

CONSTRUCTING A FAMILY DYNASTY

THE MURPHY FAMILY HAS A 100-YEAR HISTORY IN CONSTRUCTION AND CURRENTLY HAS \$500 MILLION WORTH OF CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS IN PROGRESS.

BY JO WERNE
Special to The Herald

For the Murphy clan, it's no cliché to say they work their way from the ground up in the family company, Coastal Construction Group.

From Tom Murphy, Jr., chairman and CEO, to his 21-year-old son, Erin, members of the Murphy family start their careers by working as laborers. They clean up construction sites, carry steel and dig holes. And there's no favoritism; they don't earn one dollar more than their peers.

"Starting as a laborer, I learned to appreciate all levels of the business and how hard some of them are," says Erin Murphy, a junior at the University of Miami majoring in finance and accounting. Like his dad, uncle, brothers and cousins did, he spends his summers and school holidays on construction sites. This past summer Erin was promoted to the accounting department.

The Murphy family has a 100-year history in construction starting with an ancestor, Thomas Joseph Murphy, who was a ship builder in Ireland. In 2005, the family will mark 50 years of building in Florida. It currently has \$500 million worth of construction projects in progress.

A builder of luxurious homes, Coastal Construction built much of Ocean Reef Club, Deering Bay and Fisher Island. Among the celebrities the company has built homes for are Oprah Winfrey, Sylvester Stallone, Dan Marino, Jimmy Johnson and golf legend Raymond Floyd.

The company's commercial side is also strong. Coastal has built 40 hotels, the latest being the Ritz-Carlton in Miami Beach. Office, retail and industrial buildings; churches, schools, libraries, condos and restaurants from Key West to St. Augustine have been built by Coastal.

CURRENT PROJECTS

Current projects include 46 homes at Aqua on Miami Beach's Allison Island, the Ocean Palms luxury condominium tower in Hollywood, and the Andalusia, a Mediterranean-style condominium building in Coral Gables.

Tom Murphy, Jr., 55, the third generation in his family in the construction business, started working when he was 12, sweeping and picking up the "tin caps" that keep poured concrete out of masonry blocks. He got his first real job as a laborer at age 15, building Killian High School. He became a carpenter apprentice and worked every summer, as well as during his Christmas and Easter holidays from school.

"I think it helped a lot starting as a laborer," says Murphy. "I learned every aspect of construction and loved working with people."

His sons agree. Tom C. Murphy, 35, vice president of preconstruction services, labored without pay when he was 14 and 15. "I was carrying steel, digging holes. I was really good with a broom," says Murphy, who earned a degree in construction management at the University of Florida and a master's degree in business at the University of Miami. "At 16, I got paid."

Sean Murphy, 33, also started working as a laborer at 14. He dropped out of the University of Florida for 18 months following Hurricane Andrew in 1992 to work as a superintendent overseeing 35 reconstruction projects. Recently promoted to vice president of operations, he returned to UF and earned a degree in construction management.

"I wouldn't want to work for anyone but family," says Sean Murphy. "We have such a good working relationship. We know each other's strengths and we feed off them. I used to listen to my father and uncle (John M.



PHOTOS BY DAVID M. BARRERA/HERALD STAFF

BIG PROJECTS: Coastal Construction Group averages approximately \$25 million per job. These homes on Fisher Island begin at \$4 million.

Murphy) at meetings and now they are listening to my ideas. That's pretty neat."

HARD WORK

Though his sons earned college degrees, Tom Murphy Jr. left college after two years. During his sophomore year at UM, he worked three 10-hour days a week as a carpenter, taking classes two days and three nights a week.

"On weekends, I worked 24 hours as a security guard. That's when I did my studying," he says. "I got a full-time job offer from my father's partner, so I quit school." (He didn't quite quit campus, however. He lived at the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity house and served as social chairman even though he did not enroll for his junior year. "UM didn't know about it," he laughs.)

Murphy Jr. became Florida's youngest-ever licensed general contractor at 19 and started Seaboard Construction two years later. He sold Seaboard to Turner Construction in 1989 but still wanted to head his own company. He began Coastal Construction with his brother John.

Voted one of the top 400 contractors in the country by Engineering News-Record, a construction weekly, Coastal



COASTAL CONSTRUCTION GROUP

The company is divided into five divisions:

- Coastal Homes, which builds homes valued at \$10 million to \$50 million and averaging 12,000 square feet.
- Coastal Condo, which focuses on medium- and high-end condos and time-share properties.
- Coastal Construction Co., which builds hotels for Hyatt, Hilton, Holiday Inn, Hampton Inn and Ritz-Carlton.
- Coastal Interiors, which primarily builds out new or renovated properties.
- Coastal Construction Services, which handles large projects in excess of \$75 million such as a hotel or a community.

Coastal's quality of construction has won the company numerous local and national awards, including the National Trust for Historic Preservation Award, 12 FAME/South Florida's Best Awards and four Aurora Awards from the Florida Home Builders Association.



FROM THE GROUND UP: Tom Murphy Jr. began working in his family's business at the age of 12. He is now chairman and chief executive officer.

Coastal Construction is family affair



DAVID K. BARREDA/HERALD STAFF

LUXURY CONDOS: Coastal Construction Group of Miami heads the new development on Fisher Island. The condominium complex will sell individual residences beginning at \$2 million each.

•COASTAL, FROM 4

now counts eight family members in the company. Not all are named Murphy; nephews Jason Anderson and Ken Fabel are part of the family team.

Tom Murphy Jr., who has around 160 employees, takes pride in the quality of his construction, keeping within the client's budget, and the company's on-schedule performance "every time."

"When I started in this business someone advised me to take a long-term view, don't go for the buck," he recalls. "Construction is tough. You have to deal with architects, contractors, city codes, a demanding schedule. There's never been a job that could not have made more money for us. Our goal is to come out with a well-built project and, hopefully, a good experience. We always do good quality work and try not to surprise anybody."

While he says he enjoys everything Coastal builds, "the most interesting building is the large home. The reasons? I get to meet the wife and the kids. When building homes you really get to meet interesting people. You build a relationship with them."

Murphy built four homes for Oprah Winfrey on Fisher Island. She later sold them, but he got to know the TV host so well that Oprah has invited him and his wife Leslie to be

A MURPHY NAMED TOM

For six generations, the Murphy family of Coastal Construction Group has produced a son named Tom. Not always the first born, but whoever was named Tom fathered two sons. Only two sons, no daughters.

Other Murphy siblings have had daughters and large families.

Tom Murphy Jr. may have stopped the trend. He fathered two sons — Tom C. and Sean — by his first wife and son Erin by his second wife. Three sons but no daughters.

However, Tom C. Murphy, Coastal's vice president of pre-construction services, seems to be keeping up the two-son tradition. He has two sons. Brother Sean has two daughters.

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her guests at her \$55 million home in California.

Projects built by Coastal have consistently been featured in *Architectural Digest*, *Florida Architecture Magazine*, *Florida Design and Professional Builder* *Luxury Homes*, among other publications.

One of the ways Murphy has built relationships with his clients is by living in the community in which he's building. He lived in Ocean Reef for 16 years while building 25 percent of the homes there. Later he lived in Deering Bay; Murphy now resides on Fisher Island.

"Most people wouldn't want to live in the community they are building," he says. "You go to church there, shop there. People get to know you. There's no hiding. We are successful because we do what we

say we'll do. If we make a mistake, we correct it. There's a good living in construction, but if you take short cuts, it might not be a good idea to live in the community you are building."

Tom Murphy Jr. looks back at his 35 years in the construction business and notes that since launching Coastal "we have never had a time that we were out of work. If residential is slow, commercial work picks up. I think by keeping in both is healthy for the company."

One thing he continually tells his employees is this:

"Even if you exceed our clients' quality expectations on 99 percent of the job, the only thing the client will remember is the one item where we fell short. You must be a strong finisher in this business to succeed."

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