



# BISHOP'S RESIDENCE

SHOWCASES INTRICATE ARCHITECTURAL DETAIL

■ *THIS \$600,000 PROJECT EARNED TOP HONORS IN THE ARCHITECTURAL MILLWORK CATEGORY.*

By Jo-Ann Kaiser

Asked to describe the project that won top honors in the "Architectural Millwork" category in CWB's Design Portfolio Awards competition, Eduard Zepa explained the elements of the large, complicated architectural woodwork project. "The job — extensive work on a very formal luxury estate — was extremely difficult, because an unusually large percentage of the work was curved and radius and much of the installation was done elevated and in the air off of scaffolding."

The award-winning work, a bishop's private residence, took a total of 9,000 man-hours to complete, Zepa said. Like 70 percent of his company's work, it was a luxury estate project. The other 30 percent involves very high-end corporate interiors. His 19-year-old company, Zepa Industries Inc., is based in Charlotte, NC.

■ **JUDGE'S VIEW: WHOA! THE SCALE AND DETAIL OF THIS PROJECT WERE OVERWHELMING, EVEN IN THE PHOTOS. MY HAT'S OFF TO ZEPSA INDUSTRIES FOR A CHALLENGE WELL MET.**

— ROB KLEEMAN ■

The bishop's residence, a 20,000-square-foot home in Charlotte, was designed by architect Tony Miller. "The scope included all standing and running trim, doors and jambs, curved staircases, paneled rooms, and custom cabinetry," said Zepa. "Maple, mahogany and cherry were the principal woods used. The entire job was unique and from a technical standpoint, a high level of complicated machine and shaper work was required, as well as highly skilled bench work."

The \$600,000 project for the new home included an elliptical staircase, one of four stairways produced for the home, with custom-turned balusters done in

Brazilian cherry and maple. The company produced all the interior doors on the project, which were American cherry, plus the standing and running trim.

"This project included a tremendous amount of radius work, such as the elliptical raised panel jambs in the library/den and the dining room. We used American cherry in the library/den and the work included a lot of intricate detail. This includes the dramatic master bath, which features a centrally located whirlpool tub enclosed in maple paneling with a faux finish and surrounded by four hand-turned and carved vertical columns. The dining room features a floating ceiling panel with lighting fonts that gives it the illusion of stars.

The home also boasts several custom mantels within paneled rooms done by Zepa, featuring Northern hard maple. "Another intricate feature of the home is a series of radius French doors. The curved wood of the stiles and rails and bent glass was exacting work but produced very dramatic results," Zepa said.

"Because of all the curved, radius and elliptical walls, this project proved to be a real challenge throughout all phases of production," said senior project manager Richard Pydynowski. "Our skills were tested in the designing and engineering phase, manufacturing on the shop floor, and in executing the installation of architectural millwork on this project."

Pydynowski said that the parlor is an elliptically shaped room approximately 26 feet long by 19 feet wide. It consists of 4-foot-high curved wainscot paneling on all wall surfaces and three raised panel cased openings which are approximately

*The master bath features a centrally located whirlpool tub enclosed in maple paneling with a faux finish and surrounded by four hand-turned and carved vertical columns.*

9 feet tall, 4 feet wide and 2½ feet deep with radius top segments.

"This entire room was field templated and mocked up in our shop," said Pydynowski. "The raised panel cased openings were extremely difficult and labor-intensive to fabricate because they were curved and also radiused at the top portion. The casing was a two-piece 7-inch by 2-inch-thick profile, curved and also at a radius. The stiles and rails were all laminated from ¾-inch-thick material to a finished 1-inch thickness. The raised panels were ¾-inch-thick HDF laminated





*Zepsa Industries used American cherry in the library/den of a Bishop's private residence in Charlotte, NC.*

to a finished thickness of  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch. The casings were stack laminated poplar.

"All of these components were individually glued up on forms, sized and shaped to finish profiles. The entire room was preassembled in the shop and mocked up, then disassembled and sent knocked-down to the job site. All painted woodwork was factory primed for a paint finish by others in the field," he said.

Next to the parlor is the conservatory, which is also an elliptically shaped room with dimensions approximately 26 feet by 19 feet. "We manufactured five sets of exterior French doors and transoms using mahogany with true divided lights. Each unit was  $9\frac{1}{2}$  feet high by 5 feet wide with a pair of doors and fixed transom above," said Pydynowski. All five units were elliptical in shape and individually templated and formed per opening. Each door was laminated on an individual form because the transition in the radius occurred at different locations per the shape of the ellipse.

"Throughout the residence there were hundreds of lineal feet of five- and six-piece crown assemblies and three-piece base assemblies that were manufactured and installed to field-templated radiuses and curved conditions. Three tilting head shapers were utilized for approximately

three months non-stop, sizing and profiling all these custom mouldings," said Pydynowski. "Hundreds of lineal feet of templates and forms were shop-fabricated to simulate field conditions and allow for accurate forming of radius panels and moulding assembly."

**Z**epsa, who immigrated from Yugoslavia as a boy, said he came to woodworking naturally. Several generations of his family were highly skilled European furniture and cabinet makers. He learned the business working in a small woodworking shop in Illinois during high school and college. After graduating from De Paul University, he moved with his wife Maripat, company office manager, and sons Brian and Peter from the Midwest to North Carolina in 1980.

Zepsa began his business in a workspace the size of a garage. Today his workspace is a 26,000-square-foot manufacturing plant and he employs 30. Sales range from \$4 million to \$5 million annually with the average project being in the \$600,000 range, he said. "We do our work nationally, but most is in the New York, Florida, and Chicago area. We are very selective about our projects and decline most offers to bid work. We could triple our sales volume based on reputa-

tion and experience, but we choose to stay mid-sized and grow in a controlled and profitable manner. We do complete turnkey packages from all engineering drawings to manufacturing, finishing and final installation."

Zepsa recently purchased new machinery for the production facility, spending more than \$200,000 on equipment he saw at IWF '98 in Atlanta. Machinery in the shop includes several Diehl gang rip saws, five SCMI shapers, Weinig moulders, a Diehl profile grinder, Hesse pneumatic door clamp, a Maka mortising machine, Wadkin tenoners, Taylor glue clamp, an SCMI resaw bandsaw, IMA edgebander, Robland panel saws from Laguna Tools, and Cemco and Timesavers widebelt sanders.

**JUDGE'S VIEW: BEAUTIFULLY DESIGNED AND EXECUTED PROJECT. THE WAY THE RAISED PANEL WALL SYSTEM FLOWS ACROSS THE ROOM AND INTO AN OVAL WINDOW TRANSOM IS VERY IMPRESSIVE.**

— **SCOTT DeGENOVA**

"We believe in prudent capital investment, measured and specific," said Zepsa. "Like all companies in our business, we find it increasingly difficult to find skilled people. We recruit heavily on a national basis and train within. We are fortunate to employ 30 of the highest skilled people around. Our skill level on the floor is as high or higher than at any point in the company's history. I remain optimistic that traditional trade skills will gain social value as a career choice for new generations of workers."

Zepsa credits word-of-mouth and reputation for his company's success. "We are obsessive about quality workmanship and service to the client. We spend time, money and considerable effort on marketing and sales. I spend 50 percent of my time on the road developing new business and making sure existing business is properly executed," he said.

"We see good things in the future," said Zepsa. "We recently purchased 12 acres just a few minutes from our present location and are doing facility studies to determine the best way to expand our business." ♦