

Multani 'fell into' life of building

By Vincent Ball
EXPOSITOR STAFF
Brantford

He is a gentleman who has transformed a couple of old, abandoned factories into homes and in the process has become one of the city's best-known homebuilders.

But the way Dalip Multani tells the story, his recent success is more a matter of divine intervention than of good planning.

"I believe in God," Multani says. "I think He shows us the way and all I did was follow His path."

"I fell into this and, well, here I am."

His company, Multani Custom Homes, built Central Square Condominiums and a housing development on Jamieson Court that occupies part of the site of the former Solar Ray Plant off Grand River Avenue.

But building homes was never part of his plan and, speaking about his life, there is nothing in his past to suggest that he'd become a homebuilder.

"I came here in October 1972 because I wanted to build a better life for myself," Multani says. "I came from a small village in India and when I first arrived I was in Toronto and I didn't like it all that much."

"It was too busy, everybody going their own way. It wasn't what I was used to."

The survival of a village depends on co-operation. Everybody works together, people help each other out, he explains.

So when he arrived, his plans changed.

"I decided I would get a good-paying job, make some money and go back home," Multani says.

His job search brought him to Paris, Ontario, where he took a job at the former Penman's plant. He didn't stay there long, however, because another opportunity arose in Brantford.

He began working at Sonoco, but only stayed for a short time because he wanted a job that would teach him a skill.

Multani then started working at a small machine shop, but when an opportunity to work at the Hussmann's plant came up, he took it because it gave him both the pay he desired as well as an opportunity to learn some skills.

Then, he heard Massey-Ferguson was hiring and he remained there until it closed in the mid-1980s.

"I think it closed in 1985 or 1986, but around 1980 I could see that things were changing. The plant just wasn't as busy after that," Multani says.

"My wife (Gurmit) had been laid off her job and we had three kids to raise."

"We thought we should have something else to support us so we purchased a variety store and laundromat."

The store and laundromat had been closed because it had fallen into disrepair and Multani had to fix it up to get rid of the work orders. They held onto the store for a couple of years before selling it.

But fixing up the store as well as another home gave him the experience he would later need when Massey's closed its doors in the mid-1980s.

Multani built his first home on Beaver Crescent. That was followed by several other homes on Beaver Crescent and the surrounding area.

The first couple of years were quite successful, Multani said.

Then, he bought the former Barber-Ellis plant on Marlborough Street. The goal was to transform an abandoned factory into residential housing.

"It was a mistake," Multani says.

"My family were farmers. We didn't know anything about carpentry and building houses. If we wanted to put in a lock, we'd call a locksmith."

DALIP MULTANI



Dalip Multani stands in front of his development, under way at Brantwood Park and Powerline roads. THE EXPOSITOR/Brian Thompson

It took a year, maybe two, to get the rezoning in place, site plan approval, all the legal work and an agreement in place with CN Rail. When that was finally completed, the market had gone soft and obtaining financing was impossible.

"I was trapped," Multani says.

He had spent a large chunk of money to purchase the property, a lot of time getting it ready and then he couldn't do anything with it.

He sold it to someone from out of town, but when the taxes weren't paid the property was put back on the market through a tax sale.

Multani, despite the advice of others, decided to bid on the property and was ultimately successful.

"I was borrowing money all over the place, from all of my relatives," Multani says. "Even though they supported me they told me that I shouldn't do it."

The market was changing, and he downsized the project to 44 units from 88. He started off slowly and when one small group of homes was finished and sold, he'd start another phase of the project.

The end result is Central Square Condominiums on Marlborough and Grey Street, which now stands as a testimonial to what can be done with abandoned factories.

It was a lot of work and caused him plenty of stress. But at the end of the day, the project turned out really well, Multani said.

He has spearheaded several other projects through his company, Multani Custom Homes, or MCH, in recent years.

There is a 50-unit apartment building on Harris Drive, another development on Mohawk Street and he has a project on the go in Cambridge.

Multani is also building a 29-unit housing development on Jamieson Court, and his office sits on the former home of the Solar Ray Plant, which burned down in the 1990s.

Some of the homes back on to green space and the dike/walking trail that runs along side the Grand River.

"It's a beautiful location," Multani says and he's pleased with the life he has been able to build for himself since arriving in Canada.

"I love Brantford," he says. "I really do."

"I could have left the community like a lot of others did when Massey's closed, but I chose to

stay and I'm glad I did. I was able to build a better life for myself."

Still, even he sometimes wonders about his path to success.

"My family were farmers," he says. "We didn't know anything about carpentry and building houses. If we wanted to put in a lock, we'd call a locksmith."

"There is no history of homebuilding in my family whatsoever."

MULTANI CUSTOM HOMES

Who: Dalip Multani

Business: Homebuilder

Employees: Four people are employed in the office while six others work in the field.

The company also has between 25 and 30 subcontractors who are working on projects at various times.



Proud To Be A Part Of The Community Since 1945

National Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Products Canada Corp., is a world leader in the commercial refrigeration industry.

Designed and manufactured in Brantford, our products are sold around the globe under the KeepRite Refrigeration, Bally and Trenton brand names.



NATIONAL REFRIGERATION & AIR CONDITIONING CANADA CORP.

159 Roy Blvd., Brantford, ON, Canada N3R 7K1

Phone (519) 751-0444, 1-800-463-9517 Fax: (519) 753-1140

e-mail: info@k-rp.com www.keepriterefrigeration.com or www.k-rp.com

Ponds Plants and Patios

"Your Imagination is our Specialty"

Summer is the perfect time to renovate your property.

With over 24 years of creating and constructing spectacular and affordable landscape designs for the Brantford, Brant and surrounding communities, Wood Landscape Visions has gained the trust of hundreds of satisfied customers.

With a little help from Wood Landscape Visions, you too can enjoy beautiful landscaped gardens, walkways, stonework, waterfalls and ponds.

Call us today for a personalized quote, and join us for our 2008 Pond Tour on July 26 to view some of our natural pond designs. Annually Certified Aquascapes contractors. Lifetime members of Landscape Ontario.

Wood Landscape Visions
Brantford, Ontario
519-756-1283 1-877-890-5909
info@woodgroundsmaintenance.ca
www.woodgroundsmaintenance.ca

Natural Ponds Stone Patios Indigenous Plants

183 Emerson Blvd
London ON
N5Z 3L5