

“The Morris Factor”

STANDARDS THAT BORDER ON THE OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE HAVE MADE LIFE REWARDING—AND REMUNERATIVE—FOR THIS COLTS NECK-BASED CONSTRUCTION GURU

BY LAURA D.C. KOLNOSKI • PHOTOS BY AMESSÉ PHOTOGRAPHY



The rare innate ability to quickly absorb, analyze, and assimilate construction blueprints set Morris Flancabaum apart early on. After witnessing this facility, the original developer of Six Flags Great Adventure hired him on the spot as primary contractor for masonry work for the expansion of the Jackson theme park in the 1980s. Flancabaum was 24. That gift and Flancabaum's unflagging attention to the minutest of details have continued to distinguish the acclaimed builder for over 35 years, along with his knack for creative problem solving.

“Working at Great Adventure pushed me to the limit, but it taught me the importance of big expectations in getting the job done while being cost effective and doing quality work,” Flancabaum said. “I was young and energetic and found it intriguing. At times we worked 24 hours nonstop. One night we were pouring concrete, the weather turned and it got dark, so I called the fire department. They brought trucks with floodlights so we could keep working. It snowed, too, but the job came out flawless. I've always been able to pull things off against all odds.”



Simultaneously, Flancabaum was performing masonry work at the Lakehurst Naval Air Station. Between both jobs, his workforce swelled to over 200, making him one of the largest mason contractors on the East Coast.

Flancabaum's expertise led him to waterfront construction, where he again undertook an historic task—building the Cuisinart Resort & Spa on Anguilla, within two years, so it would be completed in time to ring in the new millennium as 1999 turned to 2000 on New Year's Eve. While the golfer's paradise is replete with luxury features and amenities, Flancabaum is proudest of its 18,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art hydroponic farm; the first and only one of its' kind at a resort in the world. Unlike other Caribbean resorts that import produce, Cuisinart chefs cook with a daily fresh harvest of a large variety of produce from the soil-free farm. In addition to a Greg Norman Signature Champion Golf Course, the resort has a dazzling infinity pool, Mediterranean architecture, whitewashed villas, and award-winning botanical gardens.

The project's architects described Flancabaum's Cuisinart accomplishment, "a Herculean effort on Morris' part to complete such a complex project on an undeveloped island that other builders wouldn't touch." In addition to creating an

infrastructure where none previously existed, it was necessary the resort be built to withstand Category 5 hurricanes and seismic activity. Those sought after skills have been a boon to his clients, both before and after Superstorm Sandy.

"My experience at Cuisinart Resort & Spa made me a waterfront development expert," Flancbaum said. "After Sandy, a client I built a house for on the Metedeconk River in Brick called to thank me. Her home survived, while others around her did not."

He explained that the challenge to building on the waterfront is to be meticulous in all aspects of construction to keep out rain and wind, including 100-mile-per-hour wind-driven sideways rain, which gets into every nook and cranny. Constructing a "bulletproof" foundation that allows no water infiltration is also essential, he said. In addition to five other private homes he is or will be constructing along the Metedeconk River, Flancbaum is the developer/builder of the Estates at Metedeconk, a gated, non-age-restricted community of 23 lots overlooking a golf course.

Originally from Ocean County, he was always interested in building and the construction industry. Many of his teen years were spent in California, where the architecture and Napa Valley winery areas were significant early influences. After attending Glassboro State College, (now Rowan University), Flancbaum focused on masonry and began working with major developers, including U.S. Homes, K. Hovnanian, Lincoln Properties and more; completing thousands of units per year. His next step was to start acquiring land to become a custom home builder of subdivisions (the first included 23 residences in North Howell).

"I started buying land, subdividing and selling homes," he said. "I still do that." Of the more than 100 customer homes built by Flancbaum, no two are exactly alike. "No cookie-cutter homes; that was the goal because I wanted to be unique in the industry and give people a



superior home-building experience, as well as give the industry a better name."

Of the five homes he is currently building in the Camelot development in Colts Neck, one will be entered as New Jersey "House of the Year" by the New Jersey Home Builders Association for its unique, seldom-seen style. The home

was completely hand-designed and built to exceptionally high standards.

"Every home at Camelot is different and very high end," Flancbaum said. The English Manor or French Normandy homes, which begin at \$2.6 million, feature up to six bedrooms and six and one-half baths, architecturally



landscaped front courtyards, distinctive paver driveways, and Belgian block curbing. Set on substantial two-plus acre lots, home sizes range from 6,000 to 8,000 square-feet. Other amenities include elevators and four-car garages in addition to high-quality materials and craftsmanship. With each taking about a year to complete, the remaining three are expected to be ready for occupancy within two years.

“My contractors always refer to what they call ‘The Morris Factor,’” he explained. “Contractors must understand what I expect. I’ve been using the same people for years. They know work must be done at 110 percent or I won’t accept it. The quality I demand is what I deliver, that’s one of the reasons I’ve been successful. I never get calls from homeowners that something isn’t working properly because we pay so much attention to details. I actually look forward to clients’ phone calls because they are always positive. I’ve worked hard to accomplish that.” His clients have become friends, too, often inviting him to their family events over the years.

Flancabaum’s firm, Colts Neck Associates—focused as it is on an elite niche market—strives to “transcend extravagance





in every sense," he said. "Our client base is an array of sophisticated consumers. They are working professionals interested in luxury living at its highest level, desiring custom-built homes that reflect their functional and personal needs. Our ability to satisfy this particular market revolves around facilitating a balance of style and comfort."

In addition to the Camelot project, he is currently building one of the largest private homes in the state, totaling 20,000 square-feet.

"What I do gives me so much pleasure," Flanbaum said. "Every project is very special and I look forward to doing each one. Meeting new people and making their dreams reality makes getting up in the morning exciting. It's been a great ride. I'll never retire."

Home Sweet Home

Flanbaum's own sprawling 127-acre Colts Neck family residence made headlines last year when it became the most expensive private home offered on the New Jersey real estate market, at \$34,900,000. When the listing expired, the family decided to stay.

"We are comfortable there and would never leave Colts Neck, even if we sold the house," he said.

Built in 2011, the home encompasses approximately 20,000 square-feet, in addition to about 8,000 square-feet on the lower level. The exterior includes some 22,000 square-feet of patios overlooking a salt water in-ground, heated swimming pool with nine fountains, a waterfall, and multi-colored LED lighting. Beyond, a six-acre stream-fed lake sets the stage for a year 'round outdoor activities. The compound is also an equestrian Shangri-la, with riding trails, two barns, a 50-foot silo, four paddocks, and 21 acres of horse pastures. Nine horses currently reside on the property, which includes a two-story carriage house with an office.





Inside, residents enjoy nine bedrooms, 12 baths, balconies, a full gym, a theater room, state-of-the-art heating and cooling system with radiant heat, and an elevator with access to all four floors. Special sparkle emanates from Swarovski crystal chandeliers and crystal door knobs throughout, along with exotic marble, granite, and Peruvian walnut hardwood flooring and custom cabinetry and furnishings. A full-home high-tech automation system allows control and monitoring of security, music, climate, lighting, and irrigation through a smartphone.

Garnering unique awe is the restaurant-style kitchen, where top-of-the-line amenities include a walk-in refrigerator, 2,000,000-BTU Blodgett cooking suite with eight-burner gas range, deep fryer, barbeque grill, two commercial dishwashers, a coffee center, three sinks, double butler pantries, and a breakfast area/main bar with two wine refrigerators. The kitchen was once mastered by internationally-renowned chef David Burke for participants during a local kitchen tour, an event to benefit local schools that brought hundreds of visitors to the home. The community-minded Flancbaums, who welcome the opportunity to give back, have opened their opulent home for other local gatherings, too. ●



Morris Flancbaum

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