



Adams & Beasley

A PARTNERSHIP BORNE OF BB&N

by Peter DeMarco

Eric Adams '94 and Angus Beasley '94 had never built a latrine in the woods before. Who at Freshman Bivouac had?

But if the bar was set low, the two friends sure didn't know it.

Grandly situated on a high bluff overlooking the lake, Adams and Beasley's outdoor bathroom had it all: a seat the height of a standard toilet; a well-strung overhead tarp to provide privacy and protection; excellent ventilation; a toilet-roll hanger made from the perfect stick; even a bench to set magazines and canteens on.



Eric Adams '94, left, and Angus Beasley '94



"Because of the ventilation it didn't smell at all. It was dry. It was beautiful," Beasley recalls. "I would use it today."

Adams figured that if they were stuck building a latrine, why not make one that was totally awesome?

"We tried to think about it in a holistic sense. It was something you could actually enjoy going to," he says. "It seems funny to talk about, but as I sit and think, it's an approach that Angus and I take now. The approach that everything matters."

More than 20 years later, Adams and Beasley are still building bathrooms together — albeit, the \$300,000 kind. Their high-end custom building and remodeling business, Adams &

Beasley, Inc., of Carlisle, is booming, with jobs all over Greater Boston and a staff of nearly a dozen employees. From penthouse roof decks to home gyms with rock-climbing walls to old country barns restored to glory, they do it all.

That the pair have remained best friends is no surprise: they clicked the moment they met in eighth grade English class, eventually wrestling, rowing crew, and singing in the Knightingales together. They shared a passion for building things, too, each having learned carpentry from an uncle who was in the trade.

The idea that Adams and Beasley would be business partners, however, never dawned on them while they

were at BB&N, or when they went their separate ways in college.

By 2004 Adams had started his own remodeling business, and Beasley had taken up cabinet making. By chance, they bumped into each other on Charles Street in Boston while headed to job sites on the very same block. It was like old times and by that night, they'd decided to give partnership a try.

Joining forces, they were warned, might ruin their friendship. "Partners are for dancing, not business," chided one of Adams' clients. But being best friends, it turned out, actually made their business stronger.

Their shared success, in turn, has brought Adams and Beasley that much closer.

"A lot of people lose the relationship by getting mired in a situation or detail at work and taking it too seriously," Adams says. "We say to each other, fairly frequently, 'I love you like a brother.' That's the connection. It's kind of unbreakable in that sense."

"It's not that we never disagree," Beasley says. "But a lot of the time Eric and I will actually end up fighting with each other while saying the same thing. I'm saying it from the Yin and he's saying it from the Yang. Then, we realize we're arguing to a place we're actually in agreement over."

"As long as we trust each other," says Adams, "which we've been doing for 23 years, everything else is easy."

Interviewed in their workshop — at the time, home to an 8-foot stained-glass "half-rose" church window they were restoring — the alums talked about their enduring connections to BB&N, their work, and each other.

BULLETIN: Take me back to when you first became friends.

BEASLEY: There's kind of a funny story. In eighth grade he came over my house, which was on this hill, and we had this neighbor who had a go-kart that didn't have a motor. So we thought it would be a great idea to bring it to the top of the hill and pile, like, five kids on it. Eric said if something should go wrong he would sit in the front and be the brakes. So we start going down the hill...

ADAMS: ...and we're about to hit a manhole cover. I was like, "I gotta bail!" I went to jump off but we were moving too fast.

BEASLEY: The thing went right over his leg and broke it.

ADAMS: So, I'm lying by the side of the road — I was in shock or something — and I'm like, "Angus, go get me two pieces of wood and some rope and we'll build a splint." He goes into his house and he comes out with a magazine to ease my anguish. I'm like, "Where's the rope and the wood?" It's that kind of camaraderie.

BULLETIN: In another life could you have been just as happy running, say, a hot dog stand together? Or did it have to be about building things?

BEASLEY: I don't think it could have been anything. We had this connection through the trades because of the work we did summers and vacations for our uncles doing tiling or roofing or digging ditches. Not a typical experience for a BB&N kid, I would say. So, we both had that.

ADAMS: It would have to be a very specific business because Angus and I are both tickled by very specific things. Part of it is this very physical, tangible craft production we do. Part of it is the ability for us to sit and take hours of each other's time talking about the most minute details. We've thought about owning a restaurant. Perhaps we could be fishing boat captains together. But could we be in software sales? No.

BULLETIN: How do you divide the responsibilities of running your company? Who's the hammer and who's the nail, so to speak?

BEASLEY: I'm the president and he's the treasurer, but we found out the treasurer actually has more power. I'll say no, forget about the margin, this needs to be beautiful. And sometimes Eric says, "No, it doesn't have to be *this* beautiful. It has to be about the margin."

ADAMS: Angus is much more detail-oriented, and that brings a huge, critical component to our production. At our Christmas party last year we gave out these funny awards, all kind of half-truths. Angus' award was the "Your Perfect Is Not Good Enough For Me Award." It read, "Striving for a level of excellence only a truly unassailable, infallible artist could achieve... by purging any potential profit from any job."

BEASLEY: Eric shows up to a site and the guys start running faster. I show up and the guys start worrying that I'm going to pick apart all the minutia that maybe they had tried to sweep under the rug. Those two things are kind of complementary aspects that we bring.

BULLETIN: What's most memorable from your time at BB&N?

ADAMS: People always think about the academic portion as the most important thing, and that's obviously important. But I can remember the evening after a grueling wrestling practice halfway through our senior year when Angus called me up. I'd already lost 8 pounds to get from 168 to 160 and was really feeling lean and mean. Angus said, "You have to drop another weight class so all the holes in our lineup are filled up. It's the only way we can get to the Graves Kelsey Cup and win." At the time I was kind of pissed at him, but ultimately that phone call was kind of a turning point in my life because the pressure that Angus put on me forced me to work that much harder.

That degree of pushing each other, either sparring at practice or rowing in the same boat and having to compensate for each other—he's tall, I'm short—helped make me who I am.

BEASLEY: For us it was always, "Let's get better." I think this is partially what BB&N meant for me. Hard work, stick-to-it-iveness, setting goals and working towards them. You can always learn more and get better at what you do. We still feel that way.

BULLETIN: What has being in business together taught you about your friendship?

ADAMS: That the relationship is the most important thing. The business decisions we are making, it's not like any of them are saving any lives.

BEASLEY: That it's a balancing act.

BULLETIN: What makes a successful friendship?

ADAMS: Trust, implicitly. Fun. Laughter — that's the backbone. You've got to have the ability to brush the dust off your shoulder from the day and have a beer and make fun of each other.

BEASLEY: I was going to just say that. I think listening is a big part...and taking joy in your friend's success. Humility is important, but I'll go on the flip side of that: dreaming, reaching,



Samples of Adams and Beasley's work include this 2009 roof deck in Beacon Hill and a 2011 Back Bay brownstone restoration (see page 18).

"For us it was always, 'Let's get better.' I think this is partially what BB&N meant for me. Hard work, stick-to-it-iveness, setting goals and working towards them. You can always learn more and get better at what you do. We still feel that way."



stretching, challenging yourself and the other person to succeed. Then, to share in that success and revel in it.

BULLETIN: Where would you be without each other?

ADAMS: There are a lot of well-established builders in Boston, guys who've been around 30 or 40 years. We've been joking for years that they're our competition, but the reality is that with

each passing year, and each peg in the board, we've caught up. We have a proven track record and reputation. That wouldn't be there without both of us.

BEASLEY: How could I run this business without Eric? I would be at a loss.

(This interview was condensed and edited for clarity.) ❁