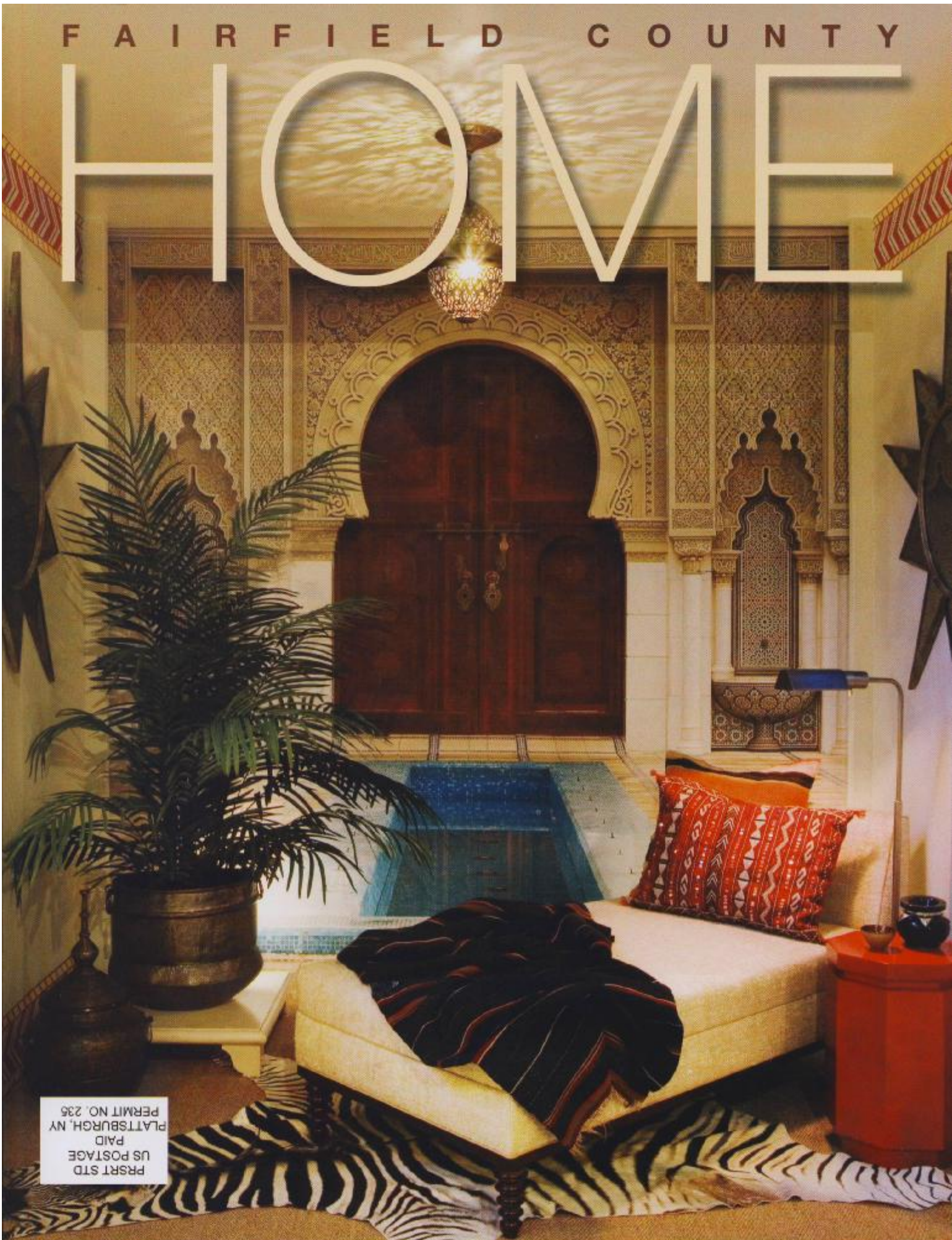


F A I R F I E L D C O U N T Y

H O M E



PRSR1 STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
PLATTSBURGH, NY
PERMIT NO. 236



To the Trade

ELIZABETH ERVIN



This Is How We Rally

Extra, Extra read all about it, the economy has tanked—again. Guess what? It has happened before and it will happen again. Our financial system is cyclical, but you don't need an economist standing on a soap box to tell you that. Although the media has leapt at the opportunity to tell you that Wall Street is burning on its head, we have to step back and consider what is truly happening and take a moment to reflect upon where we've been before.

going to share the benefits of designing and building during a slowed economy. This is the inside track straight from the perspective of Fairfield County's builders and architects who have dug their heels in and stared down the barrel of the economic shotgun.

Peter Cadoux, proprietor of Peter

A brief stroll down economy lane might remind us that in the 80's and the 90's (Savings and Loans Crisis, anybody?) our economy derailed itself. The good news? We bounced back. It is true that this economic setback has struck our population deeper than before and the businesses of "Main Street" America are feeling the pinch. However, seasoned business owners are pulling out their boxing gloves because in times like this they rally.

After sitting down with twelve builders and architects, they unanimously agreed that situations like this provide an opportunity to separate the people who are serious about their businesses from the ones who are 'skating by.'

In addition, the majority of those interviewed have been in business on average from 20-30 years, got their start right as the 80's bottomed out, and have muscled their way through 2 1/2-3 economic setbacks. Are these business owners concerned about the state of our economy? Sure. Are they afraid of losing their businesses? No.

Twenty five year business veteran, Tony Savino, owner of AP Savino, LLC, shared that, "the 80's recession hit right



as I opened my business. I worked tirelessly, scared to lose what I had. The second time, I knew what I had to do—I tightened my buckle and it was okay. And for the third time it has just become a fact of life."

The American Dream is premised upon thankless sweat equity and for those who are willing to roll up their sleeves and "do the work" there is business to be had. This month's column is

Cadoux Architects, has noted that "the market has changed, and clearly people are being much more careful about doing a project or how they go about it." However, he continues to state that prior to the "hit," he was seeing a change in how people were living in their homes, especially with respect to feeling the pinch of energy costs.

Studio Dumitru's owner, George Dumitru, is aligned with Eric Rose, own-

er of EM Rose, in the acknowledgment that Fairfield County experienced an extreme high in the real estate market. Dumitru points out that, "everybody seems to forget that we had a crazy residential market for quite a few years. The house values grew unrealistically for years in a row." The architect hypothesizes that "the change of the times may be that we won't see as many mini-castles around anymore, but even that may be a good thing. A lot of these quasi-mansions were built just to be big, not necessarily out of necessity. Hopefully the clients will understand that money can and should be spent differently."

Clients who have elected to proceed with their building projects have shared the sentiment that "At least I know where my money is. I will be able to see it." David Prutting, proprietor of Prutting & Company Custom Builders, supports this idea by suggesting that "an investment in solid built housing, in good communities, with inherent value materials might be regarded more highly than how ones Lehman and Citigroup stocks pre-

History has proven that the single most worthwhile investment in one's life—and the one with the best return—is still one's home

viously were." Philip Terlizzi, of D&D Fine Homes agrees by stating, "History has proven that the single most worthwhile investment in one's life that has the best return is usually your home—and you can not put a price on enriching your life."

As Cadoux states, people are growing more cautious about embarking upon a project, however there are benefits available to the consumer in this climate. Rose, encourages that, "If you want a bargain relative to the cost of construction of the past 10 years BUILD! Admittedly the industry is hungry and material prices, for the most part, are way off due to lack of demand."

Kelly Wright of Wright Brothers Builders estimates that the profit margins go down to a 10-15% margin. "Some are going in just at cost, to keep moving and keep their crews employed. An average job at 3 million can be had for 2.7"

Jeff Kaufman, owner of Jeffrey M. Kaufman Architects, states, "There is not a better time to do a project. Construction costs are way down, the better builders are willing to do more

**CHRISTINE DONNER
KITCHEN DESIGN INC.**



203.966.0160
www.donnerkitchens.com

**COMFORTABLE
LUXURIOUS · INVITING**

WE HELP YOU REALIZE YOUR VISION



gillian drummond, llc
I N T E R I O R S

WILTON, CT 203.544.1220 WWW.GILLIANDRUMMOND.COM

To the Trade

Almost everyone has had some work done at some time and a recommendation can mean everything. If a contractor is busy, it's usually a good sign—he is in demand.

then just new construction. With pricing more competitive—this is the market to get the most for your money.” All of the builders and architects agree that projects are moving more quickly and efficiently, as their resources are not spread over as many job sites.

There is one contention with the mentality of getting “the most for your money” and that is the bidding process. All of the architects and builders caution clients unanimously—If it sounds too good to

be true, it probably is. In a slowed market competitive pricing is a perk, however Mark Finlay of Mark P. Finlay Architects shares that bids should fall within 3% of one another.

It can be challenging for clients to navigate through the bidding process, therefore it is important to understand that the quality of bids are more important than the quantity. According to Finlay, “As a good architect, it's your job to analyze bids and make sure your client is getting apples

for apples.” Kaufman shares that his team compiles all of the information on a spread sheet to make sure everyone includes the same information. “This is where we find missing items and we instruct the bidders to include any lacking information.” By adhering to this protocol it enables Kaufman and his clients to make an educated decision on a builder.

Terlizzi shares a good tip that addresses reputation. “Almost everyone you know has had some work done at some time and a recommendation can mean everything in selecting a contractor. If a contractor is busy it's usually a good sign, he is in demand.”

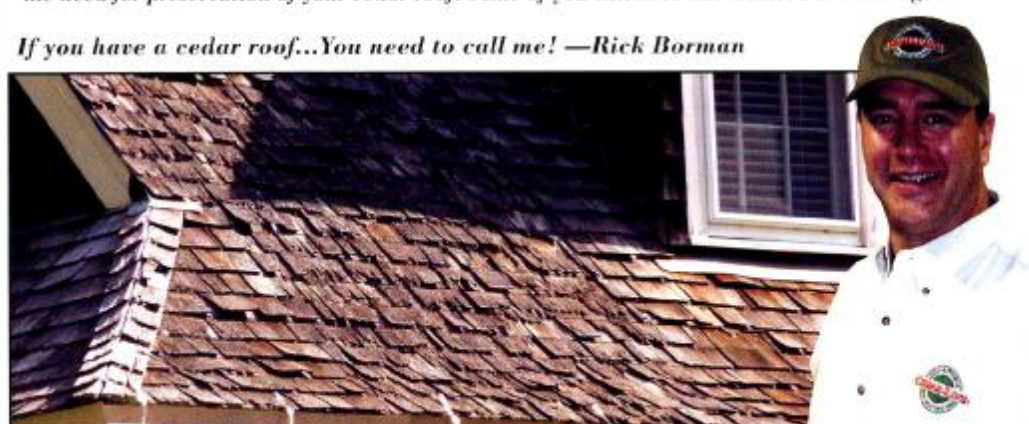
Louis Contadino, owner of Contadino Architects, explains that, “This is an appropriate time to plan your projects. This economic climate encourages architects to ‘do more with less’. A leaner and keener proj-



“Go Ahead Wait, it's Your Money”

At Cedar Life LLC we have been trying to warn you for nearly ten years of the dangers of ignoring the need for preservation of your cedar roof. Some of you still have not received the message.

If you have a cedar roof...You need to call me! —Rick Borman



Keep Your Cedar Roof looking Great for 50 Years*

If left untreated, a cedar roof will age quickly. Cedar-Life preserves the beauty of new cedar roofs for decades and rejuvenates the older ones. Innovative technology and professional service—that's the Cedar-Life promise.

The fountain of youth for your Cedar Roof
203-637-6755
www.cedar-life.com



*Longevity estimate is approximate and is based on a Cedar-Life maintenance program dating from original installation.



ect program can result in a more creative and cost-effective design solution. Once the economy is back on track most of the planning will be behind you, and you can move a project forward more swiftly. Project approval time has also been reduced, municipal reviews and approvals have been rendered quickly and efficiently because of the reduced workload."

Mark Olson, principal of Olson Development LLC, recommends that hesitant clients do have the option to consider "phasing" home improvement projects. By completing all of the necessary structural work and having the option to consider holding back on items that can be easily added later with little or no mess. "Improvements to your home is a lifestyle decision not just an investment."

Architect Dinyar Wadia, principal of Wadia Associates makes the imperative point that, "We always try to get our clients the best prices and value for money—and show them what to and what not to spend their money on." Regardless of the economy this is daily practice for his firm. His associate, Phillip Dodd, reinforces the firm's integrity in stating that, "regardless of the economy there are certain quality standards a person should not skimp on. For example, windows aren't just windows. However they don't become an issue until 5 years later when one uses pine, not mahogany for the casing and it's beginning to rot."

While Dodd is a believer that "God is in the details" he also stresses the importance of knowing where one can use stock items

instead of custom. "In the instance of moldings—manage how many you use and don't have a different one in each room. With more conditions the expense increases."

Terlizzi affirms this position and states, "that by cutting corners some things seem to have a savings now but later on a homeowner can incur more expenses in utilities or repairs."

Through candid consultation and unrivaled reputations, these architects' and builders' communities have rallied together and know how to make a seemingly dismal situation benefit their clients. With a keen understanding of their pro-

fessional mission and an unyielding sense of responsibility these are the players that have weathered the storm. Wright rallies behind this point, "Americans, especially entrepreneurs, are incredible people and strong by nature."

If you are one who is considering construction or renovation, heed their advice and take advantage of the sale. It's like Rockefeller said, "When there is blood in the streets . . ." ■

Elizabeth Ervin is owner of Linen Press, with stores in Old Greenwich and Mystic, CT. Contact her at Elizabeth@ElizabethErvin.com.

Builders

AP Savino, LLC
3 W End Ave
Old Greenwich, CT 06870
(203) 698-1147
www.apsavinollc.com

D&D Fine Homes
1918 Boston Post Rd.
Darien, CT 06820
203.655.4455
www.dndfinehomes.com

EM Rose Building Company, LLC
34 East Industrial Road
Branford, CT 06405
203.481.5155
www.emrose.net

Olson Development LLC
www.olsondevelopmentllc.com
47 Pine St
New Canaan, CT 06840
(203) 972-7722

Prutting & Company Custom Builders
70 Pine Street
New Canaan, CT 06840
203.972.1028
www.prutting.com

Wright Brothers Builders Inc
325 Post Rd W
Westport, CT 06880
(203) 227-8215
www.wrightbuild.com

Architects

Jeffrey M Kaufman Architects
181 Post Rd W
Westport, CT 06880
(203) 222-1222

Louis Contadino Architects
436 East Putnam Ave
Coe Cob, CT 06807
203.861.9007
www.contadinoarchitectseia.com

Mark P. Finlay Architects
96 Old Post Road, Suite 200,
Southport, CT 06890
(203) 254-2388
www.markfinlay.com

Peter Cadoux Architects
35 Post Rd W
Westport, CT 06880
(203) 227-4304
www.cadouxia.com

Studio Dumitru
49 Richmondville Ave # 106
Westport, CT 06880
(203) 226-5156
www.studiodumitru.com

Wadia Associates
134 Main St Suite 1
New Canaan, CT 06840
(203) 966-0048
www.wadiaassociates.com