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From England to Austin, a Journey of Construction



David Wilkes | David Wilkes Builders

By Michael Reed



Who would have imagined that one of Austin's premiere builders would have his start across the Atlantic in England? For David Wilkes of David Wilkes Builders, that path seems only natural.

With close family connections in the building industry, Wilkes spent his teenage years working with his uncle in the construction business. After graduating from one of England's prestigious engineering and construction schools, the Wolverhampton University's School of Engineering and the Built Environment, Wilkes and a friend took a vacation to the U.S. "We had of course been bombarded with American television growing up and always wanted to go," said Wilkes. "After we went back, we had itchy feet and ended up coming back stateside in 1985."

During their tour of the U.S., the two travelers had made business connections in Austin, and with the building boom going on during the mid-1980s, it made sense for them to move there. "When I got here in 1985, I ended up working for a remodeling contractor, mostly doing carpentry," Wilkes said. The experience proved to be positive as he worked his way up

to a supervisory position, which readied him for what was to come next.

Getting Down to Business

In 1990, Wilkes and a colleague decided it was time to move out on their own and they began their own company. The company primarily started in remodeling, but eventually branched out into new construction as well. Over the years, Wilkes built on his experiences and in 2008, he and his wife, Catherine, rebranded the company as David Wilkes Builders.

Wilkes' education and experience have built the company into one of Austin's most respected builders, but they aren't the only reasons David Wilkes Builders has been a success. "We're in the service industry and need to be sympathetic," said Wilkes. "Across the board I try and instill a service-based approach." Each customer is treated with respect, particularly in remodels in which the homeowner is still living in the home during construction. Attention is given to reduce interruptions in the lives of the homeowners, and a commitment to communication with each client has proven successful. "Communication is



the downfall in our industry, so we try to compensate by over-communicating.”

In addition to their customer-oriented approach, their high quality of work has earned an impressive reputation in the Austin area. Wilkes believes the talented architects and designers with which he works have contributed to his continued success. The unique designs as well as the numerous materials and finishes they've worked with have allowed his company to shine. “We have a lot of attention to detail with some of the unique designs, and it takes a lot of skill in those areas,” Wilkes said. “And we've managed to do that and maintain a good track record.”

Making a Name

When looking at Wilkes' presence online, one word is often repeated: “bespoke.” This motto of custom tailoring for each individual is



to get some national press in Austin,” said Wilkes. “We're really fortunate to have worked with some really talented architects and designers in Austin.”

The future looks bright for David Wilkes Builders. Continued growth in the downtown Austin area and more opportunities in the new construction arena look promising. “And the core of our business, the remodeling, is always steady,” said Wilkes. “And if things keep heading this way, we might have our highest business year so far.”

With all this business success, David said his greatest fortune has been working with his wife each day. “Coming from England, it's just been great to establish a life here,” Wilkes said. “Settling down with my wife and starting a family, I'm here and still happy.” ■

demonstrated in each of his projects. Wilkes works to treat each project and portion of a remodel as a hand-crafted experience.

Wilkes recently worked on one such custom remodel in the Four Seasons Residences in downtown Austin. The client owned one of the units and then purchased an adjoining unit, which they wanted to combine. Wilkes was up to the challenge and worked with the client to completely change the floorplan, take out the wall, and fashion it to the client's particular requirements so they would be able to host parties of fifty to sixty people. “We had some real challenges with gutting out the living space and, on top of that, a really tight schedule,” said Wilkes. “To meet that date with the challenging design and the logistics of getting materials from all over the country, it was really rewarding.”

Wilkes has been particularly pleased with the increased attention his company has received. From the recognition their projects garnered at the most recent Texas Association of Builders Star Awards, to the article and selection of their master bathroom suite as the Room of the Year in Best American Living, and winning the 2014 HBA of Austin's Remodeler of the Year award, David Wilkes Builders is continuing to be acknowledged for its quality remodeling projects. “It was nice

