

NEVADAN AT WORK: Builder constructs homes as personal as their owners

By JENNIFER ROBISON
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Daniel Coletti.

Position: Owner, Sun West Custom Homes.

Family: Wife, Natalie; children, Christopher, Kyle and Kimberly.

Education: Degree in building-construction technology, Pasco-Hernando (Fla.) Community College.

Work history: Various jobs since the 1980s in construction and carpentry for Coletti family-owned businesses, as well as general contractors in Florida, Colorado and Nevada.

Hobbies: Riding dirtbikes offroad, waterskiing, wakeboarding.

Favorite book: "Rich Dad, Poor Dad" by Robert Kiyosaki and Sharon Lechter.

Hometown: Mountain View, Calif.

In Las Vegas since: 1988.

Sun West Custom Homes is at 2575 Montessouri St., Suite 200, and can be reached at 363-8060.



A passion for architecture and inspiration from his home-building mother helped Daniel Coletti build Sun West Custom Homes into a company known for imaginative designs and high-profile clients.

Photo by Jerry Henkel/Review-Journal

Local homebuilder Dan Coletti has a familiar history: Like legions of builders, he got his start taking on odd jobs for the family's contracting business.

What's unusual is that Coletti learned the construction industry from his mother, a pioneering woman builder who was one of western Florida's first female contractors.

After Coletti finished college in Florida, he moved with his family to Colorado, where he continued to work in the business with his mom, Cynthia Coletti. After an economic slump struck in 1988, the Colettis decamped the Centennial State, intending to settle in California; they stopped in Las Vegas for a spell to take advantage of a nascent building boom, found substantial long-term opportunities and decided to stay here.

Since then, Sun West has built nearly 500 custom homes across the Las Vegas Valley, with prices ranging from \$2 million to \$15 million. The company has captured best-of-show honors in every home showcase it's entered, including the annual exhibitions Street of Dreams and Parade of Homes. The builder has also constructed some commercial buildings.

Question: How did you decide on a career in homebuilding?

Answer: I followed in my mom's footsteps. My mom was the second female to acquire a general contractor's license on the west coast of Florida. She started building when I started going to college, and I would work on the homes she had designed and built. The whole process was interesting to me, watching people move into nice, new homes and being so happy. We're a family-owned business, though my dad was an aerospace engineer. He retired about eight or nine years ago. He designed all the tiles for the underside of the space shuttle.

Question: Why did you stick with custom homes after the local market boomed? Why didn't tract development appeal to you?

Answer: I never wanted to tarnish that reputation that each home we build is unique and individual for each client. If we crossed that production-home border, we might have lost that feeling that people believed they were getting a one-of-a-kind home.

My passion is architecture, and I have a (residential design) license. I'm limited in that I can't technically draw skyscrapers or high-rises, which is not my ambition anyhow. We've kind of slowly built our business up. Back in 1991 or '92, custom homes were smaller and the market for high-end homes wasn't that prolific. We've slowly raised ourselves up into being known in the valley for building premier custom homes.

Question: How have customer demands changed since you began building here?

Answer: As of late, it's popular to have indoor-outdoor living spaces that blend together. We're known for creating those kinds of spaces. We put in glass doors that slip into pockets (inside walls), and you can't see where they go. You can barely tell whether you're inside or outside. Also, kitchens are getting bigger, with more gadgets, and master bathrooms are getting lavish, with five or six water valves coming out of ceilings and walls, and with TVs in shower areas. Modern-day technology is integrating into homes more, with lighting-control systems and home theaters.

Question: What homes are you proudest of? Which projects were especially significant accomplishments?

Answer: One of our greatest accomplishments is being recognized as a builder by Strip headliners and executives of major national companies. We have built for many extremely high-profile people. They'll see our homes in the Street of Dreams or Parade of Homes, see our talent and want to tap into it for their own homes.

As for specific projects, the Windemere, a home we built at MacDonald Highlands, won the top award at the Street of Dreams in 2002. With the indoor-outdoor pool, we had two giant pieces of acrylic hanging from the ceiling. When you apply water to the top, the water sticks to the acrylic sheets all the way down to the pool. It looks like tons of water pouring from the ceiling beams. If you push a button, the acrylic sheets slide into wall pockets, so

you can turn off the feature and enjoy unobstructed city views. I've always loved how water integrates into homes and how it's tranquil.

Another cool feature was the pool room under the swimming pool. You could look up and see the pool through glass above, and we installed an aquarium on the other side so it would look like the fish were swimming out to the pool.

Windemere made an impact on the entire valley. About 50,000 people came to the Street of Dreams that year, and it seemed like the vast majority who came through would say, "I came to see this house, because I heard I had to come see this house." A lot of high-profile people saw it and wanted me to do their house. We've built several local homes for executives and heirs of Fortune 500 companies.

Question: What's the weirdest thing someone has asked you to build into their home? Is there any request you haven't been able to handle?

Answer: No one has asked me for anything I can't do. What's fun is learning the lifestyles of people and what they think is important in their home. We've built safe rooms that were very, very clever. No one could figure out how to get in or where the room would be. We've built brass poles for exotic dancing. We have done some fun stuff. The window view from the basement pool room that backed into the pool -- no one asked us to do that, but we knew it would be cool.

Question: How has the economy affected Sun West?

Answer: It hasn't been as dramatic as it would have been for a company that builds production homes. We seem to be keeping ourselves kind of busy. Of course I'm concerned about the future. Luckily for us, some people who have money are still willing to build nice homes for themselves. Our sales have been flat. I don't want it to sound like we're booming. We're holding steady.

Question: What do you see for the future of Sun West?

Answer: We pride ourselves on the service we give customers. Our company offers architecture, construction and interior design. We don't farm work out. The future for us is in refining the systems and processes we already have. Trying to create more value for our customers is our goal, and that is where we're headed. This city is attracting more and more Fortune 500 executives. We want to be the go-to company for people who want something very unique.