. But now you will! He loves to travel and cruises are his favorite. He said "I like the self-contained aspect. No packing/unpacking. No paying for food or drinks. And I love the entertainment!" He showed me some funny photographs of him dressed up like Neil Diamond, long flowing hair, green polyester disco suit and "Sweet Caroline" performance on stage. Maybe if you ask him, he'll share with you, too! And so, for a last tidbit, Robert disclosed that "No one really knows that I love ballroom dancing as well. In fact, the Viennese Waltz is my absolute favorite!"

Robert told me that one of his passions is flying airplanes. "Very few people know that I have been learning to fly single engine planes, but I am. I am working out of Boerne Stage Road Airport. I have been taking lessons for a while, and have learned to pilot a plane but still need to study and take the pilot test. Lots of information to digest. Do you have ANY idea of how many gauges and dials and buttons you have to pay attention to, all at the same time?" He reminded me planes don't 'float' down out of the sky. You have to actually 'fly' them to the ground and if you don't watch out, it probably will not end good for you!"

Robert and his ex-wife, Gracie, have five children together, ranging in age from 46 to 25. They have 13 grandchildren. "Everyone is a huge Spurs fan, and I love spending time with all those children." Robert has a huge heart, and that comes through as he talks about some of his early years with Gracie and their family. "Gracie's sister died when she was 28, and left three sons behind. We took them into our family and raised them as our own." He laughed "I don't know how we did it, but we had EIGHT kids and two adults in an 1100 square foot home. Wow. How did we do that?"

When I asked him about working with Art, and for an example that showed what Art is like, Robert was quick with the answer. "Once we were bidding on a big job. Right in the middle of that bid process, one of the Burdick Homes' associates, Roseanna, lost her daughter in a car wreck. All the bidding process stopped while everyone absorbed this devastating loss and Roseanna was working through all the details of such an event. The potential client was very irritated that the bid was slow in coming, and he told Art 'Hey, when this happens in my company, we don't slow down or stop. We just keep doing our jobs.' Art told the man to leave and that Burdick Homes would not be bidding on his (very lucrative) job. Art told me that anyone that heartless and callous would simply be painful to work with and not someone he wanted to know. That's Art and Pam in a nutshell."

If you happen to run into Robert Reyes during his rounds in your neighborhood, introduce yourself and ask him to show you those Neil Diamond pics. **D**