

Builder Spotlight

Bobby Alvarez: It's about family

By C. Baxter Carter



Bobby Alvarez, Alex Socias, and Freddy Socias

Builder Bobby Alvarez took some time out of his busy schedule one recent afternoon to stop and smell the proverbial roses. It's something he does often. Forty-five years ago, when he was ten, he fled Cuba with his family to avoid political persecution. Today, he's one of Tampa Bay's top custom builders.

"My father needed to leave Cuba very quickly," Alvarez recalls. "He had a Coca-Cola distributorship, a restaurant, an ice plant We had to leave it all. My mother was pregnant, and there were six brothers and sisters."

In the states, his father worked at a Miami Beach hotel, and the family

crowded into a small bedroom in a third-cousin's Miami home. A little more than a year later, the family came to Tampa.

It was a success story from the start. In 1983, Alvarez Homes opened its doors with three contracts to build high-end custom houses. Today, the company always has more than fifteen projects underway. Most homes are more than a million dollars.

Alvarez is a true custom builder: "I've never used the same drawings twice," he says. "Every house we build is unique. We start everything from scratch."

Alvarez's brother-in-law Alex Socias oversees construction in the field, and

brother-in-law Freddy Socias—the brothers each married Alvarez's sisters—handles business affairs.

Alvarez can't pick a favorite among the homes he's built because they're all different. "Every house we build is unique," he says. So are the requests of some clients. Some, for instance, want urinals in bathrooms. No problem. One asked for "cameras in places they shouldn't be".

The requests don't bother Alvarez. He loves his work and doesn't mind the hectic pace.

"I think construction all the time. I wake up in the middle of the night and write down ideas—I have a pad by my bed," Alvarez says. "It's been probably ten years since I've been in a model home of another builder. I want to be the trendsetter; I don't want to do what somebody else is doing. I read the magazines, I know the trends ... but I like to come up with the ideas."

As is typical of most builders, though, that's not the case at home—Alvarez and his family live in a "typical South Tampa home, very nicely refinished", 4,000 square feet, and built in 1950—the year Alvarez was born in Cuba.

"The other day I was thinking about my background, and how far I've come..." he says. "It's not that I'm smarter or know any more than anybody else—I've just been blessed. With my business, my family, with everything I have, I've just been blessed." 🏠

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