

BY LAUREN BELLER
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Ed Westbrook doesn't just practice artisanal masonry, he practices what he calls the art of legacy. After all, his company, QuarryHouse, builds with one of the most enduring materials on earth: Stone.

"You need to build thinking, 'What is this going to look like in 200 or 500 years?' We're very serious about that — how it's built, how it's engineered, how it's going to look," said Westbrook, who discovered his affinity for stonework while running the landscape company he co-owned in the early 1980s. When he decided to end that venture, Westbrook, along with his wife Mary Ann and mother-in-law Rita Rhoades, founded QuarryHouse in 1983.

"We felt there was a niche opportunity. It turned out to be true," said Westbrook. He already had the clients, the experience and the crew: 10 members of the Ochoa family from the Mexican state of Michoacan, known for its tradition of stonework.

Case in point: Although the senior Ochoa has retired, his three sons remain on the crew.

One of the first major contracts QuarryHouse won was in 1990, working with landscape architect Lawrence Halprin to create the Agave Trail on Alcatraz island for the Golden Gate National Park Association. "It's really been a wonderful relationship. He's helped a lot in finding appropriate stones ... he has a unique ability to do that, he has a good ability in the field," said Halprin.

QuarryHouse has tackled a number of projects with Halprin, like work on the National AIDS Memorial Grove in Golden Gate Park and at Yosemite Falls in Yosemite National Park.

Projects under way are the 8,000-seat Stern Grove Amphitheater and the Lucas Digital Arts Center, both in San

QuarryHouse: Rocks are on a roll

Small Biz Snapshot

Company name: QuarryHouse.

Company location: San Anselmo.

Founders: Edward Westbrook, Mary Ann Westbrook, Rita Rhoades.

2004 revenue: \$6.4 million.

Year founded: 1983.

Source of startup capital: Came into business with 15 years of experience and existing client contracts. Used personal sources for money, no outside capital.

Number of employees: 59.

Web site: www.quarryhouseinc.com

WESTBROOK:
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Allan Swartz of engineering firm Swartz & Kulpa in Tustin, has worked with QuarryHouse since the late 1980s on projects including Larry Ellison's swanky Woodside dwelling.

"I'd rate them among the very top in terms of execution, general ability, know-how, and commitment to turning out a high quality finished product," Swartz said. Perhaps that's due QuarryHouse's values: Employee well-being and development, 100 percent client satisfaction, and absolute excellence in artisan work.

Growth at QuarryHouse hasn't always been easy.

Westbrook discovered that unexpected business issues cropped up after his company broke the million-dollar revenue benchmark. Westbrook had to relinquish the role of field supervisor and take a strong lead in business roles. Even more pressing issues came in the form of cash flow and payroll, as the company found itself paying employees without having been paid for the jobs they did.

Today, Westbrook sounds like a seasoned financial manager: "Learn to grow and survive on the profits you earn. You can't get into too much trouble if you stick with that."

His three-prong approach to meeting a goal of \$15 million to \$20 million in revenue in five years includes continuing to emphasize training and continuing to reinvest in the company.

Westbrook said that the company may diversify, and he is entertaining the idea of setting up offices outside the Bay Area.

QuarryHouse has had never had outside investment, but as it approaches revenue of \$6.5 million, Westbrook is in talks with banks about adding outside capital to the mix. Said Westbrook,

"They've done all the numbers and I don't believe we're done growing. There is a lot of work yet for us to look at."



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