

# ACADIANA BUILDER

A man and a woman are standing in front of a house. The woman is on the left, wearing a yellow short-sleeved top, a patterned scarf, and blue jeans. She has her hand on her hip and is smiling. The man is on the right, wearing a plaid short-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. He has his hands in his pockets and is looking towards the camera. The house behind them has white columns, a wooden door with a glass insert, and a wall-mounted light fixture. The ground is covered with mulch and some green plants.

**SJM III Construction, LLC**  
Former Marine Returns Home to Start SJM III Construction



Photo by Virtual Showcase

## **SJM III Construction, LLC**

### **Former Marine Returns Home to Start SJM III Construction**

*By Kathy Stolz*

When Stevan J. Melancon III returned to his hometown of Lafayette, LA., after 20 years of service in the United States Marine Corps, he also returned to the type of work he had done before joining the Corps – flooring and construction.

He spent his years in the Marines as a military policeman, retiring as the Chief Warrant Officer 3 in charge of a unit, but when he returned from Iraq in 2003, he considered other types of work.

“I miss it (law enforcement)

sometimes, but 20 years was long enough for me,” Melancon stated. “I had a chance to become a U.S. Customs officer, but that meant moving to Miami, and I didn’t want to leave home again.” Born and raised in Lafayette, Stevan stated, “This is the best place to be.”

Having learned how to install and buy flooring as a kid from his parents, who were commercial flooring subcontractors, he revisited his roots and picked up the trade again. While doing flooring projects, he was asked to do small kitchen and bath

remodeling projects by clients. “The smaller the job, the harder it is to find somebody to do it.” Since he was already on the job site, he easily picked up construction projects.

Those small remodeling projects developed into larger new construction projects, and he formed SJM III Construction, LLC, in 2004. Because of his experience working on small remodeling jobs, he says “no job is too small or too big” for him.

He now holds residential, commercial and swimming pool

*See Page 10*



Photo by Virtual Showcase



Photo by Virtual Showcase



Photo by Virtual Showcase

*Continued from Page 7*

construction licenses – allowing him to do other things than housing – so that he may serve his clients and survive the ups and downs of the economy better.

Melancon, who is a New Orleans style builder, now serves as a general contractor/site manager, juggling eight or 10 projects at any given time within a 50-mile radius of Lafayette. “I use the same subs (sub-contractors) from house to house. It took some weeding out to find the right formula (of workers). Not only am I licensed, but so are my subs.

“You know the cliché: ‘Cheap help ain’t good, and good help ain’t cheap,’” he added.

Clients appreciate having him on the job site, managing the people, money and time to help them realize their dreams. “They love the one-stop shop so they only

have to call one person,” he said. “That’s why I got into the swimming pool business.” He said a lot of people building a custom home wanted a swimming pool, and they appreciated having the same contractor in charge of the

exterior building projects, too. Word-of-mouth marketing is his primary source of advertising. “I always do top-notch work, no matter if it’s a small remodel or a million-dollar house. I set out to be the best at everything. *See Page 14*



Photo by Virtual Showcase



Photo by Virtual Showcase



Photo by Virtual Showcase

“It’s a matter of making people happy, and most people are very, very happy” (with his work). Some of his clients followed his work for years as they considered custom builders before hiring him, he said. For example, he saw some of the same people at his Parade of Homes sites year after year.

He said he prefers to build custom homes because building a house from start to finish is more gratifying than commercial projects. “It’s more gratifying because people choose me to help them to reach their goal, to realize their dreams.”

But the price of the home that client chooses doesn’t matter to him. “Someone buying a \$180,000 spec house – that’s their dream house.”

Most people building a custom home have lived in a couple of houses already and they know what they want. Others don’t, so he and his team will make suggestions.

“Some people show up (at the first appointment) with nothing; they don’t even own a lot.” Others



Photo by Virtual Showcase



Photo by Virtual Showcase



Photo by Virtual Showcase

have had their building lot for years, have selected the floor plan, and have even picked out the appliances. “I don’t have a preference for which type of client, although it’s a little easier if someone has a floor plan. We make it really, really easy, from providing an architect to decorators to designers.”

Melancon uses Michael Murphy Design Group as his architect. “But if a client brings me pictures of the types of houses they like, that way I can get a real good feel for what they’re looking for.” If his client doesn’t know where to start, he can provide floor plans and books showing past projects.

“I’m a cost-plus builder. I

provide a spreadsheet based on what we talked about with the clients and their budget. Most of the cost difference between one house and another is the flooring, lighting and cabinets. At the end of the day it’s what the individuals want. Every decision is theirs.”

And every one of Melancon’s houses is custom-built. “We walk the house with the clients, talking with them about how they will use each room” so they get the electrical outlets in the spots where they need them, for example.

In the years since Stevan worked in his folks’ business, he finds that products are better, with many more selections to get a nice-looking house without having to

spend a fortune.

Melancon supports the changes in the building codes since he’s been in the business. “They’re better for the consumer. People can rest assured that we’re building houses according to international and state building codes. Although costs may have gone up a fraction, we’re building houses better and stronger. Now all builders are on the same playing field.”

The biggest issue he faces as a builder is with banks’ lending practices. “The Feds have tightened up money, making it harder for people to borrow money, but we’re lucky down here with one of the fastest growing

areas in the country.”

Although Melancon refuses to speculate on how the economy might impact his business in the next five years, he plans to keep doing what he’s been doing for the seven years he’s been in business: Top-notch work on each project. After all, those 20 years in the Marines taught him something besides law enforcement – extraordinary attention to detail.

You can reach SJM III Construction at P.O. Box 60069, Lafayette, LA 70598 or **337-319-9211**



Photo by Virtual Showcase



Photo by Virtual Showcase



Photo by Virtual Showcase