Young talents shine bright

It wasn’t easy for the 20-under-40 committee at Glass Magazine to pick 20 representatives out of the 72 nominations. Each sponsor had a fascinating story to tell about his or her nominee—of persistence, courage, ambition and enthusiasm—and each presented a special talent unsurpassed by the others.

As a group, the honorees selected represent the best of the flat-glass industry and present a rich tapestry of diversity. They each come from different disciplines within the industry and from different parts of the world. They are contract glaziers, glass-shop owners, department managers, sales managers, engineers and designers. They also are campers, boaters, motor-sports enthusiasts, soccer coaches, cooks, fishermen, scuba divers and devoted volunteers who continually give back to their industry, their communities and their countries. Their companies vary in size and ownership types, and spread across the continent.

Supervisors and peers nominated their stars through the Internet site www.glassmagazine.net or by mail. Their deadline was Oct. 28.

Consider nominating the young heroes in your companies as you get a peek at the lives of this year’s selection on the following pages. The future of the industry is in their hands; they chart the course of glass history.

The biographers

Staff:
Nancy M. Davis
Katy Devlin
Sahely Mukerji

 Freelance writers:
Anna America, Tulsa
Ann Lallande, Annapolis, Md.
Bill Kirtz, Boston
Gina Rollins, Silver Spring, Md.
Scott E. Hoover

Product development is his game

Scott E. Hoover was attracted to the building-products field because AFG Industries Inc., the company that recruited him, had 12 sales reps nationwide, not 450 like other big corporations. It would be difficult to stand out in a large field, he says. Today, the senior manager of marketing and business development for Pilkington North America has racked up distinguished credits, most recently in managing the launch of Pilkington’s Eclipse Advantage, an improved Mirropane™ and Optiview antireflective glass.

Of all the facets to his job, Hoover enjoys working on Pilkington’s international product-development teams the best. The interdisciplinary teams, with members from various departments, use a multiyear phased process to study products and ready them for the market. Product development remains a singular challenge for the glass industry, Hoover says, “just as you’re introducing a new product to architects, they’re already demanding something else.”

Hoover’s approach to selling to architects has changed over the years. These days, architects “look for people ... who can consult and advise, even without promoting their own products.” He manages an array of tools to sell glass to architects including continuing education programs and Internet sites with interactive glass calculators.

“Scott is a sought-after authority who has consulted in multimillion-dollar projects,” says Stephen Weidner, vice president of Pilkington North America in Toledo. “He has advocated for responsible energy legislation and provided training to architects, manufacturers, fabricators and contractors alike on product application and selection.”

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Christian Karl Janssen

A technologist with a poet’s heart

Soft-spoken, articulate and an artist at heart, Christian Karl Janssen has been soulfully drawn to art “since before my first birthday. I began with an insatiable fascination with exploring, observing and building,” he says.

Ron Wood, principal and partner of Ron Wood Architectural Art Glass LLC in Sun City, Calif., mentors Janssen and calls him “a tireless, inspired worker.”

Meeting Wood in a digital multimedia classroom triggered his interest in architectural art glass, Janssen says. “He was there to learn about his Macintosh. Evidently, I was there to meet him.”

There are two extremes in architectural art glass, Janssen says. “On one end, artisans exercise virtuosity of craft in restoration. At the other, advances in manufacturing, digital tools and material technologies have our pulse racing. As technologies approach the micro scales, their inclusion in films and transparent media is inevitable. Pervasive digital processing will avail sculptable display systems. In the next five to 10 years, limitations will be completely blown away.”

Janssen’s compositing skills are unrivaled, Wood says. “He arrives at solutions through mathematical analyses while maintaining a spanning aesthetic discipline. Using advanced modeling-animation software, Christian virtually explores perspectives.”

Janssen’s portfolio includes R17, a Rapid Transit station of Kaohsiung Rapid Transit Corp. in Taiwan; Digital Art Gallery of KRTC; St. Vincent de Paul Church, Houston; and hotels in Honolulu, Miami, New York City and San Francisco.

A loving husband and a devoted father of a 1-year-old, Janssen appreciates “the professional context of celebrating life and opportunities.”
F or six years, P. Daniel Laporte has overseen Solutia’s technical-service division, helping glass fabrica-
tors produce laminated safety glass with polyvinyl butyral interlayers. In that time, he’s developed quite a following. “Dan is well-respected throughout the industry as the go-to person for any lamination issues,” says Julie Schimmelpenningh, technical applications manager for Solutia Inc. in Springfield, Mass. “He has a breadth of knowledge that’s very recognized by our customers.”

Laporte takes the “go-to” moniker seriously and spends about 60 percent of his time meeting with fabrica-
tors on their turfs. “I work with laminators to produce good glass, so I do a lot of troubleshooting to identify ways they can optimize their processes or improve quality,” he says. On-the-spot problem-solving is what drives Laporte professionally. “Finding a solution right then and there is most fulfilling,” he says.

Through the Glass Association of North America’s laminating technical and laminating education committees, he’s also the go-to guy for those considering a start in lamination. “I explain what’s entailed, consult on plans, help put equipment in place and help people run and organize their production lines,” he says.

As fabricators adjust to new challenges in the wake of two active hurricane seasons, Laporte plays yet another go-to role promoting customers’ interests. “He’s one of the most important voices,” Schimmelpenningh says. “He makes us aware of what customers would like to see and how we can help them improve their products.”

When not on the road for business, Laporte devotes his free time to his children and both his and his wife’s extended families.

Jean Lefrancois is hard to get hold of. No wonder, as he shuttles from Quebec to Florida, fields meet-
ings with employees and customers, and faces increasingly tight deadlines on construction projects that must satisfy Florida’s strict hurricane codes.

Employees for Gamma USA, a Miami glass and glazing subcontractor, have had plenty of experience with hurricanes. They claim a 100 percent no-leak rate during the last three. Much of the credit, says Stewart Struzer, Gamma USA’s director of operations, goes to Lefrancois, the organization’s vice president.

Lefrancois, who trained as an accountant, attributes his executive expertise to his father, Roland, who was the president of Gamma Industries. Now 71 and retired, Roland is “like a consultant” and “the best in the world in glass and glazing,” Lefrancois says.

He got on-the-job supervisory experience as early as high school, working on Gamma Canada crews, Lefrancois says. He deals with everything from sales to project management to subcontractors to coordinating incoming supplies from Quebec. A myriad of high-end projects include a $10 million, 74-story Miami building now going up at the rate of a floor a week.

Lefrancois manages 100 employees, and that number will expand to nearly 200 later in 2006, when Gamma USA opens a South Florida fabrication and assembly plant. He handles this range of tasks with hands-on experience; he’s even earned Florida licenses for glass and glazing.

Lefrancois’ biggest challenge: “Finding labor and keeping to a tight schedule of jobs.”
Molly O. Clarke
Go-getter and a green fan

Molly O. Clarke puts her love for the environment to work at Alpen Inc., a company her father started during the 1970s in Boulder, Colo. She recently received her U.S. Green Building Council Leadership and Energy and Environmental Design certificate.

“I love the people in the green building community,” Clarke says. “People are more energy conscious now. It’s nice to work for a company that pushes the envelope.”

Even though Clarke grew up around the company and worked there while she was in high school, she never expected to join Alpen after earning a degree in manufacturing.

“I wasn’t pigeonholed and could work on different projects. I had a lot of responsibility at a young age,” she said.

Alpen fabricates high-performance insulating glass and windows. Its suspended, wave-length selective thin-film technology provides a combination of transparency and infrared reflection, allowing glass to block summer heat, retain winter warmth, eliminate ultraviolet rays and maximize passage of daylight. Alpen officials use the Heat Mirror film from Southwall Technologies in Palo Alto, Calif., in their glass panels and provide a 10-year warranty on the units.

Tony Bouquot
Innovation runs in the family

Tony Bouquot might have ended up in his current career path by accident, but he recently discovered that a knack for designing, manufacturing and patenting door enclosures runs in his family.

Since he joined Patio Enclosures Inc. in 1997, Bouquot has been granted patents for three separate window and door designs. A fourth remains pending.

A few years ago, Bouquot learned that his great-grandfather designed, patented and manufactured a very rudimentary door-closing device. An advertisement for his great-grandfather’s device hangs in his office.

Bouquot had been working at General Motors in Dayton, Ohio, as a design engineer, but moved to Michigan in 1993 when his wife took a new job there. He then found a job at Tubelite, a manufacturer of storefront systems, entrances and curtain walls in Reed City, Mich., and discovered he was more comfortable in the glass industry than in the auto business. He also liked the environment of a smaller company where he wasn’t pigeonholed and could work on different projects.

“I wear many hats” at Patio Enclosures, Bouquot says. They range from the manufacturing of existing products to the design of new ones. Since joining Patio Enclosures, he has redesigned the company’s year-round and seasonal sunrooms. The product lines that he designed represent a third of Patio Enclosure’s sales volume.

“He has used his position to improve both product design and product management,” says Craig Cox, Patio Enclosure’s vice president of manufacturing.

Although Bouquot spends much of his time thinking about sunrooms, his current home doesn’t have one. However, he says he picked out a location for his future year-round sunroom.
Although his father spent decades in the glass industry, Tim Czechowski never planned on going into the field, and instead studied printing and graphics. He went into packaging design and enjoyed the creativity, and the fact that he was involved in cutting-edge graphic technology.

Czechowski’s ultimate goal, however, was to work for himself, and he started realizing that creativity and technology could be similarly combined to create exciting new glass products. In 1998, along with his father, Wayne, he co-founded Artwork in Architectural Glass Studios, specializing in cast glass, slumped glass and textured glass products. With offices in Newport Beach, Calif., and in Good Hope, Ga., just outside Atlanta, the company now numbers among the industry’s leaders in the specialty art-glass sector.

“We approach things differently from most other companies, and really look for ways to think outside of the box,” Czechowski says. AAG has been a pioneer in developing products such as anti-slip glass flooring; AAG Dichro-lam, a laminated product that changes color according to viewing angle and light; and Cast Glass Medallion curtains. Some customers consider the company’s work as art, Czechowski says, “but while it’s creative, we are more into value engineering than a true artist would be. We’re arty, but we are also businessy, and at the end of the day, safe products are our No. 1 goal.”

Wayne Czechowski gives his son credit for the company's rapid rise. “Through his marketing, sales and creative endeavors, he keeps AAG on the edge of industry trend-setting fashions in specialty glass,” he says.

Jose Angel Fontela
Coming through in a crisis

is 10 years as an installer couldn’t prepare him for Wilma. However, only hours after the hurricane swept through Miami last October, Jose Angel Fontela led his 11-person American Glass & Mirror crew out with plywood to give temporary help to residential and commercial customers whose windows were destroyed. And soon afterward, while other installers were making excuses, he was making deliveries.

Fontela, with his wife and office manager, Alexandra, came to America from Cuba in November 1995. He had no formal schooling, and experience only as a bartender, but quickly found work as an installer with ReadyWindows, Miami. And last July, with hustle and business savvy, he bought American Glass & Window from owner Eni Sanchez. Today his shop has an annual revenue of approximately $750,000.

Matthew Staton, president of Tai Management, who manages a chain of Miami area boutique hotels, was a customer who Fontela serviced hours after the hurricane. Staton deals with plenty of subcontractors every day and lauds Fontela’s dedication. “He comes in at very short notice and delivers when others fail miserably—sometimes within six to eight hours,” he says. He recalls the care that Fontela took to make sure that elevator glass, in particular, was up to code.

Staton also appreciates Fontela’s business ethics. In one emergency, he says, “he could have put me at the end of the line, but they came out the same day. There was little money but he was loyal.” Even when some hotel owners lost invoices or delayed payment, Fontela still came.

Tim Czechowski
Schooled in the art of glass

Education: 1990, bachelor’s degree in printing management and graphic arts, Georgia Southern College, Statesburg, Ga.


Personal: Age, 37; born, Portsmouth, Va.; married, wife Lisa, first child on the way

Diversions: Golf, running, computers and software

Connections: 20101 S.W. Birch, Suite 276, Newport Beach, Calif., 92260, 949/251-0075; tim@aag-glass.com.

Jose Angel Fontela
Coming through in a crisis


Personal: Age, 36; born, Havana; married, wife Alexandra, one son and one daughter

Diversions: Fishing

Connections: 1580 W. 35th Place, Hialeah Fla. 33012, 305/216-1504, alexandraagm@hotmail.com.
Ed Geyman
Spanning the distance

Ed Geyman has come a long way from where his heritage in the glass industry began. That distance is both literal—his family of glaziers emigrated from the Soviet Union in 1990—and figurative—in the old country, his grandfather was installing window glass and mirrors into custom furniture out of the back of a pickup truck. Today, Geyman runs a thriving New York City architectural glass company that has installations in some of the Big Apple’s most prestigious commercial sites.

Upon arriving in the United States, Geyman’s father started doing residential mirror and glass installs. After graduating from college in 1996, Geyman joined his father to open Carvart Glass, manufacturing carved and etched panels for the residential market.

The duo started getting more requests for commercial projects. “Next thing I knew, I was working with top architects on high-profile retail and corporate projects … quickly creating product lines and altering existing ones to cater to this exciting market,” Geyman says.

In 2005, the company launched an Internet site and moved into a Manhattan showroom. Projects include work for Christian Dior, Mercedes Benz, Sephora and Citibank.

Carvart has 50 employees including production personnel, draft people, engineers, craftsmen, artists, glaziers, project and production managers and sales staff. The company grossed more than $8 million in sales last year, Geyman says.

Despite the strides, the firm is not as far from the family roots as it might seem, Geyman says. “While the craftsmanship is distinctly old world, the execution is entirely new world.”

Alfonso Marin-Garcia
In search of a dream

I n Spanish, one might say “La Fontana de Oro;” in the United States, people call it the American Dream—a dream 31-year-old Mexican immigrant Alfonso Marin-Garcia knows quite a bit about.

“When I was young, people would say ‘I want to go to the United States, where you can achieve what you want.’ They had big dreams,” recalls Marin-Garcia, shift foreman for Mammen Glass & Mirror Inc. in Irving, Texas. “I have dreams, too. [People] in this company give me the chances to [fulfill them].”

Marin-Garcia left Mexico in 1996 and moved to California, knowing little English, but possessing the desire to learn and succeed. He made his way to Texas and started working at Mammen in 2000.

From the start, Marin-Garcia had a plan, goals and the drive to achieve them, says Chris Mammen, president. “He quickly learned the basics, and in his 90-day review stated that his short-term goal was to become supervisor, and his long-term goal was to operate his own company or become a manager for Mammen Glass.”

In 2005, Mammen managers promoted him to second-shift supervisor. He earned the position through knowledge and ambition, apparent in his decision to use the company’s tuition-reimbursement program and enroll in English classes, Mammen says.

“We like to support any employee who is willing to take the initiative that Alfonso has—coming into the country the right way, performing the job the right way,” he says. “In an age when it is difficult to find decent employees, much less high-caliber self-starters, Alfonso is a rare breed.”

Marin-Garcia says he will continue working toward his long-term goals and creating a good life for his wife and two young children. “I’m going to do what I need to do, because [my family] needs me,” he says. “And because I want to keep doing more, making more. It feels good.”
Glass is often used in interior design, but to Sherry E. Gill, it’s more than just a window or skylight; it’s “a limitless product” that helps her create a mood, be it slick and elegant, calm and soothing, or exciting and glamorous.

“There are so many types and textures. There are so many color variations, shapes and sizes. Glass can be changed by cutting, molding, etching, painting and lighting,” says the senior interior designer for Wimberly Allison Tong & Goo, a design consultant for the hospitality, leisure and entertainment industries.

Gill specializes in resort and casino design and continually finds ways to use glass in unexpected ways, says Michele Phillips, WATG director of interior design. She cites Harrah’s New Orleans, where Gill used glass to create a glittering backdrop for the Masquerade entertainment area. Backlit glass stairs were set glowing with changing color lights, while a glass and stainless steel railing was erected to divide the lounge from the casino. In the Radius Bar, broken chips of glass were heated and melted to look like ice cubes, and a glowing wall was created using “bubbletoes,” with frosted glass panels and blue and gold glass “bubbles” attached for a rock wall effect. Glass curtains made of chains of glass cubes were hung between banquette seating, and tempered glass panels line the walls.

With glass, Gill says, “you can turn a relatively dull space into a dynamic space.”

Every project Robert Grosze works on involves more than just designing, manufacturing and installing blast-resistant glazing. “It’s easy to get lost in the details and think they’re just construction projects, but they’re not,” he says. “Our products represent the main level of protection for workers in those buildings and they’re relying on what we do to protect them.”

In 2004, Masonry Arts’ revenue was about $23.8 million, and Grosze’s projects read like a who’s who of high-profile installations: he’s been retrofitting parts of the U.S. State Department and the Pentagon and installing a blast-resistant curtain wall at the U.S. Courthouse in Jacksonville, Fla. Most meaningful to the vice president of operations and senior project manager for Masonry Arts in Bessemer, Ala., was the Oklahoma City Federal Campus, built to replace the Alfred P. Murrah building destroyed during a 1995 bombing. “I met a lot of survivors,” he recalls. “They came to the job site. It was healing for them and it caused me to step out of the engineering details and think about what my work was for.”

One of the first in a breed of blast-resistant but aesthetically pleasing public buildings, that project also demanded Grosze’s best communication and engineering skills. “The line of dialogue between architects and blast engineers seems to be difficult,” Grosze says. But he is “extraordinarily gifted” at bringing the perspectives together, says Kenneth Hays, Masonry Arts’ executive vice president. “He’s good at understanding what the architect’s trying to achieve, the capability of the technology, manufacturing, and installation and how it all must dovetail.”
Versatility has become Ryan McDougle’s stock in trade. Bob Syroka, president of Syroka Associates in Johnston, Iowa, a sales representative for Oldcastle Glass, praises McDougle’s work as an office manager, consultant and a vital liaison between the front office and Oldcastle’s Perrysburg, Ohio, manufacturing plant.

McDougle supervises eight people, proclaims a “customer first” philosophy, and will skip lunch to tend to an employee’s needs.

“For his part, O’Connor finds that his varied experiences help him understand employees’ perspectives. His only timeout from the glass industry was the U.S. Army, where he served as an infantryman in Operation Desert Storm.

He suspects that future success as a glass-shop owner and retailer in the United States depends on finding, training and retaining good people for an increasingly complex and demanding business environment: “It’s a huge challenge.”
At 20, Brandie Overbay had an infant son to support, and Alumco, a manufacturer of aluminum screens, made her an offer she couldn’t refuse: a job with medical and dental benefits. As a “bug stripper,” she installed the flaps on screen doors that keep bugs at bay.

Overbay did that for about a week and then made her move. After six months, she had done every job on the production line, and began working in shipping, packaging products and loading trucks.

“I wanted to learn everything in the plant,” Overbay says. A self-proclaimed “hands-on learner,” she took turns at inventory control, order entry, accounting and payroll.

Overbay leads the team that designed, developed and implemented Alumco’s first companywide computerized accounting system, linking operations across five facilities. She has been instrumental in launching Aluminite Advantage, an electronic order processing, manufacturing and delivery system, says Chad Kegans, vice president of sales. The program has enabled Alumco to double its business with existing accounts.

Overbay also improved Alumco’s billing process by simplifying its pricing system. But she found her niche in customer service and sales. “I’m a people helper,” she says, and she enjoys trying to resolve the logistical challenges faced by customers.

Overbay’s territory covers Washington State and Oregon, and parts of Arizona, California and Nevada. “I love this company,” Overbay says. “There’s always an opportunity to do something different with encouragement and support from managers.”

Rob Reyes II produces an unusual architectural glass product, but he doesn’t like to say he owns BP Glass Garage Doors. “If people knew, they’d never leave me alone. Everyone wants meetings.”

Instead, Reyes terms himself operations manager of the company he bought in 1996, at age 21. BP Glass Garage Doors, with an annual revenue of approximately $1.75 million, serves the high-end residential market. The company does installation, fabrication and sales in Arizona, California and Nevada, with Reyes active in every facet of the business from bookkeeping to research. Now, as the company expands to 24 employees, he says, “I have no choice but to delegate.”

Oldcastle Glass estimator Kelly Martinez, based in Los Angeles, credits Reyes with single-handedly creating and leading the market for an unusual architectural product.

BP Glass Garage Doors, once called Bryce Parker, originally did sheet metal and steel construction catering to the service-station construction industry. It had been manufacturing and installing commercial custom glass sectional overhead garage doors since 1952.

Reyes calls his company’s combination of glass and extruded aluminum alloy frames “interesting and challenging.” For the last four years he’s been “making a big push for research and development.”

However, his company’s niche has given him some problems. “I’ve tried hiring structural engineers, but most of them don’t want to touch aluminum,” he says.

Reyes tests prototypes himself to produce what he calls “the strongest glass door on the market.”
Mike Sebold

Applying sports to life

Mike Sebold played Division 1 hockey in college, and the qualities important to that endeavor—teamwork, skill and innovative play—helped him succeed at Tremco Sealant and Waterproofing in Beachwood, Ohio.

Sebold joined Tremco fresh out of college, attracted by its training program. He stayed because commercial construction fascinates him. “It’s fun dealing with big buildings,” he says.

In 2002, when Tremco named him North America business leader for commercial-glazing solutions, Sebold saw an opportunity to reshape the product line. He raised in-house technical competency; looked for growth opportunities and identified selected markets in protective and field-installed glazing. His team developed a line of high-performing architectural products that meet or exceed the industry’s most stringent performance standards, he claims, and withstand natural and man-made disasters. The designers also concentrated on creating easier-to-install products and ones that offer more cost effectiveness.

Sebold then made sure he could move the line and mount a full-court press when it came to customer service. Now, with 60 representatives, Tremco has a large North American salesforce for glazing products. The company has enjoyed a growth rate in the high teens for three years, he says.

During Sebold’s tenure, says Chuck Houk, vice president and general manager for Commercial Sealants and Waterproofing, the company’s reputation as a glazing manufacturer has grown “from a little-known supplier to a widely recognized leader.”

Education: 2001, Master of Business Administration, University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis; 1989, bachelor’s degree in business, marketing, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, N.Y.


Personal: Age, 39; born, Cleveland; single

Diversions: Ice hockey, golf, skiing

Connections: 3735 Green Road, Beachwood, Ohio 44122, 216/766-5690.

Shawn Kelly

Training the next generation

In 18 years at Palo Alto Glass in Palo Alto, Calif., Shawn Kelly has gone from know-nothing apprentice to lead man responsible for training the next generation of installers. “I like training people, seeing them start without knowledge of the business and getting them to the point of going out on a job by themselves,” he says. “I like seeing their satisfaction and gratification.” In making pros of greenhorns, Kelly strives to be calm and encouraging while reinforcing a can-do attitude and strong work ethic.

Kelly takes pride in jobs well done. “My greatest reward is in seeing a smile on the customer’s face and knowing I’ve done something good,” he says. Even more fulfilling has been Kelly’s role as coach for his children’s baseball and soccer teams. “I don’t just coach. I touch on the similarities between sports and life. If you want something you have to strive for it,” he says. Experiences on the field have paid dividends at work. “I’ve learned a lot of patience, and that people aren’t all the same and you have to work with those differences,” he says.

Kelly’s winning ways translate into jobs done right the first time, all the time, says Jerry Stellman, general manager of Palo Alto Glass, a company that brings in an annual revenue of $2.5 million to $3 million. “He was just a kid when he started here but he’s matured into one of those people that I can send on any job and know it will be taken care of.”
Thomas Thompson III

Young in age, mature in acumen

The first thing customers notice about Thomas Thompson III is his age; then they’re wowed by his professionalism. “I never met a young man with the class and business acumen he had,” recalls Cookie Gold, a customer. “I thought it was amazing for a kid his age.” Thompson is general manager of the Denver-based Colorado Classic Sunrooms, overseeing sales, design and construction of custom-built sunrooms, skylights and conservatories.

Thompson cut his teeth as a laborer constructing sunrooms, installing skylights and absorbing all he could from co-workers. Early on, he proved his mettle as a salesman, winning clients from much older and more experienced competitors. “When he was just 19, he was selling $50,000 to $100,000 sunrooms and coming back with $40,000 deposits,” says Thomas Thompson Jr., company president. “This would be after the customer had spoken to salespeople from other companies, but they bought from this young kid.” In 2004, Colorado Classic’s annual sales were $1.25 million.

Thompson III also has a knack for design and project management—the more complicated the better—including sunroom additions made to harmonize with Victorian homes in some of Denver’s oldest neighborhoods. Customer service is never far from his mind. “I strive to give them exactly what they want,” Thompson III says. “Now that I oversee all our crews, my goal is to make sure the construction’s done right.” That attitude resonates with clients like Gold. “He did a great job. He’s a very special young man,” she says.

Dave W. Vincent

Left protective cover to grow

His fourth-generation glazier knows you have to leave home to come home.

Dave W. Vincent began his career as a teenager sweeping floors in the family’s business, Center Glass Co. in La Mesa, Calif., and rose to be chief estimator for major construction projects in the United States. Vincent wanted to learn every aspect of the glazing business and says the only way to do that was to venture out on his own. In 2001, he joined friend Robert N. Hoyt, founder of Division 8 Inc., with whom he had worked closely years earlier at Center Glass. The move caused a family rift that lasted nearly a year.

As chief financial officer, salesman and estimator for Division 8, based in Lemon Grove, Calif., Vincent gains the well-rounded experience he sought. He jokingly cautions, “Be careful what you wish for.”

His father, who always had encouraged Vincent to leave protective cover to grow, has come to accept his son’s decision. However, it’s been a challenge. With no cash and no track record with prime contractors, Division 8 has had to accept small, bread-and-butter jobs. This summer, its workers juggled 30 projects, an experience that unnerved the partners because they wanted to personally supervise every job to ensure quality and protect their reputation.

Vincent expects that 2006 will be Division 8’s breakout year. The startup has outgrown Hoyt’s garage, where it was launched, and it boasts a backlog of $12 million worth of contracts. Hoyt praises his partner’s contribution. “David’s solid foundation of monumental sales experience, coupled with irrepressible charisma, has moved this company into the forefront of the glazing industry in San Diego.”

Leaving his father’s side was tough, Vincent concedes, but now that he’s his own boss and equal partner in an up-and-coming company, his family members are closer than ever.