

Building Scene

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Marilyn Fitchett editor/591-2300

Thursday, November 29, 1980 O&E



★ 11



Scott Jacobson stands in front of the Berkshire model in Mission Springs in West Bloomfield.

Scott Jacobson: Builder of Year

By Gerald Frawley
staff writer

Scott Jacobson really loves to build.

That much is apparent to anyone sitting down with him for more than a minute. Ask him about himself and he will hem and haw, stammer, balk, look away, change the subject, cough, fidget, and look at the ceiling.

Ask him about building and his face relaxes, his eyes brighten, and it's off to the races.

Scott Jacobson, 36, of Birmingham was chosen by the Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan (BASM) as Builder of the Year. He will be honored for his commitment to the organization and for his contributions to the single-family housing market at BASM's annual awards banquet tonight. (For a complete list of honorees, see Page 4.)

Jacobson, president of S.R. Jacobson Development Corp. in Birmingham, said being a builder is a demanding career. He works six or seven days a week, deals with a myriad of people from tradesmen to customers, and combats invariables like weather, local regulations and public opinion.

"Building in Northville and West Bloomfield is like building in two different states," Jacobson said. "You have to pretty much eat, drink and sleep building."

"(But) I enjoy what I'm doing and wouldn't ever consider anything else," Jacobson said.

AND FORTUNATELY, he happens to be good at his chosen profession.

"I think we do some things pretty well," Jacobson said, stressing his successes have come from being aggressive, innovative and industrious when it comes to finding good building sites.

But his firm's success comes from Jacobson's studied approach to building, he said. "I don't want to sit still and build the same house I built 10 years ago."

A studied approach to building includes — but isn't limited to — extensive traveling to other parts of the state and country to see what other builders are doing, re-evaluating past products to see where improvements can be made, and building a team around him that he can rely on.

out, different room orientations, more variety in home styles, two-story rooms — builders have to provide unique homes because buyers, especially in move-up homes, are discriminating.

"There is a thrill to seeing a piece of raw property, building on it, and then seeing people live there," Jacobson continued. "I really enjoy driving through a subdivision I worked in and seeing people living there."

Trying to put into words the feelings a builder gets after seeing a thriving community he helped start and had an impact on is something few outside the trade could understand.

For Jacobson there is a sense of accomplishment ("I did that"), a sense of pride ("It still looks great") and perhaps even a sense of purpose ("Where would these people live if I hadn't built that house?").

JACOBSON WAS first exposed to building as a youngster when he accompanied his father to work sites, and later as a teen when he worked summers for his father's company, Mark Jacobson and Associates, Birmingham.

Like many other builder's sons and daughters, Jacobson remembers his first job on a building site — sweeping floors. But even though he worked for his father while still in high school, Jacobson wasn't planning on building as a career until he was already in college.

"At 18 or 19, I was like a lot of kids — I didn't know what I wanted to do. But when I was around 20 years old, I decided to give it a try," he said, and he began enrolling in business and building management classes at Michigan State University.

But not all the education in the world could have prepared him for the real world. Jacobson returned to work for his father's company after leaving college, but after several years decided to venture out on his own.

"I started in 1979 during the recession," he said. "I built a home in Rochester Hills and sat in a model for two years and lost money."

But finally he did sell the home, and using the knowledge he gained from his first sale, he built another — and another — and another.

Even he didn't foresee he would some day build between 75 and 100

Hall of famer: builder's role model

By Gerald Frawley
staff writer

Donald Van Every has been in the building business a long time, but it isn't only time served that warrants his being selected to the Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan Hall of Fame.

Van Every, 68, a resident of Bloomfield Hills, has been a member of BASM since World War II, a past president of the association, and a vice president of the state home builders association. He is president of the Streamwood Development Co.

He's built affordable and luxury homes from Detroit to Oakland County, has developed tracts of vacant land for other builders, and has seen the farms and swamp land of Oakland County and western Wayne change into a thriving metropolitan center.

Builders themselves have changed, he said. From novices with more chutzpah than business acumen to highly educated, sophisticated

entrepreneurs, the builders of today are providing better housing in a tougher environment.

"People always say, 'They don't build them like they used to,'" Van Every said. "Well, I'm old enough to remember the 'used to,' and I can tell you they're building them a lot better than they used to."

From the materials to the plans to the code inspections to the people doing the building — everything about today's homes is better than its counterpart of 40 years ago, Van Every said.

"The whole package is better. The younger guys are all better educated and know more than I did when I started," he said.

VAN EVERY began building in a simpler time. It was after World War II. A war veteran himself, Van Every recalls the time.

"We were all sitting around and all the guys were saying, 'The first thing I'm going to do when I get home is get married and buy a



Don Van Every

house," he said. "I knew there would be opportunities."

"When I got home, I started immediately because I knew everyone was going to be looking," he said.

Van Every began as a real estate agent selling new homes for other builders, but quickly moved into the building end.

"It was one of those situations where the grass is always greener," he said of his move from real estate agent to builder. "It was the same thing with developing."

Van Every does very little building these days, he said, and instead focuses on developing vacant land and then selling lots to individual builders here and in Florida.

Like other builders, Van Every laments the demise of less restrictive days. "The labyrinth of regulations and controls you have today has made building more difficult and more expensive."

"I used to apply for a building permit in the morning, go get a cup of coffee, come back and pay for it, and start work the next day," he said. "Now it takes two months just to get a building permit."

Please turn to Page 2

Lawyer returns to building roots

By Gerald Frawley
staff writer

This year's Young Builder of the Year, Terry Nosen of Nosen/Cohen Associates Inc. in West Bloomfield, never saw himself as a builder while he was growing up.

Although Nosen comes from a long line of builders and building tradesmen, Nosen thought he would pursue a career in law.

Nosen, 36, of West Bloomfield, was chosen by the Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan as Young Builder of the Year. He will be honored for his commitment to the organization and for his contributions to the single-family housing market at BASM's annual awards banquet tonight.

Nosen's great-grandfather was a carpenter, his grandfather was a carpenter/builder, and his father Harold "Manny" Nosen, president of Nosen Building Corp. in West Bloomfield, has been active in residential construction since World War II.

"I was practically born into it," Nosen said.

But Nosen became a lawyer instead and for two years worked as an assistant attorney general for the state of Michigan. And he hated it.

"A time comes when you see you realize you're either going to be an assistant attorney general for the rest of your life or you have to try something else," Nosen said.

So he tried something else — building, a career that he wasn't totally unfamiliar with since he had worked for his father since he was a young man.

Nosen HAD been exposed to building since he was young boy from the days of picking up wood scraps on work sites, to riding the bulldozers with an operator, to doing rough carpentry and framing in a home.

It wasn't surprising then, that he returned to work for his father as a construction supervisor in 1978. And although he was happy there, Nosen decided to set out on his own and formed

Nosen/Cohen Associates with Lawrence Cohen — a friend from his high school days — in 1983.

Nosen/Cohen has concentrated its building in Oakland County on projects like Stone Ridge and Sable Point in West Bloomfield, and the Woods of Novi. Prices range from \$159,000.

Nosen said he is also looking at projects in Canton Township in western Wayne County.

"We've had a lot of good years," Nosen said, referring to the construction boom of the 1980s. "But now we're getting a little cautious."

But even with all the uncertainties of the economy and dealing with local restrictions, Nosen said he is happy with his chosen career.

"There are a lot of days when you ask yourself it is really worthwhile," Nosen said, but then he'll think about it and answer, "yes."

"We're really the quarterbacks that guide all that's happening," Nosen said. Orchestrating a construction site requires timing, planning and organization, Nosen said, and when it all comes together it's really an accomplishment.

"IT'S A VERY exciting process —



Terry Nosen

much more fulfilling than other jobs," he said. "Legal work, that was all pushing papers (and) spending more time tearing things down than building them up."

"But building, (with) building you drive up in the morning and there's a pile of wood and iron, and when you leave at night there's (part of) a building there," he said.

"It's almost a monument," he said. "Anyone involved in it — from the rough carpenter to roofing guy, can point to it and say, 'I had a part in that.'"

Of course not every building deserves to be a monument, he said, but they are always something substantial that represents something accomplished.

"Some (buildings) are nice and some are wonderful (and) hopefully there are more wonderful ones," Nosen said.

Nosen said being awarded Young Builder of the Year is gratifying because it's a reflection of his peers' esteem. That esteem from other members of BASM is important, not only because it shows others have noticed his efforts, but because the association is important.

"The building industry, unlike the auto industry or manufacturing, is made up mainly of small businesses," Nosen said. Large corporations or manufacturing interests generally have influence they can use when outside agencies seek to impose restrictions on them, small business does not.

"We need a voice," he said. At the local level, builders fight their own battles with planning commissions and community officials, but as development has grown as an issue, state and federal legislation is having a larger impact.

"We need an organization that's active and brings issues to light, that lets us know when we have to rally (for builder interests)," he said.

The Builders Association, he said, also provides a forum for builders to work out ideas amongst themselves, he said.

Nosen said being selected as the Young Builder of the Year shouldn't change his position in BASM much. Granted, new members and young

Please turn to Page 2

HOTTEST SELLING

DON'T MISS THE POINTE

Don't miss your opportunity to live at Hunter's Pointe. These luxuriously elegant and affordable condominiums are selling for an unbelievable price so they won't last forever. Don't miss out, stop in today!

Features include:

- Attached Garage
- Private Entrances
- Private Patios
- Full Basements (optional)
- First Floor Laundry
- Walking Distance to Numerous Shops and Restaurants
- Full Hardwood Floors
- Central Air
- Range and Oven
- Extensive Landscaping
- Automatic Lawn Sprinklers
- Snow and Snow Removal
- Pool and Hot Tub

"The Golden Corridor" of the Westland/Canton Area
Ranches and Townhouses
Located on Hunter Ave. 1 1/2 Miles West of Westland, 1/2 Mile North of Red Rd.
(924-0111)

Hours: 12 to 5 Only • Weekends 11 to 4 • Closed Thursdays

HUNTER'S POINTE
CONDOMINIUMS