

NETWORKED IN NAPLES

A DOWNTOWN INTERIOR DESIGNER COLLABORATES WITH
BUDDY SHERRILL, A LEGEND IN THE FURNITURE BUSINESS.

BY ROBIN DEMATTIA

A LEGENDARY INFLUENCE

Susan Bay, right, says Buddy Sherrill, left, is a legend in the furniture industry. The two met years ago when Sherrill began dropping by Bay Design in downtown Naples.



Photography: Bert Vanderveen

Several times a year, Bay would briefly see Harold “Buddy” Sherrill, owner of Sherrill Furniture in Hickory, North Carolina, at industry events. The two had brief conversations that Bay always treasured.

“Buddy Sherrill is a legend,” she says. “He is very interesting.”

But their relationship grew when Sherrill, who has owned a second home in Port Royal for about 25 years, started popping in to her Naples store.

“Every time I would come to Naples, I would drop in her store to see her and I always liked the look of it,” Sherrill recalls. “It looks very much like the way we like to look in

FROM AT LEAST THE DAWN OF THE 20TH CENTURY, WHEN THOMAS EDISON AND HENRY FORD COLLABORATED WHILE AT THEIR WINTER HOMES ON THE BANKS OF THE CALOOSA HATCHEE RIVER IN FORT MYERS, SOUTHWEST FLORIDA HAS BEEN KNOWN AS A PLACE WHERE GREAT MINDS FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE MEET IN THE WINTER AND, MAYBE, HATCH A BIG IDEA OR TWO.

That comes as no surprise to Susan Bay, whose Bay Design store and studio opened at 326 13th Ave. S. in 2003. For more than 25 years, Bay also owned a store in Ann Arbor, Michigan, until she closed two years ago.

our High Point showrooms. Clean, bright and cheerful.”

Bay says Sherrill would ride his bike over from Port Royal and chat about business, products, trends and the economy. They would bounce ideas off each other.

One year, he asked Bay to design some wood pieces for his Hickory White line. A year later, he asked her to redesign the entry to one of his showrooms. Then, he asked her to create a product line for his Dan Carithers Collection.

“There’s a newness to the unique touch that she and her staff always accomplish in their display and selection of fabrics and furniture,” Sherrill says.

Bay confesses she had not previously done that type of design work and was hesitant to take it on, lest it take her away from existing clients. But now, she



ANIMAL INSTINCTS

Zebra prints are used as accents for this interior display at Bay Design. Almost anything goes in today's world of design, explains Susan Bay.

Bert Vanderveen

enthuses, "I really enjoy it. It's an honor and a privilege to work with him and to have been selected. I like change and new challenges and doing something different. I love doing this."

For the past three years, Bay has designed furniture for Sherrill; bought accessories, lighting and art for their showrooms; and selected fabrics for pieces shown at the furniture markets held twice a year.

She recently added larger credenzas to his line, to help offset hefty televisions that hang above them, and designed a round dining table, some chests and cocktail tables. She has also selected fabrics for sofas, sectionals chairs and benches.

"My main interest is to find products that I think are missing for Buddy's clientele and our clientele," Bay says. "These are needs that I see in our store, so I design a product based on need."

She also keeps in mind how furniture styles differ across the country, drawing on her experience of creating more traditional styles and neutral tones for Michigan versus blues often used in Southwest Florida. She watches trends, too, noting that heavier textures, patterns, grays, oranges and corals are coming in style.

So is personalization, she says. "People are not staying with one style necessarily but are multilayering styles, using items and artifacts they have collected over a period of years. People are more expressive individually in their homes than they have been. They don't want it to look cookie-cutter. There's a great deal of 'almost anything goes' right now."

Bay says her friendship with Sherrill works because "it's based on respect for what both of us have accomplished."

She admires Sherrill "for setting an example of being an honest, hardworking, successful firm built on a solid basis," she says. "He's not flamboyant. He's built a multitiered series of companies under the Sherrill umbrella that have set standards for style and integrity throughout the industry."

And, she adds, "He's such a nice person. We like each other and we love the industry."

Sherrill must feel passionate about furniture, as he is nearing 90 and still actively involved in his businesses.

"I've been successful with a lot of good people like Susan," he says. "We have seven companies, and it's just a joy to come to work." AH