

# WALLS & CEILINGS

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# COASTAL COFFERS

A DEEP LOOK AT  
PORTLAND CEMENT

STEEL STUD  
CONSTRUCTION BOOMS

**Volk**  
**DRYWALL**  
CUSTOM HOME SPECIALISTS SINCE 1987

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# Deep Coffers

For 22 years, Volk Drywall has been a residential drywall contractor in southern California. Since its inception in 1987, this southern California player has been supplying custom drywall and steel stud to higher-end homes through the Reagan years to the current Obama administration.

Located just 20 miles from downtown Los Angeles in West Covina, Mark Volk, the owner of the residential drywall company is still weathering the economic storm, where conditions aren't much better. But the work's there, and the area seems well off.

Recently, Volk Drywall returned to one of its first projects from the '80s for extensive remodeling.

"We drywalled the project owner's home about 20 years ago. He is reported to be the largest land-

California-based drywall contractors put thousands of hours in multi-thousand square foot residence.

By John Wyatt

owner in [the] downtown Los Angeles area," Volk says of the property located in neighboring Whittier. Just miles away, this city has an extensive filmography where movies such as *Back to the Future*, *Big Fat Liar* and *Disturbia* were shot.

## OFF ANGLES

This private residence has a square footage of 28,000 feet. Volk says it took approximately 116,000 square feet of drywall, [and] bullnose metal bead. The project took an estimated 3,480 manhours to complete.

Six-hundred and twelve boxes of Hamilton mud along with about 230 gallons of USG's Plus "3" mud for

the putty-coat was used. Throughout the project's whole, California-based Pabco was used. Volk says the board gives the contractor consistency and quality for the high-end custom homes he works on.

"During the putty-coat process we prefer the 'mud' to be no thicker than 1/32 inch. This avoids 'pock-marking' and gives the finished product a superior finish," says Volk. "We worked closely with the painting contractor Roger Macintosh of Macintosh Painting. It helps when the painting contractor and the drywall contractor can work in unison; it helps in producing the best product possible."





Off-angles were covered using Select Taping Tools' Off-Angle Head.

"It is the only tool we have found that consistently produces smooth consistent off-angles on the long runs in the coffered ceilings that this house had," Volk says.

#### UNUSUAL FEATURES

"The house has several uncommon features. First, its footprint is of an unequal hexagon surrounding a very large courtyard within. It is a two-story structure with six large separate sublevels. Because of its size and three-level design, the house requires its own detached 1,200 square foot subterranean boiler room for heating and cooling," says Volk.

The house had a very large amount of off-angles with 217 total. There are also many coffered ceilings, along with an inordinate amount of hexagon rooms, including two "porthole" windows with the same hexagon feature. The company used 44 sheets of 1/4 inch high-flex drywall, double layered, for the many radius walls and barrel-roll ceilings.

The drywall portion of this project began in early December and was completed in early January.

#### WEATHERING THE STORM

"The California market is still slow," he says. "We are doing a lot better than most partly because custom homes (our niche) are still being built while tracts are, for all intents and purposes, close to a stop."

One of the ways the company is combating harsh economic times is that it still actively solicits new customers, Volk says.

"Our old customers' volume has dropped by what I estimate to be about 70 percent in the last two years. We are rapidly expanding our customer base by reaching out to new customers on a weekly basis. With that we have been able to maintain and even increase our gross sales since the second quarter of 2007, not our profit because of the smaller profit margins, but certainly our gross sales and volume has increased. Profits are about 35

percent down since the first quarter of 2007."

When asked if the company has thought of entering any niche markets, such as more of the trowel trades, Volk says not currently but that it is looking into Venetian plaster and will be offering this as part of the company's pallet in the future. Interestingly, Volk Drywall has found a niche working on gas stations. **W&C**

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