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VICTORY HOMES & DEVELOPMENT, INC.
'making' *dreams* come true'



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by Ledyard Woods

When confident craftsman Victor Yazbec bounded onto the Northeast Florida homebuilding scene as a small business owner just over a decade ago, he did so with no guarantees. That rather bold step, by his own admission, was more like a giant leap of faith.

Raised from age 6 on the inviting beaches of Duval County, little did the Brooklyn, New York, native know that his new company would quickly catapult into a leading builder of magnificent high-end luxury homes. Today, Victory Homes & Development of Ponte Vedra Beach enjoys a reputation as one of the more unique among only a handful of preferred builders of extreme luxury homes in the entire area.

For Yazbec, a path into the building industry opened while he was still a student at Duncan U. Fletcher High School, the familiar institution in Neptune Beach known for fostering dreams and regarded for years as the “Pride of the Beaches.”

Curved counters of granite and travertine frame this handsome kitchen with cherry cabinetry, mosaic tile backsplash and center island. ©Photo by Judy Davis Photographer





During high school, Yazbec had a job framing houses. From that moment on, he wanted to be a part of the construction process.

After graduating from Fletcher, attending a couple of building instruction courses at Florida Community College at Jacksonville, and receiving his Florida real estate license at the early age of 19, Yazbec accepted what he terms "a golden opportunity."

"I had an unbelievable opportunity at age 20 to run a multi-million-dollar construction company," Yazbec says. "I had a builder take me under his wing and basically a la carte give me a chance. He was responsible for me learning attention-to-detail and architecture."

A major step in his career was when he became a certified general contractor at age 25. At the urging of some of his satisfied clients, Yazbec in 1997 founded Victory Homes & Development, Inc. What he had to offer from the very beginning was street smarts when it comes to residential construction supported by a strong attitude about honoring commitments.

"In addition, I am a very committed person – to my family, to my company, and to my church. Without support you can't do

anything. When I started this business, failure was not an option."

Initially, Victory Homes & Development had planned to build homes priced below the \$500,000 range. That first year, the fledgling company closed on three homes.

"One home was located right on the Intracoastal," Yazbec notes. "The neighborhood there thought we were crazy for building this beautiful Mediterranean-style home with a concrete tile roof. Now the home is worth four times its original value."

That experience, however, served to set the tone for Victory Homes and its founder and president. "Obviously, we could foresee the future. The company soon became involved in the multi-million-dollar range."

Victory Homes still averages building three or four homes a year. However, at least twice in the past two years, a Yazbec residential project has totaled 18,000 square feet under roof. And when you put this production into dollar value, it quickly can be viewed as incredible for a single-person operation.

Yazbec himself is the primary face of Victory Homes in the field. His wife, Kristy, oversees the business office,

What has propelled the Victory Homes operation to this point are the trust between the company and the client and the extremely high level of quality on exhibit at the end.

"I take the spending of millions of dollars of someone's money very personally and very seriously," Yazbec acknowledges. "Keeping our production level from three to five homes a year allows me to be involved on a daily basis. That's a very important key to me; after all, I am in control of part of their world, and what I do has a keen affect on peoples' lives."

Victory Homes' clientele, according to Yazbec, tend to be very sophisticated and are not first-time homebuyers.

"This past year we built homes for two repeat clients," reports Yazbec. "The clients are very diverse, not only in age, but in backgrounds. Every home, therefore, is actually different; there is no stereotype. That is what I really find the most challenging about our business."

"We build mostly on the beaches," Yazbec points out. "Ponte Vedra Beach has been home to me since the late '80s. I love this area and have watched it grow from a two-lane highway. We're very prominent



within areas of Ponte Vedra, whether it be oceanfront or on the boulevard.”

In addition to building on estate lots, spectacular Victory Homes products are prominent in the communities of Marsh Landing Country Club, The Plantation at Ponte Vedra, and Sawgrass Country Club.

Victory Homes also is known for its renovation projects.

“We have done quite a few renovations – these are my favorite jobs,” Yazbec admits. This allows me to creatively engage my talents...whether it be design or structure. “We did a couple on the ocean that were extremely difficult. We did another on Sawgrass Island that capped out over \$1.7 million on a renovation. The home was transformed and is enormously beautiful.

Preparing to have a house built by Victory Homes is not an overnight development. Yazbec and the prospective client may spend up to six months or longer in developing a chemistry that exudes mutual trust and understanding.

Once the style of a home is selected, the size is established, the type of materials are identified, and the financial parameters are put in place, Yazbec then routinely moves on



top: This luxurious master bath features a whirlpool, spectacular curved glass shower, stained maple cabinetry, travertine counters and oversized tile floor. ©Photo by Judy Davis Photographer

above: An enticing pool creates a pleasant haven for relaxing with family and entertaining friends. Highlights include a patio of hand-shaped Pennsylvania flagstone, cedar timbers, cypress ceiling, and half round copper gutters. ©Photo by Judy Davis Photographer



above: Hand carved 2-1/4" thick cypress doors open to this handsome study. Floor is reclaimed random width oak. Ceiling beams are hand-scraped and distressed cypress timbers. ©Photo by Judy Davis Photographer

below: A dramatic spiral staircase of Santos mahogany and wrought iron creates an impressive entryway. ©Photo by Judy Davis Photographer



to the design phase that includes a preliminary sketch.

"Once we get the base layout to fit the environment on the site, we move on to actually designing the rooms integrally to accommodate the intended flow of the house," Yazbec explains.

The style of a house is one of the first major considerations. Yazbec has built a variety of homes. There are various types of Mediterranean – one of the 18,000-square-foot creations was Mediterranean Revival. He has done homes featuring Country French, Asian, and Brazilian architecture.

"We built a home for a family from Brazil," Yazbec offers. "It was very modern, and included 8,000 square feet of shiny marble alone throughout the house.

On that particular project, Yazbec brought a designer up from Brazil. She made many trips in providing on-site expertise on a Victory Homes product that later was showcased in a Brazilian architectural magazine showcasing many international homes and designers.

In the actual construction of a house, Yazbec admits to taking an old-fashioned approach while subscribing to many of the new products and techniques that are considered the cutting edge of technology. For example, attics are sealed to help coexist with the humidity and temperature levels inherent in Northeast Florida.

"When you walk into an attic of one of my homes, it is as cool as the house is," says Yazbec. "That says something for the green style of building my company is doing."

While most Victory homes take on an old-style or Old World look while obviously replicating the past, final products represent impeccable traditional methods and timeless craftsmanship inside and out. The company adheres to the search-and-rescue approach in seeking out and using reclaimed products – for example, flooring materials such as oak, cypress and reclaimed tiles.

"We search out long and vast for these products," says Yazbec. "Some products we find locally and some we really have to go on an international hunt. There isn't a week that goes by without a semi-truck pulling up to a site and unloading product that's been in a cargo container and shipped from Peru, or Italy, or France."

It's not uncommon, either, for Yazbec to fly down to Miami, purchase slabs of granite, and have it shipped up to Northeast Florida to the company's fabricator. Or for Yazbec to

fly up to Ohio to the quarries to look at stone wanted for the outside of the home.

"We have done many of these types of trips," he says. "As far as the quality of the materials that are seen in our homes, they are what make Victory Homes different."

All Victory homes are completely wired for automation, lighting control, and home theaters. Most homes feature wine cellars, which are built on site. Many include pools, spas and pool houses.

"Complete wine rooms are always sealed and built the correct way," Yazbec says. "We make them as true cellars where they can maintain full humidity and proper temperature. We just finished one house with a wine cellar that topped out at about 3,500 bottles."

While not seeking out awards, Yazbec and his business have received numerous accolades. Victory Homes was voted the Number 1 Custom Home Builder in the Jacksonville area for three straight years, starting in 2001, by the Jacksonville Business Journal.

While there is a no more dedicated builder in Northeast Florida – he works a full 40 hours in the field and 20 to 30 more in his office each week – Yazbec has brought aboard a couple of rare business practices. Once a house is built, Victory Homes takes on ongoing service work similar to what a property management firm might provide.

Victor and his wife, Kristy, are parents of two children – teenage daughter and dancer Jordan and younger son Blake, a motorcycle enthusiast. As a family, the Yazbecs enjoy the outdoors – snow skiing, water skiing, surfing.

The Yazbec family also vacations abroad when possible and has traveled to at least half of the U.S. states. In addition, a 600-acre leased retreat up in the middle of Georgia serves as a nearby getaway destination.

For Victor Yazbec, though, he is destined to continue doing what he has found to be highly successful and what he describes as 'thoroughly enjoyable'. "We pride ourselves in trying to build the most extreme, unique, and innovative homes that are available to our clients and for people who are looking for that different edge. Victory Homes is making dreams come true." **E**

For more information about Victory Homes & Development, Inc., visit its corporate web site at www.victoryhomesanddevelopment.com or telephone (904) 280-2016. The company is located at 20 S. Roscoe Boulevard, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082.