



TEAGAN ANNE

Tim, Mike and Todd Duffany of M. Duffany Builders

Bob and Rob McPhee of McPhee Associates



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Projects by M. Duffany Builders, left; and McPhee Associates, right.

**FOR MCPHEE ASSOCIATES AND M. DUFFANY BUILDERS, THE LESSONS LEARNED OVER TWO GENERATIONS PROVE THAT NICE GUYS FINISH FIRST.**

# Family

# FUNDAMENTALS

Bob McPhee took a chance in 1972 when he went into business for himself and started McPhee Associates in Dennis, with a goal of what he candidly identifies as survival. Four and a half decades later, his son, Rob McPhee oversees a thriving company that has found success through some simple tenets: hard work, a commitment to customer satisfaction, and being prepared when luck and opportunity intersect.

A decade after McPhee incorporated, 1983 found Mike Duffany looking for an opportunity to provide for his family, as well as start a retirement plan, something that was not available at the time through his employer. Starting M. Duffany Builders in his hometown of Falmouth was a logical endeavor. Quickly he realized that not every contractor was providing the personal touch that encouraged clients to not only hire him again

for their next project, but also refer him to their friends and family. After 30 years, Mike is grooming his two sons, Todd and Tim to chart the future of the business.

The two firms share many philosophies and customer-focused practices that clearly contribute to not only a solid reputation, but a portfolio of impressive work that both say has spawned many close and valuable relationships.

“We’ve had the good fortune of working for many, many fine people over the years,” says Bob McPhee, “and our whole basis for existence has always been customer service. Do what you say your going to do, communicate well, be honest and transparent, and those actions will perpetuate existence and success follows that.” McPhee goes on to credit the beginning of the company’s success

**BY JULIE CRAVEN WAGNER**





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this family has been like a second family to my kids over the past few decades. Here you are trying to make a living and a family accepts your children as part of their family. How special is that? Those are the kind of relationships we are lucky enough to have as a result of this business.”

Both men talk about the personal nature of the structures they have constructed and the effect a home can have on a family, as the backdrop for every happy and meaningful interaction as a family grows, moves on and returns with new extended family. “This is one of the most personal businesses you can be in,” says Bob McPhee. “You get to know families at a very intimate level. Clients tell you what they want, what has to work in their life, what problems they need your help to solve. You meet their friends, their extended family and you share their achievements and losses with them along the way.”

Likewise, Duffany reflects on how clients’ goals have become refined over the past decade. “People are building for the next generations. It has become important to make sure that adult children and grandchildren are acknowledged in the design and amenities,” he says.

In both companies, the next generation have essentially spent a life in training. Both fathers are understandably proud, but both also possess acute clarity when discussing their sons’ skills and abilities. Bob McPhee says that Rob is far better prepared than he was when he was Rob’s age. “He has



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recognized the value of customer service and he has incorporated it into the way that he works as well,” he observes.

When asked what he has learned from his father, Rob says with a chuckle, “Where do I begin? But honestly, I’ve learned a lot. Just the patience, the listening to people and what they want, it is what I witnessed my father doing my entire life. Growing up and working in this

company, right down to learning the mannerisms of dealing with clients, employees and sub-contractors, I learned it all from shadowing and watching my father.”

Mike Duffany says that the decision to hire his sons during their summer school break was a no-brainer. “I’ve always told them, ‘What other job can you get that will give you time off to go to various summer camps and still have a job when you come



to one client in particular from the ‘80s, a successful financial executive whose loyalty resulted in several referrals that McPhee says provided the stability of a good foundation for the company.

“People often ask how many houses we have built through the years. I’ve never stopped to pay attention to that,” he says, “but I can tell you that we have made many, many close friendships and maintain relationships with almost every client we have ever served.”

Mike Duffany recalls a familiar photo that sits in his home. “It was a picture of a client on their new deck, and sitting practically on their lap was Todd, our oldest. He couldn’t have been more than 6 or 7 at the time. Todd is in his 30s now and

Above and top right, a warm, true north welcome is beautifully crafted by the Duffany crew. Left, the Duffany family when they were just starting out.

Opposite below, McPhee’s attention to detail is evident in details like this home’s tray ceiling.



back?” Both boys were active with football, lacrosse and scouting. Mike Duffany has been involved with scouting his entire life, and has achieved Star Scout accreditation himself. But both Tim and Todd are Eagle Scouts and all three credit the discipline and dedication gleaned from scouting as integral elements of the success achieved in their business.

Mike goes on to say that he knew the skills his sons gained in construction would always serve them well. Whatever their career choice, they could either hire a contractor and have an understanding of how things could be done, or at least perform the work themselves. “Either way, they would always have a skill that would serve them well,” Mike says.

Todd, who studied aviation at Daniel Webster College in New Hampshire, made a decision to join the firm shortly after 9/11 impacted the flight industry. Tim coincidentally attended Bryant College, the same alma mater as Rob McPhee, and launched a career in finance. After several years spent in the Boston area managing other

McPhee projects on these two pages show the range of expertise they offer to every client.



peoples' money, he recently joined the company. For both, the choice of construction might seem to be a sharp right turn from careers that they had studied hard to achieve, but they both understand the value of a family business that has been built for decades. “Since I had been involved with the company as their financial advisor and I really understood the business and its goals, when an opportunity arose a few months ago, I was excited to jump in,” Tim says.

Mike is also quick to credit his wife Christy for instilling the right values in the boys. And since she is also an invaluable part of the firm, he feels it is truly a family business. That sentiment is reinforced every day since their offices are housed in





Mike's childhood home on Palmer Avenue in Falmouth.

Bob McPhee also credits the people who have helped build his company. "It's never one person. Over the years we have had tremendous people in our organization and great subs that we work with every day," he says. "You are only as good as the people around you."

The day-to-day, nut and bolts of the business both of these firms deal with on a constant basis is where their success is defined. Both emphasize their commitment to quality and customer satisfaction, but neither tenet would be possible without the unique partnership they forge with their clients. Mike Duffany says, "At times it has been challenging because not all of the work is easy. You have to place the commitment to quality ahead of everything else, if you are in it just for a buck, you will never survive."

Bob McPhee appears to be quoting the same contractor scripture,

when he says, "You can't be truly successful in this business unless you are in it for the right reasons, and those reasons are the people you build the houses for."

If Shakespeare wrote, "The sins of the fathers are to be laid upon the children," then conversely shouldn't it be true that the hard work and lessons learned be passed along to the willing and capable children as well? The next generations of these two firms seem ready for their challenges. As Rob McPhee sums it up, "Those relationships that you work hard to achieve during the construction process, and you appreciate nurturing them. And then you might bump into a client at dinner, it's gratifying to hear someone say they are proud to live in a McPhee-built home, it's nice to see that everyone's hard work and efforts paid off."

*Julie Craven Wagner is the Editor of Cape Cod HOME.*

