

A family brings Dad's design expertise indoors

By LISA CRAWFORD WATSON

THE APPEAL of Old World architecture, with its meticulous craftsmanship and attention to detail, lies not merely in the aesthetic of the work but in the quality. Locally, the standard was set and influenced by legendary master builders like M.J. Murphy, Hugh Comstock, Francis Wynkoop, Mark Mills, John Thodos and, still at his drafting table after more than 50 years in Carmel, Al Saroyan.

Saroyan graduated from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo in 1970, after a five-year program yielded a bachelor's degree in architecture. He worked for architects in Fresno until 1974, when he started his own practice, focused initially on family residences.

"I later designed larger commercial projects, among them hotels, office buildings, and retirement centers. In 1988, I moved to Carmel-by-the-Sea and shifted my aesthetic to mostly cottage architecture, with an Old World flair." Per his website, one of his earliest projects, Liliput, "emulates the Hansel and Gretel cottages of Carmel of the 1930s" — a reference to two of Comstock's early works.

In 2005, Saroyan added an interior design department to his firm, Saroyan Masterbuilder, enabling clients to engage him to craft a whole house, from concept to architecture, to interior design. He named the company Lenox Hill, a nod to the appeal of New York's tony Upper East Side, with its elegant architecture and cultural icons like The Guggenheim.

More than a decade ago, Lenox Hill Design went dormant as Saroyan focused more on architectural design. Yet that was before he met Mica, who married his youngest son, William Edward (Eddie) Saroyan in 2022. Having developed what she called "a robust career in marketing with a deep investment in branding," she approached her father-in-law with a proposal to reinvigorate Lenox Hill in Carmel as a luxury furniture store and interior design studio to complement his architectural design business.

"At Lenox Hill, our mission is to promote thoughtful design and intentional furniture choices," she said. "We believe each piece of furniture should enhance a space and reflect the true identity of the architecture and the homeowner. Every piece in our curated selection features

world-renowned brands chosen for quality, craftsmanship, and its ability to represent the aesthetic of its owner, which often results in a complement of form and function."

Urban in the village

While Mica, 32, lives in Pebble Beach, she hails from New Jersey, whose proximity to Lenox Hill made her a regular visitor to and devotee of the neighborhood, and she drew parallels between that area and the culture and architectural designs of Carmel.

"I think of the amazing art galleries in Carmel and the amazing art museums on the Upper East Side, and I appreciate the culture of both areas," she said. "In coming here, I traded the seduction of Central Park for the allure of Carmel Bay. So we endeavor to be the bridge between New

York and Carmel."

This may mean shifting from a seashore sensibility to furnishings that evoke the forested reaches of the community with natural materials and darker colors.

"Furniture is a love of mine and is the final touch for our creations," said Al. "The interiors must complement the architecture and provide harmony. We started Lenox Hill Interiors initially to provide that service exclusively for our clients. Now we provide it to the public with our new showroom in Carmel-by-the-Sea."

For clients who want to combine an urban perspective indoors with a Carmel architectural sensibility, Mica said Lenox Hill is the conduit between contemporary and

DESIGN *cont. next page*

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Al Saroyan with his daughter-in-law, Mica, in their showroom on Lincoln Street in downtown Carmel.



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P E N I N S U L A B U S I N E S S E S

REALTOR from page 38A

“to know and understand where you are in the world.”

“Not everyone as a sense of where they are. I like dead reckoning. I like to know where I’m going.”

Noorzoy’s quick on the draw with a laser pointer, which he uses to show visitors where they are and where properties for sale can be found. Elevation and sun exposure come into the real estate picture as part of the “location, location, location,” mantra, so that geographic knowledge isn’t trivial.

For Noorzoy, success is about more than money. “I want to help the individual meet their goals. Real estate is a very human business, and takes in all facets of the human condition — goals, perceptions,” and helping people get a grasp on what living here is like. “It’s being able to

communicate effectively, listen and understand,” he said, to bridge “what the person wants, versus what physically exists.”

Popular portrayals of real estate deals, like those on HGTV, inspire varied responses among realtors. Noorzoy said they’re fine as long as people understand they’re seeing a “brief snapshot” of what the business is like. “You get more than three choices,” when buying a house, and there’s no pressure to close a sale in one day, he pointed out. He also noted that like fashion, home design follows trends — remember the Tuscan craze of the early 2000s, with earthy tones, dark wood and an “Old World” aesthetic?

When you’ve been around for a while, those are the kinds of things you pick up on. And when you’ve come to know who you are, how you got here and where you’re headed, it’s nice to share the wisdom — and always keep moving forward.



(From left to right) Kim Bartholomy, Robert Noorzoy, Jamal Noorzoy and Sharmaine Torrey are a real estate team within Carmel Realty.

DESIGN from previous page

classic, where some pieces have an antique feeling while others are more modern.

“We have the ability to work with traditional, classic, elegant styles, as well as looks that are fun and avant garde. Our ethos is to pair key pieces — we have access to the ‘Hermes’ of sofas — with very economical brands. How we curate the diverse looks is what brings it all together.”

Al Saroyan, 80, is working on a

17-Mile Drive “ground-up” project, which Lenox Hill will furnish. What makes this one special, he said, is that he and Mica have worked together to make it a true masterpiece.

“It’s hard to believe that I have touched more than 150 projects on the Monterey Peninsula,” he said, “most of them in Carmel-by-the-Sea. With my son, William Edward Saroyan, we plan to continue our services on the Peninsula for the next 50 years, designing, building and, now, furnishing each unique property.”

CLEANUP from page 40A

2-year-old daughter, Amanda, and newborn son, Casey.

By 1993, what was then known as Ream Construction and Disaster Cleaning had more than 30 employees and a proper office in Sand City, and there were more serendipitous encounters to come. Two industry veterans, one a cabinet-builder and the other a flooring expert, approached the Reams with business proposals. Both wanted to work there for the same reason.

“They came to us and basically said, ‘I heard you treat your employees like family,’” said Ream.

The insurance adjustor from way back when is their longest-standing employee. Amanda, “savvy” and “systems-oriented,” started filing paperwork at 18 and has become chief operations officer.

It’s not only her work family, but other

female entrepreneurs, that get Ream fired up. In 2020, she became president of the Professional Women’s Network of the Monterey Peninsula, which had previously, awarded her Woman of the Year. Ream coordinates speakers and networking events for the group.

“When the pandemic hit, I got my stalking self out,” she laughed. “I found all these amazing businesswomen on social media, from Erie, Pa., to Los Angeles, to join us and share their stories via Zoom.”

From that effort came her consulting service, Feminine W.I.L.E.S — Wisdom-Inspired Leadership Empowerment Services — which balances lifestyle coaching with practical business advice for female entrepreneurs. She often volunteers her services, remotely and in-person, and there’s a cheeky self-awareness to the name. “Iron sharpens iron. There’s nothing like a business girlfriend,” she said.



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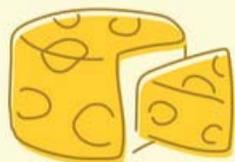
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