



Home is Where the Heart Is  
**Hart & Debby DeNoble**

By Amanda N. Wegner

**D**ebby and Hart DeNoble try to joke, saying they met in the Peace Corps.

Or a bar.

In reality, their relationship goes back to a business math class at West High School. And this year, they're celebrating 40 years of marriage.

Or, as Hart says, notes Debby, "all my life."

"We kind of want to sound more exciting than we really are," Debby says.

But who needs a fast life, fancy parties and whirlwind excursions when you have love, a great family and a premier business to boot?

"Nothing," says Debby DeNoble, "makes me happier than looking around the table and seeing my family. That's really what makes it all worthwhile for us."

### Care forever

Hart is the owner of Hart DeNoble Builders, one of the greater Madison area's premier builders of high-end homes; if you've been to a Parade of Homes in the last 20-some years, you've most likely witnessed the builder's quality craftsmanship.

Now working alongside his son, Jason DeNoble, his son-in-law, Jason Franzen, and his nephew, Gar Holcomb, as well as a slew of other talented staffers, Hart always knew he wanted to be a builder. His father was a carpenter and building inspector, and Hart worked as a carpenter before that evolved into remodeling, then building projects.

But Hart didn't want to be just any builder, turning out homes as fast as possible.

"I always wanted to be a high-quality builder," he says. "I put quality above everything else."

That quality extends beyond the workmanship and quality of products used in a Hart DeNoble home; his pride is evident in how he works with clients as well. His above-and-beyond service often turns clients into friends. Debby recalls how once the second owner of a Hart DeNoble home called the office asking how something worked; Hart personally drove over to the home to answer the homeowner's questions.

"I take pride in my work. These are my houses, and I want to take care of them forever," says Hart. "Plus, you build such a bond with these people as you work with them in the building process, often over a year, that you feel terrible to let them down."

### Family business

While Debby is not a formal partner or employee in the business, she often finds herself involved in projects and with clients. Plus, with her son, son-in-law and nephew working with Hart, much of the business talk extends outside the office and into the home.

"I like to keep my nose in what's going on," she says, adding that Hart doesn't like for her to go to building shows for fear she'll return with ideas for their own home, which is just five years old.

"Very seldom do we go out together and not talk business," says Hart. "But we also know not to get into it too much."

Hart works 40 hours a week, but he's more involved with customers than the specifics of projects.

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Hart DeNoble

"When people come to the office, they want to see Hart," says Debby. "The two boys can totally run the business, but [clients] are coming because 'Hart DeNoble' is the name on the building."

That is, after they realize "Hart DeNoble" is one person, not "Mr. Hart" and "Mr. DeNoble."

"People used to call and ask to talk to Mr. Hart or Mr. DeNoble, and I'd say 'You have both,'" says Hart, explaining his first name was his grandmother's maiden name and that others in his family have it as a middle name.

"It's a good name and I get lots of compliments on it, but I certainly wouldn't choose it as a first name for a kid."

In fact, if Hart were ever to change anything about the business, it would be dropping his first name from the name of the business.

"It's got its merits. The confusion is its only drawback," says Hart.

### Home base

The DeNobles have been happy to donate their time and money, but they prefer not to spend their time sitting on boards or helming campaigns.

"He'll do anything for anybody," Debby

says of Hart, "but he's not really interested in being president of anything."

Debby, on the other hand, has a knack for doing the dirty work.

"Anything that takes a lot of guts, Debby does it," Hart says of his wife.

In the past, Debby worked with the Ronald McDonald House, was a PTO mom and served on the Women's Council, a women's group associated with the Madison Area Builders Association, of which Hart is a longtime member, and more. More recently, she was a major donor fundraiser for Gilda's Club of Madison, working closely with Cindy Alvarez to get the organization off the ground here.

But building or fundraising, home is where the heart is. The DeNoble's gorgeous Middleton home is home base for the couple's four adult children and their five grandchildren; all the grandchildren live nearby and the couple's only out-of-state son, Ben, comes home as often as his job working with reality shows on MTV allows.

With 13 years between their oldest son, Jason, and their youngest son, Zach, a graduate student at UW-Madison (they also have a daughter, Robin, who lives in nearby Cross Plains), the DeNobles have enjoyed having their children at home with them longer than most couples. And Debby, who worked as a med tech with the Red Cross early in the couple's relationship, had the rare opportunity to stay home with her children through the years.

"We're kind of sticks in the mud," says Debby, "but I'd rather have a sleepover party on a Saturday night with my girls than go to the Frostiball."

The couple enjoys traveling with their family, especially taking the grandchildren on cruises and trips to Disney, though they often go on excursions with Zach, "a big history buff who likes to keep us busy," Debby chides. Hart, also a history buff, is happy to tag along.

At home, Grandpa Hart enjoys racing the grandchildren around on four-wheelers or snowmobiles, and in the summer, the air at the DeNoble home is filled with laughter from the children and grandchildren playing in the pool.

"Our family, they certainly do keep us young and active," says Debby. "And we couldn't ask for anything better."



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