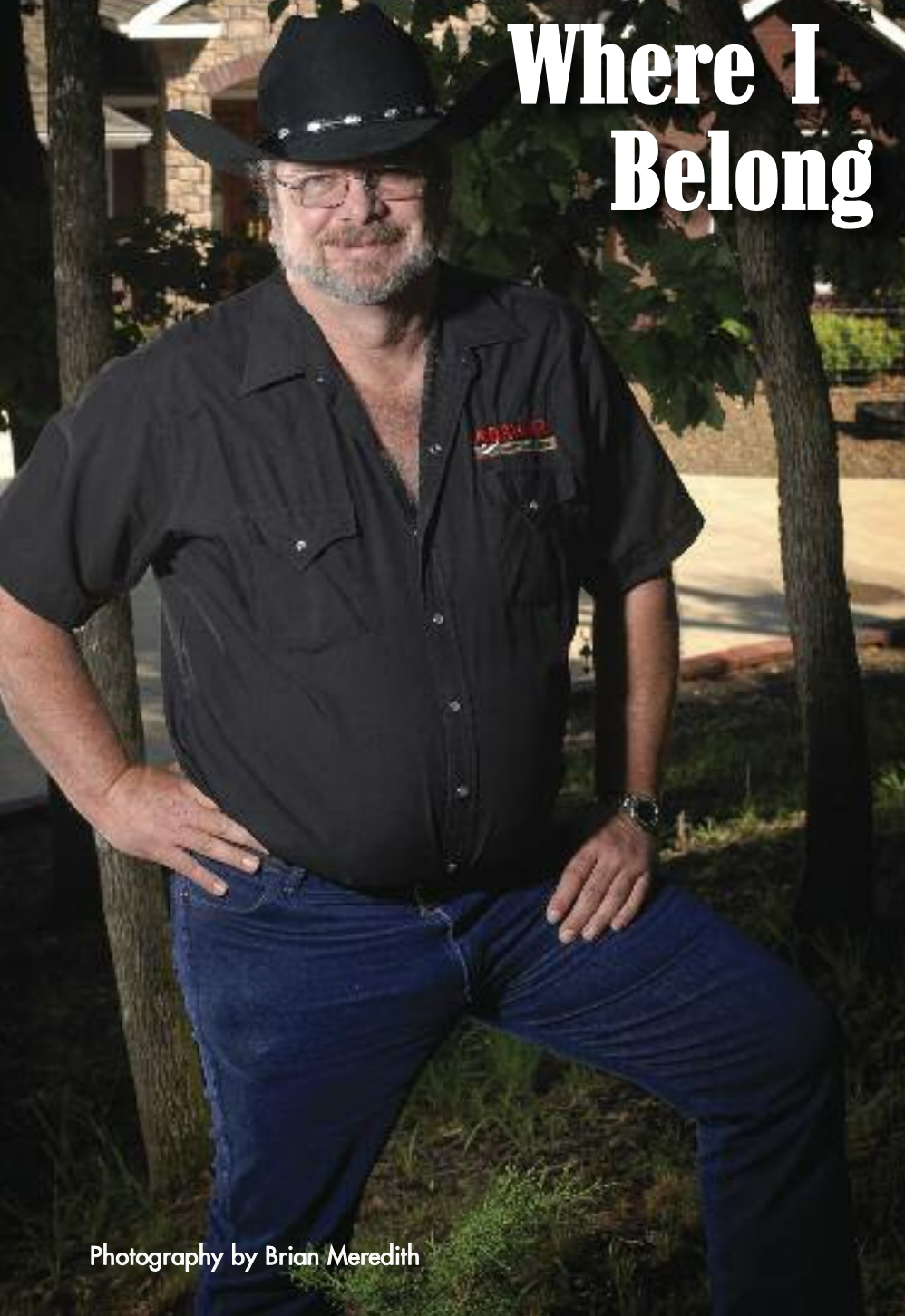


Abshier Construction

Where I Belong



Photography by Brian Meredith

By: Priscilla Shrader-Peters

Since Steve Abshier was around five years old, his father was a home builder. "He was a builder during a time when the contractor did it all – subs weren't really involved then," said Abshier. "I've got a reputation of honesty, professionalism and standing behind the work - thanks to my father and grandfather." Today, Abshier continues the family legacy of home building in Northwest Arkansas with Abshier Construction, building custom homes and remodel projects for homeowners in the area.

Abshier started his career early on as a police officer. "It didn't pay very good, and when you have a family to provide for, you have to find a way to make it work," said Abshier. So, he went to work for his father in the home building business. "When I started out, I did whatever needed to be done," said Abshier. "I remember my very first day on the job I hauled gravel in a wheel barrel."

Around 10-15 years ago, Abshier began taking over more duties at Abshier Construction, as his father, Bill Abshier, moved in to retirement. "He is still very much involved in the business," added Abshier.

Abshier acknowledges he joined the building industry because he likes most aspects of the business. "I like remodeling and building," said Abshier. "I started out from day one working with customers – building the way they want their home to be built. I knew this is where I belonged."

Building primarily custom homes and remodel projects in the Northwest Arkansas area, Abshier admits he is a very hands-on builder. "Most of the time on a custom home, you're building something that the homeowner has been dreaming about for years," said Abshier. "There's a good chance it will be the last home they build. It's my job to get as close as possible to what they want."



Sometimes making the customer happy means making adjustments on the job that might not be foreseen, according to Abshier. "If we get a wall built and the home buyer doesn't like it – it should be changed," he said. "We try to spot those things before we get too far into the project, but meeting their needs and having a home that you're proud of and they're proud of is the goal."

One of the secrets to Abshier's success according to the home builder, is the company's reputation for standing behind the work. "You've got to let the customers know to be sure and call you if there's a problem – and most importantly make sure you fix it properly and quickly," added Abshier.

Custom homes and remodels make up most of the business of Abshier Construction, and he says the diversity in the business has paid off. "Right now remodeling is a big industry for us," said Abshier. "We've always done both [custom homes and remodeling], and I'm comfortable either way."

For the past couple of years, Abshier says kitchen remodels have been quite popular in his business. "We've had more remodel work over the past two years," said Abshier. "The new kitchen in the old house is the new kitchen that would have been the new house for many clients. Homeowners are too reluctant to sell their existing homes and build

At A Glance

Abshier Construction – Steve Abshier

Location:

Northwest Arkansas

Advice for New Builders:

Be professional, honest and fair. Don't overextend.

Approach to Home Building:

Hands-on; builds custom homes and remodels.

Hobbies:

Grilling out; corvette shows and clubs.

a new one right now – so, they’re remodeling and updating their existing homes with features they want in a new home.”

Along with more remodel projects, Abshier has also made other adjustments in his business over the past two years. “We’ve never really advertised in the past, but now we do,” said Abshier. “Also, any education we can get on anything new in the industry, I think is valuable to the business growing.” Abshier has become a Certified Green Professional (CGP), and he believes wholeheartedly that he can better serve his customers with the more education and knowledge he has in the industry.

Abshier enjoys a number of aspects of the home building business, but he is quick to point out that seeing the project through from start to finish is the most fulfilling part of his career of choice. “I also enjoy meeting all kinds of different people and working through their ideas and seeing it work out how they wanted it,” said Abshier. “I enjoy working with the sub-contractors also – I’m always learning new things.” His sub-contractors are his most important “tools of trade,” according to Abshier. “I know I can trust my folks, and that means a lot,” he added.

His experience and his knowledge in the home building business also play a big role in his success. “My knowledge and my subs and their knowledge set us apart,” said Abshier. “What I’ve learned over the years affects what I do now.”

Recently, Abshier has incorporated many more energy-efficient trends in his building techniques. “I encourage my customers to do as much as they can when it comes to green building and energy-efficiency in their homes,” said Abshier. “With green building, you can spend a little or you can spend a lot. Do as much as you can and make the most out of the project – especially when it comes to insulation





and better windows and doors.”

Abshier has solid advice for home builders just getting started in the industry. “Be professional, honest and fair with everyone you deal with,” said Abshier. “Don’t overextend yourself or your business, and fully appreciate the process. Don’t be surprised when things don’t go right. Challenges and scheduling will come up – you have to understand reality.”

In addition to his work on the job site, Abshier is also very involved in his local Home Builders Association. He serves on the Board of Directors and the Green Build Committee for the Northwest Arkansas Home Builders Association (NWAHBA). He was also one of the builders who started the Remodelers Council for the NWAHBA – one of the first of its kind in the state.

Abshier is also deeply involved in charity work in his community, where he spends a great deal of time and resources on charities like Rebuilding Together of Northwest Arkansas, a locally funded, non-profit organization serving families and individuals in Benton and Washington Counties whose homes are in need of repair. He also gives his time and resources to the Northwest Arkansas Children’s Shelter, and

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Horses for Healing, a charity that serves kids with disabilities.

Like most home builders in Northwest Arkansas and across other areas of the state, Abshier felt the slowdown in residential building over the past several months. "We had so many people that would buy a hammer and the next day be a contractor," said Abshier. "We had builders that weren't here for the long term. My blessing was that we had been here so long and had a good reputation."

Abshier says he became more proactive, started advertising and worked hard to make it through the more difficult times. "We're seeing the economy pick up with remodels, and people are getting more confident," said Abshier. "They're not quite confident enough to build new homes just yet, but they're confident enough to add on."

Another issue relating to the economy, according to Abshier, is the fact that buyers are reluctant to sell their existing homes right now. "The economy needs to come back to where home prices come back up," said Abshier. "They need to feel comfortable leaving the house they're in and possibly not making as much on it as they may have in the past. It's tough for homeowners who bought their homes in the peak of the housing boom."

Abshier is optimistic about where the housing industry in Northwest Arkansas is headed. "Hopefully we've learned from what's gone on in the past few years with the over-extending," said Abshier. "We will always have the big





employers here like Tyson and Wal-Mart, which is good for housing. And, we have a new museum and new hotel coming to Bentonville that will hopefully continue to draw folks to this area."

When Abshier isn't at the NWAHBA in meetings or on the job site visiting with sub-contractors about the day's work, he enjoys grilling out (his specialty is steak), and he is also very involved in the local Corvette Club in his community going to shows and club gatherings. He owns a 1977 corvette.

Abshier has no plans of slowing down his home building and remodeling business any time soon. "As long as my heart keeps beating and my heart can survive I'll build," said Abshier. "Hopefully the economy and the Good Lord will help me keep doing it." 🏠

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