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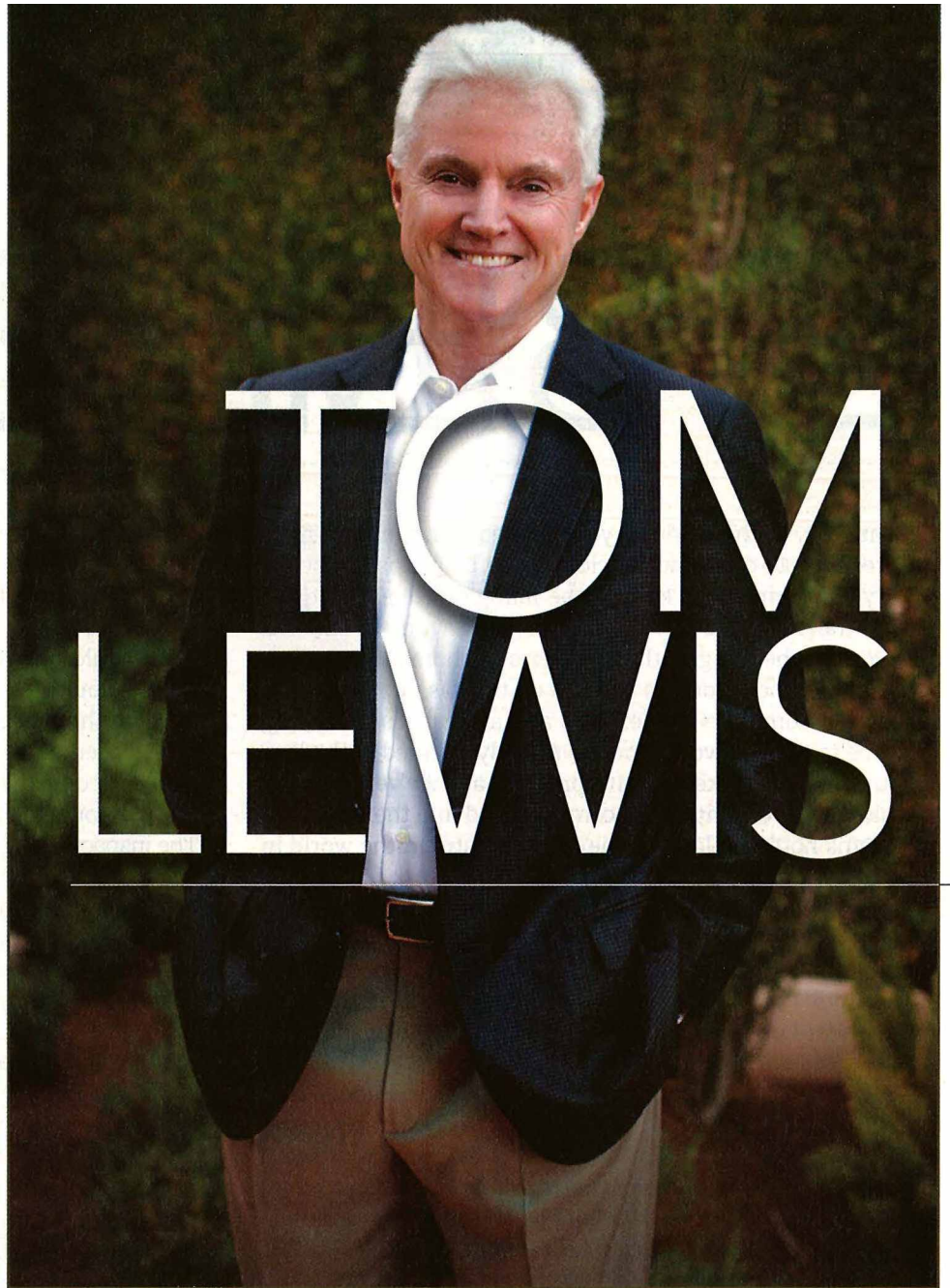
[NHQ HALL OF FAME]

By Charlie Scott, Contributing Editor

The National Housing Quality Award (NHQA) was founded in 1992 and has grown into one of America's most prestigious home building quality awards. Originally modeled after the Malcom Baldrige Award, the company review thoroughly evaluates the eight most critical areas of quality within an organization. In the past 23 years, only 46 NHQA Gold and 34 NHQA Silver recipients have been recognized for achieving outstanding quality ratings. In 2013, the National Housing Quality Award Hall of Fame was established and inducted its first member—Tom Lewis, founder of T.W. Lewis Company.

The requirements necessary to earn the National Housing Quality Award are daunting, and the criteria for the first inductee were even more rigorous. The inductee had to be a past NHQA Gold recipient. The HOF inductee had to demonstrate continuous improvement even after receiving the award, and have a legacy of sharing the fruits of their success in terms of knowledge, service, and philanthropy. Tom Lewis met all these criteria and was a unanimous selection on his first credential review and validation. T.W. Lewis won the NHQA Silver award in 1998 and achieved the NHQA Gold in 2009. T.W. Lewis Company has built over 5,500 homes in the Phoenix market, succeeding through both the industry's good and tough times. Tom has shared the fruits of his success in many ways, awarding more than 130 college scholarships and generously supporting a long list of Phoenix area non-profit organizations. He gives some of the credit for his success to the lessons learned during the National Housing Quality Award journey.

"The application process was quite intimidating and required a great deal of thought and preparation," Tom says. "There was a lot of value in trying to summarize our approach to the eight areas of evaluation (leadership,



strategic planning, process management, customer satisfaction, human resources, construction quality, trade relations, and business results). It wasn't until we started the application process that we realized these are all the components that we needed to become a quality company." The feedback from Tom's first application (and the judges' site visit) helped identify the areas that needed improvement and gave Tom and his team their improvement priorities. Tom says, "The NHQA application process drew us closer together and helped us focus on growing

our quality culture from the inside out."

Ten years later, Tom and his team felt their operational improvements had prepared them to reapply for the 2009 NHQA. In writing their second application, they discovered that NHQ had changed its way of thinking. It had evolved the quality focus from just construction quality to a larger focus on building quality homes, quality relationships, and a quality company. Tom says there were unexpected benefits from the change. For example, he says, "Quality is a great way to inspire and attract employees. Many of our best

FIRST INDUCTEE INTO THE NATIONAL HOUSING QUALITY HALL OF FAME

employees have come from non-quality-minded builders and found that a quality culture was more rewarding at T.W. Lewis Company.”

When asked why more home builders do not pursue the rigors of the National Housing Quality Award journey, Tom speculates, “Most people are not willing to go the extra mile and put in the work that is required to create the systems and excitement it takes to become a true quality organization.” Tom’s company set very high customer expectations with the company’s slogan, “Homes for particular people.” This slogan worked for over 20 years and attracted customers who appreciated (and demanded) high levels of quality at every level: 5,500 of them, in fact. Tom knew the only way they could consistently deliver at these high levels of execution would be with quality systems, quality people, and a company-wide understanding of quality, customer satisfaction, and profitability. While other builders may prioritize one of the big three—quality, customer satisfaction, or profit—T.W. Lewis understands all three are equally important and support each other. Tom

also knew the consolidation and growth of competing public builders dictated that T.W. Lewis become a high-performing builder to survive.

In 2013, after 22 years in business, Tom wanted the legacy of T.W. Lewis to continue beyond his own career. In true forward-planning fashion, Tom identified and sold T.W. Lewis to a company that had the culture to perpetuate their success—the 1993 National Housing Quality Gold winner, David Weekley Homes. The T.W. Lewis Company flag still flies in Phoenix, with 85 percent of the staff in place and Tom serving as a partner and consultant to the operations. He credits the NHQA process as having helped T.W. Lewis create a lasting brand and continued employment for his superlative staff. **PB**

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TOM’S BIO

Tom is a native Kentuckian who grew up in Lexington. He earned a scholarship at the University of Kentucky for his “outstanding academic record, leadership, and sportsmanship qualities,” and graduated in 1971. After UK, Tom enrolled in the MBA program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. With his two degrees in hand, Tom joined a large public home building firm, Ryan Homes. “I spent my first six months in the home building business in the field as a laborer,” Tom says. Rising through the ranks, he eventually became Ryan Homes’ youngest division manager at the age of 28. After stints with UDC Homes and Trammell Crow Residential, Tom was ready to start his own company in 1991. “The time I spent from grad school in 1973 to starting the T.W. Lewis Company in 1991 was invaluable. I was exposed to many great mentors and leaders and was able to start an authentic company that was based on the lessons and values I had learned from working for others.”

T.W. Lewis Company was established with Tom’s core values of honesty, hard work, reliability, integrity, achievement, and compassion. From the beginning the company hewed to its mission statement: “Our mission is to become the best home building organization in America as measured by product quality, customer satisfaction, and profitability.” Since its inception, T.W. Lewis Company has built an enviable reputation in the Phoenix market and has received numerous national awards and recognition. Tom says, “I’m not sure if we can say we ever fully achieved our mission, but I think we came close.”