

BUSINESS PAGE

Polhemus Named National Custom Home Builder Of The Year

by Tim Wood

While working for a Chatham builder during a year off from Harvard, Peter Polhemus would watch the framing of a house going up and marvel at the play of light, the view and the openness visible through the unenclosed timbers. Then the walls would go up.

"I remember writing in my journal at the time that there must be a way to preserve that," he said of the feeling that made such an impression on him.

Polhemus never returned to Harvard. Instead, he attended a program at Goddard College in Plainfield, Vt., where students designed, engineered and built campus arts centers. After graduating and spending two years in Vermont, he went through the graduate architecture program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Anyone familiar with the buildings designed and constructed by Polhemus' Chatham firm, Polhemus Savery DaSilva Architects Builders, knows that that early impression stayed with him. Light, openness and the interplay of environment and architecture play a huge role in many of the structures.

In recognition of the company's work, the National Association of Home Builders last week named Polhemus, the company's president and CEO, the 2010 National Custom Home Builder of the Year. It's the first time the award has gone to an individual leading an integrated architecture and construction company, and the first time a New England company has won the honor.

"It's totally a tribute to our team," Polhemus said in an interview at the company's office on Depot Road Monday.

Founded by Polhemus 15 years ago, the company has a staff of about 34 who cover all facets of the design and building process. Along with architect and builder Polhemus, the firm is led by design principal John R. DaSilva and builder and chief operating officer Aaron Polhemus.

The company has designed and built

dozens of homes in the area, and is best known for its high-end houses on some

design stage, and the firm competitively bids each phase of construction using a

which Polhemus places great import. "If you don't manage it right, so many things can go wrong.

While perhaps best known for its stately mansions, many of which are highlighted in the glossy coffee table book "Architecture of the Cape Cod Summer," the company's work also includes small additions and renovations. A small projects and maintenance divisions was started several years ago to focus on that work, Polhemus said.

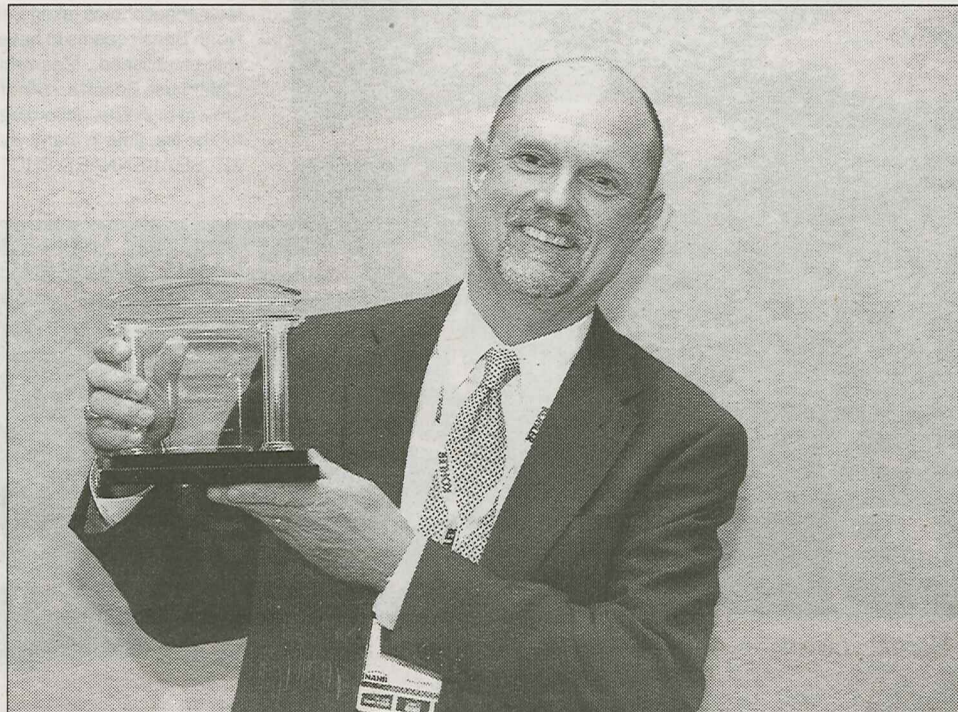
"We like that," he said. "We like having a variety of work, a variety of clients."

Polhemus also puts a lot of stock in serving the community where he chose to live and raise his two now-grown children. The company donated its design services for the rest rooms at Kate Gould Park, and helped that project, and work at the Cape Museum of Fine Art in Dennis and Cape Repertory Theatre in Brewster, come in below cost. The Polhemus Savery DaSilva Fund, begun a few years ago and now under the umbrella of the United Way of Cape Cod, helps working families on the Cape with child care and other needs. The firm committed \$20,000 to the fund which has grown thanks to contributions from clients and others, Polhemus said.

While most of its projects have been on the Cape, the company has done work all around New England and in New York. Right now a home near the North Sea in The Netherlands is being designed. And a second book is in the works, focusing on the firm's approach to different architectural elements, and will be published in April.

The award is an acknowledgement from peers that helps boost the credibility of the company on a national level, Polhemus said. And it affirms the decision he made in 1996 to move here and start the company. Not a day goes by, he said, that he doesn't look around and feel thankful to be living and working in such a beautiful place.

"I feel so fortunate to be able to live where I live, do what I love to do," he said. "I feel so incredibly blessed."



Chatham architect and builder Peter Polhemus displays the National Association of Home Builders 2010 National Custom Home Builder of the Year award presented to him last week. COURTESY PHOTO

The award is an acknowledgement from peers that helps boost the credibility of the company on a national level.

PETER POLHEMUS

of the town's most exclusive real estate, including Shore Road, Champlain Road and Morris Island.

But Polhemus sees the award, which he accepted Feb. 8 at the association's International Builder's Show in Orlando, as an affirmation of the company's business model, which he said focuses on providing clients with the best value possible. Clients are involved in the process from the initial

group of trusted trade partners.

"It's assuring the client that they're getting the best numbers they can within a high-quality group of people," Polhemus said. "We managed expectations" all the way through the final landscaping.

"It takes all of our people to understand and be committed and passionate about the process," he added. Each project has a specific project manager, an element upon