

# ART GERISH

## Gerish Building Company

**A**s Developer of the Year Art Gerish feels he has joined an elite group of peers. The honor reflects his success as a quality builder of affordable housing, his pride in expert craftsmanship and his commitment to integrity in the building industry. Yet he prefers a low profile, stating that he considers himself “one of the soldiers” serving on BIA’s Board of Directors.

Certainly Art is entitled to pride. His career began in Detroit when, newly graduated from MacKenzie High School, he accompanied a neighborhood contractor on rounds. In 1949 he learned of an opening with the Edward Rose Company and recognized a fine opportunity to join the post-war housing boom. His experience with Rose was an education, and by 1957 he was ready to form his own company. His first houses were located in Detroit and in the downriver area, and then he saw growth potential in Plymouth. He moved both offices and family to this rapidly-developing community.

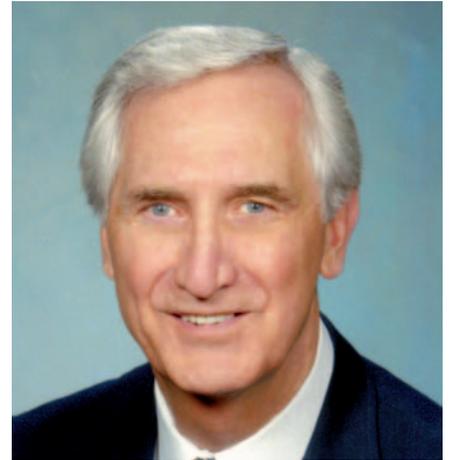
Today, he says, the Gerish Building Company has moved farther “south,” developing approximately 600 dwellings in Prairie Creek Village and Timber Creek, both in Brownstown Township, and Rolling Ridge Pointe in Trenton. All three of these communities are described as affordable housing, a priority for Art: price points range from the high \$180s to \$290s.

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is a real thrill,” he says, “to start with a basement and watch it emerge as a family’s home. But, he explains, it’s also a thrill to take raw dirt and watch its transformation with sewers and roads into a neighborhood. He recalls the ranch homes he once built on 40-foot lots in Redford, Taylor and Dearborn Heights and compares them to the homes at Timber Creek where 162 80-foot lots are set along a large park and running stream. The open spaces of Rolling Ridge Pointe and Prairie Creek Village contrast with those early days when he remembers he lacked money to buy land.

Art’s sons, David and Bruce, feel fortunate to have had their father as mentor. David was the first to recognize the family legacy. Like his father, he started as a laborer and rough carpenter. He then studied building construction technology at Ferris State College, and in 1990, he and his father founded a second company, Gerish Construction Company. Bruce joined the family business last year. Art’s daughter, Susan, is office manager. Another Gerish daughter, Amy, is mother of three daughters. Bruce has added to the grandchildren with two daughters and two sons. Recently, Art established a scholarship at Alma College, Bruce and Susan’s alma mater, for a student in the Plymouth-Canton schools. His wish was to give back to the community where he raised his children.

Art and Janet have traveled widely as members of the Nomads Travel Club and also retreat to a condo in Traverse City. Art is working fewer hours, but he says, “I’m not ready to retire. Something always draws me back to the office.” ■



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