

# Wm. H. Fry Construction Wins Not One, but Two Top PureBond Quality Awards

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by Rich Christianson



Wm. H. Fry Construction Company won an unprecedented daily double in this year's PureBond Quality Awards (PQA) competition. The highly-green minded and diversified custom homebuilder based in Cupertino, CA, took first-place honors in both the Residential Bathroom and Residential Other categories of the fourth annual awards program sponsored by Columbia Forest Products.

Adding to its impressive achievement, Fry Construction became the only company to win two first-place PQAs in the same year. What's more, the company, which also tackles San Francisco Bay-area remodeling projects and makes "artisanal" cabinets, is the only entrant to have scored at least a third-place category award each year since Columbia Forest Products established the PQA contest in 2012.

"We're blown away to win these two awards," said Rhoda Fry, CFO of Fry Construction. "If you look at our portfolio, you will see that making cabinets is not our top product category. Home building and remodeling are. We're big fans of Columbia's PureBond plywood so to win two award categories is huge!"

Fry hastened to add that she in no sense meant to imply that the cabinet making side of Fry Construction's business is merely an afterthought. After all, one does not win a pair of distinguished industry awards for creating tantalizing cabinetry designs by not taking the fabrication process seriously.

## Building a Vertical Business

Bill Fry, owner of Fry Construction and Rhoda's husband of 27 years, was a union carpenter working for a luxury home builder in northern California when he decided it was time to make a go of it on his own.



"I was doing everything from foundations to finish carpentry and had more than 100 homes under my belt," Bill Fry said. "Shortly after I got my general contractors license in 1987 I teamed up with another new GC whose background was making custom cabinets. I asked him to come to work for us as a project manager and he soon convinced me that we should offer our new home and remodel customers the option of having us make cabinets for them. We started off small, making a fireplace surround and over time things evolved into a fully equipped cabinet shop."

"Classical" is an apt word to sum up the woodworking machinery that is put through the paces at Fry Construction's cabinet shop. Though it is bereft of 21st century CNC machinery, Fry has invested in tried-

and-true equipment. The shop includes a Delta Unisaw, a Powermatic shaper, a Powermatic jointer and a JET edge sander. Another key piece of equipment is a Quality Vakuun Products veneer press.

All members of Fry Construction's cabinetmaking crew also are skilled finish carpenters.

"We're blessed to have several multi-tool talented employees," Bill Fry said. "While we still install other people's cabinets in some of our build and remodel projects, I think there is an advantage to being able to install our own cabinets and woodwork because we can build to a perfect fit and finish."



### **Building Green Ahead of the Curve**

Building green is not so much an option as it is a prerequisite for being a home contractor in the San Francisco Bay area, Rhoda Fry said. "California's Green Building Code has prescriptive and performance requirements. We typically exceed the requirements in areas as desired by our clients. Indoor air quality and energy efficiency are the two areas that are frequently requested."

Fry Construction was among the first home builders to join Build It Green, a Bay-area non-profit founded in 2005. Build It Green's mission is "to promote healthy, energy- and resource-efficient building practices in California through outreach and education." Fry Construction is also a member of the U.S. Green Building Council.

"Because we were early adopters of green procedures and processes, we were ahead of the curve as local green building code requirements became more stringent," Bill Fry said.

That said it should come as no surprise that Fry Construction also was an early adopter of using Columbia's PureBond hardwood plywood panels for making its one-of-a-kind cabinets and built-ins. Many of the company's customers are well-to-do and well-educated executives in the famed Silicon Valley.

"Most of our customers seem to have a strong sense about the ecosystem we live in," Rhoda Fry said. "They ask a lot of good questions about the building materials we use. We do a lot to educate our customers about using CARB-compliant panels versus paying a marginal amount more for PureBond plywood which contains no added urea formaldehyde (NAUF). Columbia has been generous to send us brochures telling the PureBond story so that our customers understand the difference between being CARB-compliant and NAUF. PureBond is the next level of green."

### **Daily Double Winner**

PureBond panels are integral to both of Fry Construction's PQA winning entries.

The first-place contemporary guest bathroom features a floating vanity faced with hand-selected zebrawood veneer. The drawers, crafted with built-in dividers, sport maple-faced PureBond plywood in the casework.

PureBond maple also graces the Fry Construction's first-place residential entry-way cabinet with a bench that matches a family room sideboard and fireplace surround. Bill Fry said the homeowners – enamored by PureBond's NAUF qualities – also used it as a sublayer for hardwood flooring that was installed as part of the overall project.

Rhoda Fry, who earned a BS degree in mathematics / computer science from Carnegie Mellon University, said her job with Fry Construction includes managing payroll, taxes, insurance, benefits and the company's website, plus submitting the entry forms for the annual PureBond Quality Awards.

That said it should come as no surprise that she's already thinking about which projects she might submit for judging next year.