

## **First Time Builder** by Michael Watson

I remember that night, lying in bed, staring at the ceiling and wondering if I had done the right thing. Earlier that day a Real Estate Agent explained to me in a foreign language things I had never heard of, I initialed and signed what seemed to be a paper mill worth of documents on subjects I couldn't pronounce; and although the day was a complete fog, I'm convinced that I gave ALL my blood, solidified giving my first born, and actually consented ALL of every paycheck I would ever receive for the rest of my life. And as I laid there in bed, I felt as if someone had cut the cable on the elevator I was in, falling in the darkness I realized; I was now a "First Time Home Buyer".

Years later I look back and laugh, I was sweating how I could possibly afford an \$86,900.00 Duplex, and yet years later, I discovered it was one of the greatest investments I had ever stumbled upon.

As a General Contractor that specializes in Custom New Home Construction I have had dozens upon dozens of people sit across my desk and although many of them veterans of many "already built" home purchases, even *they* look like *I* did when I purchased my first home. For some reason, buying an existing home today for a majority of people is no longer a big deal, but when it comes to *building* a home it seems to be a whole different ballgame. I'm here to tell you, it's not a big deal.

I liken building a new home much like having a baby; at first you're all giddy, excited about the future. Picking names, is it a boy or a girl? Choosing curtains and putting together a scrapbook, and seeing the doctor for the first time, in this case they're seeing "Doctor Watson". They're excited, yet petrified. They argue about things they had not discussed or things they had never even thought about. Sometimes I feel I need to wear a black and white striped shirt and carry a whistle, now I'm a referee, "Illegal procedure! Both of you hug on the 20 yard line. First Down!" I guide them through the process, every step of the way, and I assure them that everything is going to be all right.

Once the framing begins there's a lot of growth and you see a lot of results. It's smoke and sawdust for the first couple of weeks and boy life is good! The medical team is the best thing on earth! The doctor is their "New Best Friend". The couple is excited about their baby. Dads strutting around the chicken coop showing his buddy's what he's done. Then, something happens. The growth seems to stop, all the rough construction is done and Mom and Dad are wondering what's going on. The Doctor assures them everything is all right and everything is on schedule. All that internal growth just doesn't seem to be maturing fast enough. Mom's edgy, Dad becomes bi-polar, now I'm his friend, now I'm not, now I am, no wait, am I?

As the delivery date gets closer, so do the new parents, what about this, what about that? Is this going to be big enough? As Doctors, we continue to hold their hand and assure them everything is going to be just fine.

I would say the last 30 days is the most interesting, they're wondering if they can afford it, if they made the right decision, at one point she glares at him and says, "Look what you've done to me, this is all your fault"! And just when you thought they would literally implode...it's all over. We do the walk through; adjust anything that needs tweaking. Show them that their baby has all its fingers and all its toes and we introduce them to their new home. They are so excited and yet exhausted at the same time. They think it's a miracle, how could all of this come from nothing? We're once again, "their best friend", we go to bar-b-cues and house warmings, and although we are as excited the day they move in as they are; we are more interested in how happy they are after 10 or 15 years. Now *that's* a good doctor.

We do a couple check ups and the new buyer is ready to set sail with their brand new baby. The big difference is, that with our babies you get an owner's manual, a 1-year warranty on craftsmanship, a 2-year warranty against water penetration, and a 10-year warranty on all hidden structures. Top that Baby Doctor!

In an attempt to be a good Doctor, Stay tuned for a series of articles on, "The Basics of Building", I hope that they are informative and you enjoy them. My desire is to help remove some of your fears of building your own home and help your dream home become a reality.

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Michael Watson is the General Manager of Martin Brothers Development Inc., a local Custom Home Builder to the Tehachapi, Frazier Park and Bakersfield area. Martin Brothers is a 40-year-old company who has built 87 custom homes in the last 7 years on the West Coast and 100's of Custom Homes in Pennsylvania. You can currently meet Michael and his wonderful wife Cathy at the Tehachapi Farmers Market on Thursdays.