

# R. Thomas Daniel Roofing

A Third-Generation Capitol Hill Business

BY HEATHER SCHOELL

There are some Capitol Hill institutions that anchor modern day life to life in the past. Imagine ladies of the 1920s, walking with purpose to Eastern Market for meal ingredients or to Grubbs for cough medicine. Now look up to see the young Thomas Pumphrey with his hammer, repairing the roof of a Capitol Hill home. Fast forward 90 years to people walking with purpose to Eastern Market or Grubbs, and Thomas Daniel, the great-grandson of Pumphrey, fixing a Capitol Hill roof.

## Early Beginnings

R. Thomas Daniel Roofing is a third-generation family business that opened on Capitol Hill about 90 years ago and was originally operated and owned by Thomas Pumphrey. Both the business and Pumphrey's residence were at 306 Independence Ave. SE. "I remember my great-grandmother sitting at the window of the building watching the people go by each day while she served as the secretarial assistant to my great-grandfather, answering the business phone, talking to customers, making appointments, etc.," said Tom Daniel, owner of the present-day R. Thomas Daniel Roofing.

"My father, Robert, who bought the business from Thomas, met my mother, Ana, on Capitol Hill. They were introduced by mutual friends, and my mother lived on Seventh Street SE, just a few doors from Tunnichliff's and across the street from Eastern Market," said Daniel. "When I was born, we lived at 325 C St. SE, the street behind the Hawk and Dove. I probably got on a ladder for the first time when I was about 13."

Daniel was trained in roofing by his father, who was trained by Dan-

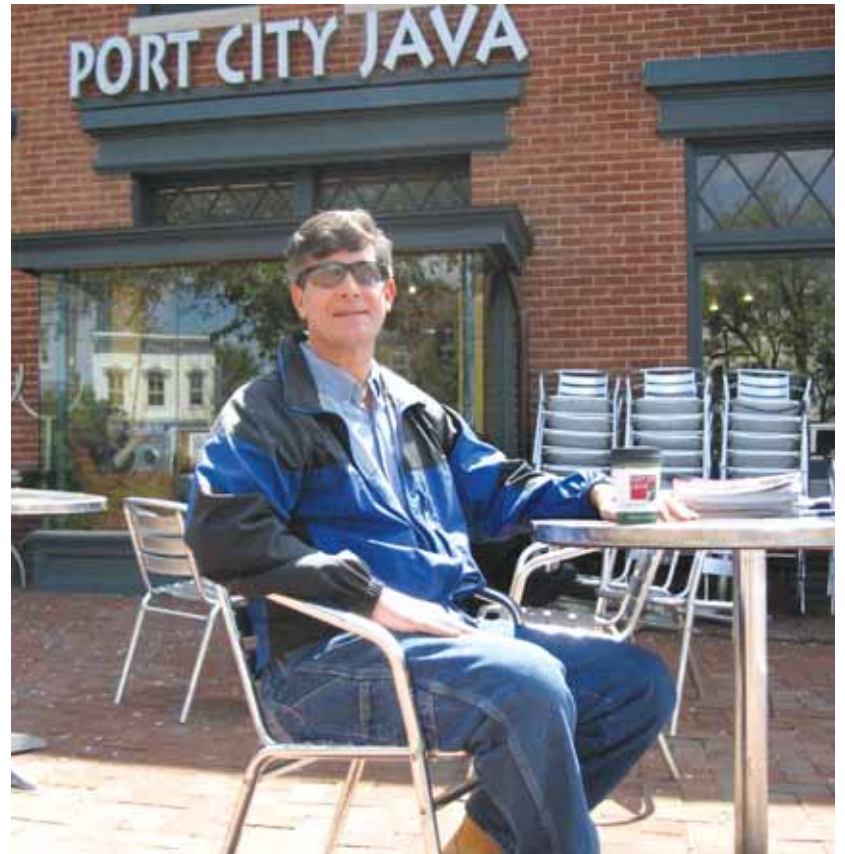
iel's great grandfather. (His grandfather was not involved in the family business; he served in the military and then as an insurance salesman.)

## Climbing Ladders

"After attending Gonzaga High School, the discussion among the family was would I go to college or go into the business full time? College won out, although I continued to work in the business on semester breaks and in the summer," Daniel said. "I was the only one among a group of close friends who never experienced spring break. To me, [spring break] meant roofing work! I continued in the business during semester breaks and summers when I was at George Mason University School of Law," recalled Daniel, who negotiated with the law school to do roof work in exchange for one semester of tuition.

"When I graduated from law school and started my career in the financial services business – my first job at the old National Savings and Trust Company at the corner of 15th Street and New York Avenue – I still worked some roofing on weekends," said Daniel.

But Daniel had other goals, and found career success with large, multi-national corporations in the US and in the Asia Pacific, working as a senior executive and as a consultant. After a time, he came home. "Roofing was never far from the family discussions. So, I had quite a few years of experience in the actual work before I embarked on the other career track. I decided it was time to change my lifestyle, permanently remove myself from the corporate rat race, and return to my roots in the family roofing business," he said. "I love it. I have a passion about what I do. With the corporate experience and the family



Tom Daniel with a coffee and his favorite jacket.

business experience I have, the absolute most important thing is to have happy customers. Everyone says that, but the most important thing I have learned in business is that the customer is king and the customer has to be treated fairly, with respect and open and honest communication."

## Full Circle

"My executive experience in dealing with all aspects of building and running companies for others has been a great experience as I build our presence in the roofing business in DC and especially on Capitol Hill," said Daniel, who is a member of CHAMPS and is the recommended roofer of Capitol Hill Village.

"I'm involved with every aspect

of the business," he said. "It's a small business – I do a lot of roofing work myself, and 100 percent of the time, I'm the one that meets with the customer. I like to explain clearly to my customers what services they need and why. We may be able to provide a less expensive alternative than a new roof, for example, that will save the customer money and extend the life of the roof. That mindset is important, I think, in any business, and especially in such a close-knit community as Capitol Hill," said Daniel.

"We specialize in repairing, painting and replacing flat roofs of all types, repairing and replacing gutters, downspouts, chimneys and wall caps. I did quite a bit of work for Al and Linda Javarone after the big storms in February," Daniel said. "It was a

comprehensive job, including repairing several leaks, taking down an ice-filled gutter, replacing gutters and painting their roof."

Linda Javarone said of Daniel, "He was great – he really rescued us. I got Tom's number through Capitol Hill Village. He responded immediately. We had a tremendous amount of ice backed up in the gutter. He was very professional, very reliable."

"I don't usually respond to flyers, but I had leaks, so I gave him a call," said Hill resident Monica Warren-Jones. Tom agreed that we did not need a new roof now, but that we would in about three years. His service was excellent, reasonable, practical and friendly. I've recommended him to friends and family, and I like that it's a longtime Capitol Hill business."

Daniel explained his approach, which is to honestly assess a roof, not to always recommend a new one. "Monica had a major roof leak, which I fixed, and on the inspection, I saw she had an older roof. Instead of recommending a replacement, I recommended that the roof be repaired where I thought it was necessary, even if it wasn't leaking today, and to paint the roof. This work extends the life of the roof by up to several years and saves the customer money today. It is a different business approach. However, if a customer definitely needs a new roof today, I will recommend that."

*For more information on R. Thomas Daniel Roofing or to schedule a free roof inspection, call 443-968-0311 or e-mail Tom Daniel at [rtd80209@aol.com](mailto:rtd80209@aol.com).*

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