

Jerome J. Zaccaria: Care And Control Through Remodeling Consultants

by Rita Tomkins

Imagine a home remodeling project that is utterly painless: no cost or time overruns, no excessive mess or disruption during construction, and a result that inspires pride.

That is the service that Remodeling Consultants at 500 Halstead Avenue, Mamaroneck, NY 10543, Phone: (914) 381-6900, strives to provide. Its president and founder, Jerome J. Zaccaria Sr ... has spent the past thirty-six years perfecting the process. What began as a one man operation is now a business with a staff of 200 and a gross income of \$4 million in the first quarter of 1986. Two key ideas have proved to be the cornerstones of Remodeling Consultants' success: the importance of architects and insistence on control of all aspects of the job.

"This business belongs to architects" stresses Mr. Zaccaria. That is the first unusual aspect of this home-improvement company: it employs several architects divided into two groups. A member of the staff of architectural consultants will visit the home of a potential client and at no cost or obligation, sketch out some options on the premises. Keeping the aesthetics of the building intact is the firm's highest priority.

"When the job is done, you shouldn't be able to see that anything new was added" ... Mr. Zaccaria explains.

The other unique feature of Remodeling Consultants is its comprehensiveness. Every detail of renovation from start to finish is handled by different members of a skilled, efficient team. By coordinating the functions of the architects, the carpenters, the plumbers, and the masons in one company. Mr. Zaccaria is able to ensure that all the stages mesh for a speedy, aesthetically pleasing result that costs exactly what was estimated.



Jerome J. Zaccaria has built Remodeling Consultants, of Mamaroneck, into a multimillion-dollar firm. (photo by Barbara Hansen)

All building permits, inspections, and even bank loans, may be arranged by the company. When a contract is signed, sketches are sent to one of the on-staff licensed architects for fine-tuning. At the same time, the production department begin its work. Any special plumbing or tiling is ordered: lumber is set aside at the company's lumber subsidiary: and special materials, such as individually designed mouldings or formica fixtures are created in advance at the company's workshops. By the time the crew reports for its first day of work at the site, all necessary materials are on hand.

Whenever feasible, excavation is done with shovels, rather than earth movers, to keep the lawn intact. Only the painting and decorating is left for the client to finish. Throughout the work, the client deals with only two people -- the original consultant, who

assists clients through every stage to completion, and the field superintendent.

Letters of recommendation from satisfied clients pour in from an astonishing ninety-two percent of total clientele, Mr. Zaccaria says. Especially praised aspects of the firm's work include the exacting design and thorough explanation of plans, the superior craftsmanship of the carpenters, the friendliness of the work crews towards children in the house and the fact that the work area is cleaned up as much as possible each evening, and completely cleaned when the job is finished.

Mr. Zaccaria credits the hard school of trial and error for his company's expert rise. The grandson of an immigrant builder from Italy, and also the son of a builder, Mr. Zaccaria opened his first business, with a partner, in 1950.

They installed custom cabinets

in Manhattan -- painstaking and expensive work. As Mr. Zaccaria's experience increased, he diversified into other home improvements, left New York and in 1956, opened his own shop in "a room in back of a barber shop on Central Avenue." For several years, he acted as construction supervisor, salesman, and bookkeeper.

As time went on, the owner saw that the only way to ensure perfect coordination on a job was to control all aspects of the operation himself. In 1968, he joined with a partner. The business continued to expand, creating subsidiaries to supply the necessary support work.

Today, there are forty partners and six subsidiaries, including companies specializing in lumber, formica, corporate remodeling and do-it-yourself kitchen centers. Another subsidiary is the Institute of Residential Remodeling, Inc., a corporate training center which teaches architects the fine points of remodeling. Its motto is: "Small Is Beautiful, Less Is More."

"One can have beauty without spending much money." Mr. Zaccaria insists. Indeed, on his company's production list are renovations costing as little as \$20,000. Others may cost \$100,000 or more.)

All six of Mr. Zaccaria's children, and their spouse are employed by Remodeling Consultants, in such diverse positions as sales manager, production supervisor, and advertising art director. The whole family looks to their mother, Lee, for support. "She is a partner in every sense of word" ... says Mr. Zaccaria of his wife of thirty-six years. Mr. Zaccaria's success has not inclined him to rest on his laurels. His ultimate goal he says, is to make Remodeling Consultants, which now serves Westchester and Fairfield Counties, the largest remodeling company in the U.S.A.