

January 2007

**Historic  
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Build,  
Remodel*

They Do It All

*JHL Designs*

The Art Of Collaboration

*The Winthrop House*

Divide And Conquer

*Home of the Month*

Ressique-Comstock House  
Wilton

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NEWSPAPERS

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New Canaan Advertiser  
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The Redding Pilot

The Darien Times  
The Ridgefield Press  
The Weston Forum  
The Lewisboro Ledger



David Ames

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# Design Builders & Remodeling

## DOES IT ALL

by Jane K. Dove

Homeowners who have had it with unreliable, messy, hurried, slipshod, tippling or otherwise undesirable subcontractors can look for relief at Design Builders & Remodeling Inc.

The full-service company, selected by Remodeling magazine last year as a winner of its 2006 Big50 Award, has its own staff of skilled tradesmen and designers who normally work on a subcontract basis.



David Adams and his staff of skilled tradesmen and designers handle all aspects of renovations, from small projects to large ones.

### New Approach

Owner David Adams says he took the unusual approach of putting subcontractors on his payroll to obtain more control over the building process and provide a

higher quality of service to clients.

Like other building firms, David started out using subcontractors. "I was only 19 and worked with one other guy, a carpenter. My office was my bedroom in my mother's home in Danbury, and I had a computer and a Chevy sedan with a big trunk. I didn't even own a pickup truck."

From a modest start 20 years ago, Design Builders and Remodeling has grown into a premier firm thanks to David's drive and determination. "I have always tried to make sure my clients were satisfied, no matter what the job," he says. "Things picked up gradually over the years until about five years ago, when I decided to end my practice of using subcontractors and hire them instead."



David says he originally thought about making the change because of his own frustrations with his inability to control scheduling. "There was also the issue of lack of control over their philosophies and business practices. The way they operated and treated clients may have been different than I wanted. When I got complaints, they were usually due to something that a subcontractor did or did not do."

David decided to take the plunge and hire his own workers. Design Builders and Remodeling now has separate divisions for painting, plumbing and heating, excavation and landscaping, masonry, roofing, concrete work, drywall, tile, carpentry, cabinetry, and architectural and interior design.

The company also has a kitchen showroom, Bailey Avenue Kitchens, located at 18 Bailey Avenue in Ridgefield. The company's main office is also located in Ridgefield.

### High Standards

David says he is very pleased with his own staff of skilled tradespeople, and his clients like it, too. "It gives me the ability to set my own standards. One of the biggest complaints I used to get about subcontractors was that they were always rushing through the job, trying to beat the clock. Now it's not an issue because I am paying them to work by the hour, not by the job. The result – they take that extra time to make sure things are perfect."

Another frequent customer complaint, lack of cleanliness, has also been remedied. "Believe it or not, this is a big issue and can bring out a lot of emotion," he says, "sometimes more than with work on the actual job. Customers feel that dirt and debris left around or in their homes is a sign of disrespect, and I agree."

David says things have "never run better" since he adopted the "minimal subcontracting" approach. "I've been able to concentrate on getting the operation to run very smoothly, putting the right people in the right places at the right times for each job. My own time has been freed up, and I can now pay more attention to overseeing jobs and long-term planning."

With an architectural background, David acknowledges liking to be in control and running a tight ship. He enjoys being completely accountable to his customers. "I feel that I am better equipped to provide a higher level of service and run things better from a business standpoint. It's been a reduction in stress for everyone, including the customers."



Design Builders & Remodeling was selected by Remodeling magazine as a winner of its 2006 Big50 Award. In 2002, they were also honored as Fairfield County's Remodeler of the Year.

He is happy that Design Builders & Remodeling grew to the point where he could take this new approach and is pleased to have received the Big50 award. The magazine editors select remodelers who exemplify the best in the industry and have proven practices to share with other remodelers.

Although the building business has continued at a slower pace, David looks on this as needed "breathing room," where he can revisit some company practices and procedures. "The past few years have been frenzied, so it's good to have some time for regrouping."

He also expects things to pick up again this spring, and says the remodeling industry is poised to meet the needs. "The economy is very favorable, with stocks and employment up and mortgage rates and energy coming down. In the Northeast, trade figures show that spending on remodeling now exceeds spending on new home construction."

David believes that his "all in one" approach to design and building will be one of the keys to his company's success in the future. "We do renovations, additions, tear downs and new construction. But no matter the size or cost, our customers don't want to have to deal with a long line of assorted subcontractors, argue with them over their time, or critique their work. This way, my company does it all, using members of our own team, and everyone ends up happier."

*For information: [www.dbarinc.com](http://www.dbarinc.com); 203-431-9104 for design builders; 203-438-4868 for Bailey Avenue Kitchens. ■*