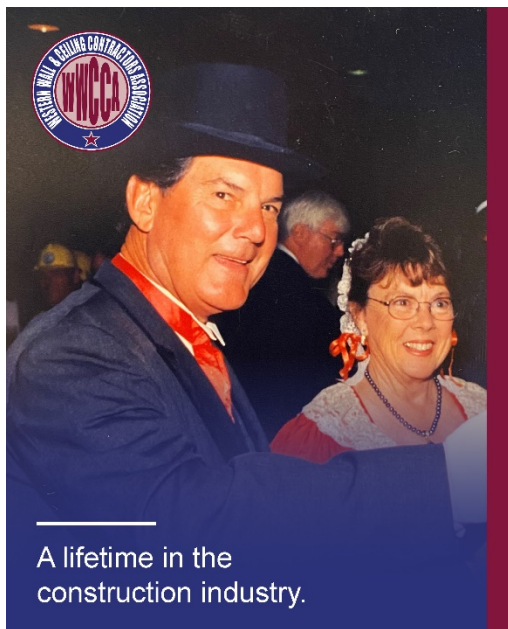


# Dick Martin, Martin Bros.



## LEGENDS

When I was a young kid, my dad asked me what I wanted to be and I told him, “a Lather”. He talked about all the things I could be if I went to school, doctor, lawyer and asked if I knew what happens with a business like that when you try to go on vacation? “Everything stops, no money comes in. If you want to be a contractor and build an organization, you can leave, and everything keeps going.” I took that to heart.

My father came from Scotland at 12 years old in 1916 with his dad who was a bricklayer plasterer. They went to Regina, Canada where they were starting the railroad depots, they were all brick. From there they moved to

Prince Rupert, Canada, about 90 miles from Alaska and that is where my dad grew up. There was a boom going on in LA in 1922-23 and my father and grandfather both were able to come. My dad became an apprentice plasterer and my grandfather was a plasterer. My brother was a plasterer, my uncle was a lather and I was a lather as well. The work ethic was in my DNA.

My father was a great staff plasterer in 1932, because he had gone through the apprenticeship. They originally ended up somewhere in LA then moved to Inglewood and bought a little house near Manchester and Crenshaw. He worked for a small plastering company as an outside superintendent. Art Rochelle was the estimator. When the company was going under, the two of them decided to form Martin & Rochelle and bought out the assets for \$15k, mixers and some other equipment. After 7 years of working together, Art brought on a different partner and my dad went out on his own. Martin Brothers was formed. Art and his new partner were competition but remained good friends.

I got my driver’s license when I was 14 years old and started building gyp tile in 1948. I would come home from school; my brother and I would get the truck from the yard loaded with sand and hard wall and go do wrecking in downtown. For years we would knock walls down at night then take the load upstairs to exchange it for the wrecking.

I started apprenticeship school in 1950. My dad would take me to pick up a truck then my grandfather, to take him to Pacific Mutual or one of the other jobs where we were doing gyp tile tenant walls. I would mix mud for him sitting on a wheelbarrow taking a rest. He would come out and blow a stack “What are you doing, you never sit down! You need to learn how to plaster.” He put me in the closet, showed me how to do things. About 1 hour later he came

back. I must have been standing in about 8 inches of plaster, none on the wall, it was all around my ankles. "I don't like all this wet stuff all over me." I told him. "You know son, you are never going to be a plasterer." In his Scottish accent. He wanted me to take the metal lath and the wire and tie it around the pipes he was going to patch. I liked doing that, and that is how I got started.

My best friend Jerry Sherman and I both finished in 1953 but I became a lather apprentice with Martin Brothers and Jerry went to work for the Pierce organization. We were a small plastering company, at that time probably had no more than 25-40 people. My first job was the Rand building in Santa Monica.

They were doing button board over wood studs, did not develop the clips yet. In commercial construction they did the tie-on metal lath. We were building tile walls. My dad could build about 14 feet of wall a day. We would stack the tile and scratch and brown and finish both sides in one day. He was a good worker.

Most all the tenant work around town at that time was plaster until about 1962. We were doing all 11 Tishman buildings, the wrecking, and the tenant work. They were all 2" solid plaster walls. We would go in, stand up the walls and plaster them.

In 1955 Jack Clinton who worked for my dad decided to go into business for himself, so he quit. I was married that year and would go to my dad's house for Sunday dinner. One day he was working on a set of plans at the table. He told me he had to do the take-off himself since Jack quit. "I could do that", I said since I was running small job at the time but knew how to read plans. He told me to take them home "big mouth". I took all the quantities down for him and brought it back the next Sunday. I got started in the office the next day.

Bob Herndon who was around the industry at the time, him and my dad formed a company called Herndon Corporation to build apartments and residences. They bought 5 acres to develop in Whittier so when I came on, I worked part time for the Herndon Corporation. The other time with Martin Bros. I learned how to build houses and apartment building and do take-off work in the lath and plaster business. I got a good experience doing all that.

1958 I went into the army for 6 months and my brother Bill who was a plasterer at the time, fell off the scaffold and broke his back. When I left, he came into the office and Bob thought him how to do estimating. When I got back Bill was feeling better and went back out in the field while I worked in the office. We really started pushing the tenant part at that time and were doing a couple of pretty good size jobs. At 23 years old I was doing take off work and managing the Wilshire Terrace with a lot of change order work. We had 100 lathers working on the job, it had about a 110 thousand yards of lath, clip on board and a ½ "plaster. I was in the service and would leave Fort Ord Friday at 12 o'clock, get on a plane and go directly into the office to work until late Sunday then catch another plane back.

My dad and uncle had a rough time getting along. I would come into the office, get a cup of

coffee and play go between with my dad on the left and my uncle on the right. I have been saving my money, both my wife and I were working at the time and knew things had to change. In 1960 my dad had a bad heart attack and it turned things around. It was a partnership at that time, and we had a hard time making payroll. Once my dad got out of hospital, I asked him to form a corporation with the 4 of us. Uncle John, my dad, my brother Bill and me. We planned on buying the assets of company and for me to run it. My dad wanted to retire, and my uncle worked for about a year than also had a heart attack and passed way in 1964.

That was the time we were working in Long Beach on a building with metal studs and screw in drywall. The gentlemen who were running the Tishman Company just received a letter from New York saying there will be no more plaster partitions in any of their buildings. We had 150-200 people working on those jobs. I decided to form a drywall company, Marcowall to do that part of the job and had Martin Brothers do the framing. That is how we got into drywall and started going strong. As plaster was fading out people wanted a dry product on the inside of the buildings, and we were able to provide that.

Neither my dad nor my uncle wanted to be involved with drywall, but it paid the bills. Once you are a lather you are always a lather, once you are a plasterer you are always a plasterer. It has hard to change.

Bob Pierce dominated the industry; he was the king. His company did the lathing for all of 7 plastering contractors. He used to bring in railroad cars of lath and black iron. Bob and Andy Kroll, who owned LA Building Material were good friends. In 1966 Bob invited me to antelope hunt in Montana. That is when I first met Don Gainer, he was in his early 20's. We also used to go on golfing trips together. Bob was a great guy, nice man.

Pierce was down near 62<sup>nd</sup> street, on the next street was Rochelle, the next Hayward/Lorenzoni and we were on the one after that. The hub of the entire industry all in the same area. Eventually specialty contractors became a part of it and Dick Howard Acoustics was there as well.

In the late 60ies Tishman asked us to design a wall to go around the elevator so there was no reason to get into the shaft. Most of the walls in New York were concrete block. They were bidding the 100 story Twin Towers in New York City and concrete would have been too heavy. They got together with USG to develop the shaft wall and we were the guinea pig. We had a lath and plaster concrete building on Airport Blvd. and redesigned the entire thing to experiment with the shaft wall which eventually went into the Twin Towers in New York.

In the early 60's the fireproofing also changed, monocoat came into the picture. Tommy Thompson, a good friend of my dad's was developing a 2-cylinder plaster machine and we worked together in perfecting it to spray monocoat to direct fireproofing. Fireproofing became very dominant around town and we were doing really well. I traveled around the country to see what everyone else was doing. Went back east and checked out buildings in Chicago where they were using fiber and also went to San Francisco. A major fireproofer was doing a 50-story building using Essick pumps with 3" aluminum pipe when none thought you could do that. I

came back a redeveloped our fireproofing operation to use the 3" aluminum pipe since we were doing a lot of work. I decided to put a Y on it and see if I can use 2 hoses from the same pump, but the machine could not handle it. I rebuild the frames and put a 3-cylinder diesel motor on them which had plenty of power to use a dual nozzle 3" pipe and still get volume I needed. I went around the country and bought all the Essick machines I could, found 25 of them. I rebuild them completely and was able to reinforce the weak part of the machines, the crankshaft. Carol Duncan was doing the 12 story - 76 building. He was pumping from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> floor dumping the material then he had another operation to go to 12<sup>th</sup> floor. We could pump to the top of a building we were working on in LA, 85 floors.

I had diesel pumps, but gas mixers and decided to also change the mixers to diesel because people were stealing gas on the jobsites. I ended up with 25 pumps that were pumping 10k bags of monocoat per day. We were pretty busy.

When we did library square in downtown, we had 6 Essick plaster machines in the basement and piped out all the diesel exhaust because we could not get power. We just recently finished an 80/90 story downtown hotel where we used electric machines, they have taken over the industry.

I was always handy and pretty good mechanically which helped the company. As a lather you get good at a lot of things. I started off in 1950 building cars, racecars and hotrods. I have made about 30 of them up to this point. We were innovating all kinds of things, experimenting. Another example was the scaffold for fireproofing. We developed that to be able to fireproof the outside beams on the multi height buildings in LA. That was my whole thought for business, how do I outsmart the competition, that is what I thrived on. I was proud to be able to do it myself and not depend on someone else.

We also had a very good system for how to move scaffolds and pumping operation from floor to floor without losing any time. We would do 2 floors a week, so we had a complete setup on the next floor already so the guys could keep going without stopping.

The first big building we did was in Century City, the core work was all plaster. The second one, the core changed to all drywall. We were doing a lot of work in those days, I had five 50 story buildings going at one time with fireproofing and core work. We went from a little 25 men company to averaging about 600-800 people at one time. Lathers, drywallers, tapers and laborers.

We started going big in the late 70's and 80's and did a lot of buildings in Downtown Los Angeles. We also did the two 44 story Twin Towers in Century City with fireproofing. That was a joint venture with the Raymond Company who we still work with today.

The first one we did was with George Raymond and we became good friends. He took a liking to me and put me on the HOD carriers labor board when I was 21 years old. Things were different back in the 60's and San Pedro was a hard place to work. One day a few years later, we had a meeting down in Long Beach. George Raymond was the chairman and he introduced me

around the room when I arrived. There was 7 Hod carriers and 7 management guys including George and I. Behind everyone one of the Hod carriers was a bodyguard. And everyone one of them had a gun.

Raymond was a monster company, ran roughly 2000 plasterers in his prime. They used to shut down Whittier Blvd. on Thursdays for him and his foreman. He had his own company of mixers and 150 trucks. They got into the commercial business about 1955 and in the early 60's Raymond, Hoppe, Bolster and Duncan joint ventured the LA Airport job. We were not nearly big enough to do that, but George was not happy working with them and wanted us to Joint Venture work together. Unfortunately, he passed away, Jim pakora ran the company at that time. We went on and did the Entertainment Buildings in Century City and the Twin Towers together. We did very well. Carl Raymond came into picture at that time and we were doing a lot of different things together like the Wells Fargo Building in DTLA.

We got very busy in 80's we did the TI on quite a few buildings in the city. At that time BonWall was strong... they had a 2" solid drywall partition that they sold thought an excellent marketing program. They were 20x24 inch panels that slide locked together, we would just move them not demo them. The product was not good sound wise, you could hear right through it. Eventually drywall tenant work went back to slab to slab. We would run one side of the wall clear to up to the top and leave the other side down to the ceiling height to run the insulation to the slab to keep the sound contained. We did lath, plaster, fireproofing, framing and a lot of tenant work.

Dinwiddie was the contractor on the Getty Project and they only wanted Raymond and us to do the job. We Joined Ventured once again. The job was a concrete building with 3 coat plaster. We did the fireproofing and the interior of the museum but were concerned about getting the material to dry. That was the time thin coat plaster was coming along. They did not want to use it because they thought you cannot patch it. We built some mockups in the warehouse and asked the architects to come take a look. We sawcut a big hole in the middle and patched it with plaster. They changed the entire project from 3 coat to thin coat. It turned out spectacular. It is an absolutely perfect project.

Berger Bros. and Brady ended up working on some of the smaller buildings as well.

I used to go up there about once a week. Jerry Sherman oversaw the job for us and Dave Suder was in charge for Raymond. We worked on it for about 1.5 year with average of 150-200 people. It had to be just as perfect above the ceiling as it was below. All the piping, ductwork and everything is meticulously aligned. They had 25 white glove inspectors and if it was not just right you had to do it over again. We did it right the first time of course. This building is a 100-year design and even though some of the studs were over specified they did not want to change anything, so we built it exactly as originally designed.

I spent a lot of time on the jobsites throughout my career and made it a point to know most of the people, the field was in my blood. I was not able to see all of them because we would

average about 60 jobs at one time.

I still love going to jobs even today and just got back from the Rams Stadium. I got Jerry to come over from Hawaii, he lives there now. We went to Fontana and looked at our warehouse where we built 1500 the exterior panels of the Lucas Museum.

We are Joint Venturing the Rams Stadium with Michael Nevell. It's a huge job, a beautiful facility. We spent 3 hours touring. There are 3 sets of our contractors on there, Standard Drywall, Raymond, Nevell and us. We are doing all the framing on 6, 7 8th floors, and plastering all throughout the building. They brought on separate contractor to do fireproofing.

The quality of the work is unbelievable. Jerry and I are lathers and my brother Bill, a plasterer. We all have a pretty critical eye and quality is the first thing we look at. None of us found anything we did not like, it was amazing.

I lived in Inglewood for 35 years, close to the racetrack where the stadium is located now. When I was a kid in the late 40's we used to climb the fence at the horse track and steal goose eggs and ride horses at the barn. That whole area must be close to 400 acres. The Inglewood Country Club used to be there as well and of course the Forum. We did all the interior of the Forum in 1966. Now Forum is on one corner the Rams Stadium in the middle and the Clippers Stadium at Prairie and Century. It is changing immensely, and I see it becoming a built-up sports hub with lot of residential because it is so close to the airport.

I was lucky to be able to know all the big-time guys really well, in New York and all over the country. I made it a point to always introduce myself and talk business. I traveled all over world with the International Association for drywall and plaster contractors for 25 years. Ron Brady and Bob Heimerl were on that committee as well as Jim Rutherford. The comradery and fellowship were great in those days. We all bid jobs competitively, but when one of us got it awarded, we shared workers and equipment.

It is a lot of who you know. We worked for the best people all the time, stuck with the bigger companies to make sure we were able to collect the money we were owed. When you are in the contracting business you can drive a Volkswagen, or you can drive a Cadillac. When you chose well you will stay working with the best people that pay their bills. The key is to provide the best service and quality work.

I retired in 2003 and will be 85-year-old in May 2020. The thing is I would be there doing it today if I could, I loved every bit of it.