

Guy Brothers Roofing Co., Inc.

Three Generations of Roofing

By Daris Brown, Writer



Guy Brothers Roofing was never supposed to exist. Mike Guy never should have achieved the American Dream. His father determined that one generation of callused hands, bad backs and never-ending days of pure exhaustion was enough.

Mike Guy and his four brothers were discouraged from following in their father's footsteps. In fact, their father wanted them to do anything but roofing. He felt that they deserved better.

However, roofing was in their blood.

The Business Of Not Being In The Business

After 10 strong years, the family business abruptly closed when Mike's father passed away and his partner (Mike's uncle) had a stroke. The Guy brothers tried working 9-to-5 jobs, but everyone in town knew them as roofers. If a roof in town needed work, they got the call. In 1971, they started Guy Brothers Roofing with only \$268 and a '69 Dodge pickup to their name.

Mike Guy started working for his brothers occasionally when he was 17, though he had no plans to make roofing a career. Like his brothers, Mike had been encouraged to find a path in life that didn't require working so hard. However, after years of working for others, he felt he could make a better living working for himself. At 26, Mike was ready to start his own business, and a quick phone call changed his life.

His brother James wanted to start a construction company. James offered to sell his share of Guy Brothers Roofing and Mike quickly accepted.

Fatherly Advice

"Stay out of the roofing business" is not the only wisdom passed along by Mike's father. He also impressed upon the brothers the importance of keeping their word. "You must do what you said you were going to do," their dad would say, "and give the customer a quality job along the way." For the Guy brothers, their father's philosophy became the foundation and guiding principle for their company.

Following his father's teachings has led Mike and Guy Brothers Roofing to the highest rating on Angie's List and the highest rating for roofing from the region's Better Business Bureau.

Mike's great work ethic led to positive reviews from clients, resulting in a successful business, and his sons wanting to follow in his footsteps. Like his dad, Mike tried to steer his boys toward another line of work. If they wanted to go into roofing he'd let them, but he preferred that they earn college degrees and find different careers.

A Family Affair

Jason Guy and Brent Langham, Mike's sons, listened. Both went to college and found their own paths. Jason was a driver for UPS, but he wasn't happy. Money wasn't Jason's primary focus. He couldn't stand spending so much time away from his family and constantly pondered a career change.

Brent never strayed far from his roots, working as a roofing inspector for a single-ply membrane company in Pennsylvania. Tired of the snow, Brent called up Mike and said, "Dad, I want to come home, and I need a job when I get there." He's been in the business ever since.

The timing of his sons' arrival couldn't have come at a better time. Mike was looking to retire. Spending time with his close-knit family, and particularly his grandsons, was on his mind. But Mike couldn't bear the thought of selling his business, which could result in someone ruining his good name. His sons taking over would not only afford them a great life but also give them the chance to work together and enjoy each other's company.

Ushering In The Third Generation

"Be the first one to the office in the morning and the last to leave in the evenings." Mike Guy

Jason and Brent took to the business quickly. Mike knew they would make some mistakes, just like he did, but figured that's the best way to learn. They also brought a modern, up-to-date perspective to the business. Both young men have internet marketing savvy and interact with customers through email – a dramatic contrast from when business was conducted with a smile and a firm handshake.

A lot has changed in the roofing industry, which is one reason Mike softened his stance on his boys joining him. Today, scissor trucks raise supplies up while lifts bring old shingles down. Mike never had any of those tools. He had to tote everything up a ladder.

Mike also felt more comfortable when he realized his sons were walking into an established business and would not have the stress he once experienced. Mike vividly remembers trying to gain credibility while struggling to cover his overhead.

“When we first started the business, we didn't have any money,” he said. “A lot of times we had to go borrow money to make payroll because we hadn't been paid for jobs. So that was a stressful point. Also, we would work on a roof all day and then we would have to return to the office to finish our estimates. We didn't go straight home.”

Guy Brothers Roofing has experienced staggering growth over the years, Mike boasted, “We have four crews, around six to eight people per crew. Three repair crews. We have a metal crew that works on metal roofs. And then we have a single-ply crew. We have around 40 people working for us.”

Even with new tools and the larger crew, Mike still preaches work ethic. His kids saw his houses, cars and nice boats, but they also saw him put in the work. Still, they didn't know how difficult it was to run a business until they joined him. Mike passed along the drive he learned from his father: Be the first one to the office in the morning and the last to leave in the evenings. You don't get to go home just because it is raining – there is always something to do. And above all, make life fun.

The Original Atlas Guy

"Atlas stands behind their word and their products." Mike Guy

A friend of Mike's went to work for Atlas and asked Mike if he'd try the product. Mike said yes, and he found Atlas shingles to be a superior product for his needs. Mike's enthusiasm for Atlas is why he was chosen as the original Atlas Guy. “Atlas products have a better warranty than all other manufacturers,” he said. “So I figured if I'm going to sell someone a roof, and they get a

better warranty, and a longer warranty period, for the same price, then we are giving the customer the most they can get for their money.”

Mike is a true advocate for Atlas products, even installing them on his own buildings and home. “It's the only product that has a guarantee,” he said. “It is a lifetime shingle. A lot of products have a lifetime (warranty), but there aren't other products that protect against black streaks caused by algae with Scotchgard® Protector and back the protection with the Atlas Lifetime Algae Resistance Limited Warranty. In Florida, there is a black streak epidemic. The algae on a shingle that is only 7 or 8 years old make it look like it's been worn out. So when you spend as much money on a roof as a person does, and they can drive up in their driveway 14 years later, and it still looks brand new, that's a good product. You can't find it any other place.” Mike just built a new house and he installed an Atlas Signature Select System on his home. In fact, Guy Brothers install systems exclusively.

As high as Mike praises the Atlas products, his love for the brand extends far beyond the shingles he installs on a customer's home. “We have a good working relationship with Atlas,” he said. “Atlas stands behind their word and their products. They have a variety of contractor tools and training sessions readily available to help us sell their products. Their support has increased our businesses tremendously.”

The Family Business Continues

Mike is almost fully transitioned to retirement. His sons have worked for him for the past five years and are expanding the business with the help of internet marketing and upholding the name he worked so hard to build. Mike figures another two years and he will be able to thoroughly enjoy dropping bait and hanging with his grandkids.

Guy Brothers Roofing started with only three people and \$268 in the bank. Today the company employs nearly 40 people and the business grosses roughly \$6 million dollars a year. For Mike, it was never about the payoff. He considers himself an artist. “When a man gets through painting a big picture,” he said, “he looks back and he either criticizes it or says, ‘Hey, that's a nice-looking job’ That's me. I could never work at a bank, not that there's anything wrong with that, that's just me. At the end of the day, I need to see the work I've done.”

As Mike takes one step back from the business and one step forward towards retirement, the artist in him can look proudly at the family business he built and exclaim, "Man that looks good!" He has proudly passed along his knowledge of the roofing business, and the success that comes with it, to his sons – and hopefully the fourth generation.