



From left to right: Billy Guerrero, Dolores Davis, and Stewart Davis—the principals of CG&S Design Build.

Building a Legacy

A residential-construction company establishes a collaborative atmosphere and community presence

BY DANIEL CASCIATO

CG&S Design Build has established a foundation on strong family values. Clarence and Stella Guerrero started the Austin, Texas-based construction and design firm in 1957, and nearly three decades later—in 1986—the founders passed the reigns to four of their eight children.

“I always give credit to our parents for the company’s success,” says Dolores Davis,

general manager of CG&S. “My parents built strong systems for us to work from and taught us to have a determined work ethic. Also, whether you have unique tools or high technology to help you do your job, it just boils down to showing up, staying focused, and doing the best that you can for your clients.”

A few years after Davis and her three brothers took over the family business,

two of her siblings left to form their own construction companies, leaving their one remaining brother, Billy Guerrero, as the president. Davis’ husband, Stewart, AIA, joined the company in 1992 and became instrumental in building and directing the design department.

Clearly, Davis also learned a thing or two about business acumen from her parents;



Founders Clarence and Stella Guerrero (pictured right) and their children have built a specialized construction company in Austin. Photo: Greg Hursley



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last year, the company had gross sales of \$7 million, an increase of about 18 percent from the previous year. “We set a goal in 2005 to increase our sales by 10 percent and we have hit or surpassed that every year since,” Davis says.

CG&S can attribute its growth to its defined market niche. It offers clients residential renovations and additions and architectural and construction services. “It’s a one-stop shop for residential remodeling,” Davis says. “Our company can provide many facets of the remodeling process under one roof.”

Because CG&S clearly defined its market niche, most of its marketing campaign is geared towards attracting customers that are interested in design-build services. “A majority of customers—once they finish design—will move straight into construction,” Davis says. “In doing that, we’re able to manage the design-build process so that we have a continual flow of projects. If we need to, we can be very aggressive in the design process to move things quickly into construction, or we can slow that process down and allow for a more relaxed transition into construction.”

To ensure that the design process goes smoothly, the CG&S architectural staff works with engineers, interior designers, and consultants, along with a construction team composed of project managers and other staff.

“Because we have all of these services under one roof, we have a full-team approach to managing the project. This gives the client a level of service that is very streamlined and allows us to wrap our arms around the client to make sure they are cared for every step of the way,” Davis explains.

In concordance with its current business goals, CG&S wants to continue integrating green-building techniques and materials into its projects and designs. Although one of the main shifts in the construction industry has been toward more green building projects, that concept is not new for CG&S. “We provide our clients with the knowledge base and the ability to produce sustainable architecture—anything that will help them have healthy and sustainable, energy-efficient homes,” Davis says.

However, challenges await, including the unstable economy. “The economy is a little unstable and questionable as to where it will land,” Davis

says. “We have a goal of creating a new office and a showroom so people can come in and look at examples of our work. That may be put on hold, depending on how things pan out.”

In addition to the economy, planning for success is something that Davis and her brother will be examining more closely in the years ahead. “We’re all getting older, and we have a lot of employees that are getting older as well,” she says. “One of the main issues we have in the construction industry is that there are not a lot of young people getting into the construction trades. We are seeing a shortage of electrical and plumbing tradesman, but that’s not unique to us. It’s a problem for anyone in the construction business these days.”

To combat that issue, CG&S connects with local schools to find apprentice carpenters to train. “We always manage to find excellent employees,” Davis says. “We have a very strong foundation here. We try to keep it a small family atmosphere, so people feel like they are part of a bigger picture. We think that attracts good employees, nice clients, and interesting projects.” H/E