

It's All In The Name

Tradition Meets Innovation at PrideCraft

by Jenn Lucey photos by Kevin Harkins

When Sebastian “Ned” DiSalvo was laid off from his aerospace job in 1969, he switched careers and went into the cabinetmaking business with his brother. Ned founded PrideCraft Fine Cabinetry & Millwork in North Andover. Starting with reproductions of early American furniture, they built custom cabinetry for locals and designed creative products for the American Express Catalog such as wooden mannequins that could be transformed into side tables and coat racks.

Ned’s sons, Paul and John DiSalvo, have since taken over PrideCraft. The brothers remember well how their father did his work because they were by his side from an early age. “They were sanding tables once they were old enough to hold a sander,” says Paul’s wife — and PrideCraft’s director of marketing — Bonnie Silveria. “He’d come in with reveille to get us up,” says John, “We wanted to go play baseball, but in hindsight, what he did for us was a blessing, because it gave us our strong work ethic.”

Ned’s work ethic was of the good old do-it-by-hand variety. The brothers remember the arduous nature of drilling hole after hole even as they now benefit from advanced automated techniques. Their dad was a self-sufficient, inventive craftsman and even designed his own custom tools. However, when his sons became proficient with computers and high-tech machinery, John says, “That’s when he said ‘OK, I’m done. You guys are in a different world than what I was working in.’”

In 1987, Ned relinquished his PrideCraft duties to Paul and John. The brothers agree that they couldn’t have stayed in business without evolving, but they maintain their dedication to the principles of their father’s traditional carpentry. They’ve even followed in his footsteps, inventing their own tools and jigs, and their old-fashioned hand craftsmanship remains essential to much of their custom cabinetry and millwork.

In the shop, Paul and John benefit from their complementary skill sets. Both have keen aesthetic eyes, says Bonnie, but John spends more time designing on the computer, while Paul focuses on crafting. “We can put our heads together,” says John, “get a little bit more creative, and figure out how to get things done more easily.”

Outside of the shop, they find satisfaction in working with homeowners on custom projects. The pair start with a general set of questions, but adapt readily, especially if clients have specialized needs or face physical challenges. And they enjoy the rapport they build with people. “There’s definitely a bond that happens,” says John. In light of this desire to serve their clients’ varied needs, PrideCraft also offers semi-custom cabinetry by Wellborn, a budget-friendly option, from another multigenerational, family-owned company located in Alabama.

The work isn’t all cabinets and millwork, though. The brothers had a twenty-year working relationship with Boston Symphony Orchestra percussionist Neil Grover for whom they made percussion blocks. You’ve heard his music on the soundtrack of “Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom.” And one day in 1993, the DiSalvo brothers noticed a chair on TV they had produced in the component parts side of their business — Judge Ito was sitting in it while presiding over the O.J. Simpson trial.

In Ned’s retirement years, he would often come into the shop to see what was going on. “Sometimes he’d shake his head and walk out,” says Paul with a chuckle. But many times, the sons would consult their dad about a problem that needed teasing out. As Paul says of his late father, “He would go home and come back the next day with an idea for us.” mvm

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Above is a recent kitchen designed by PrideCraft using Wellborn cabinets in a timeless transitional Shaker style featuring a simplistic door style painted with a warm oyster white paint. The island is also made with Wellborn cabinets in hickory wood and finished in a driftwood stain that enhances the rustic light and dark color variation of the wood. The countertops are white quartz with varying gray veining to bring the look together. Builder: Mark Ratte Construction. Interior Designer: David Cyr.



WELLBORN
CABINET