



by K.T. TenHoopen
 Three of the Pacific Northwest's leading craftsmen share their philosophies and visions of an ancient and contemporary craft: stone masonry. Here *Natural Awakenings* readers can gain inspirational insights firsthand, from the perspectives of accomplished artisans, into the diverse applications of stonework in the home and garden environs.

K.T. TenHoopen of *Natural Awakenings* interviews Portland's Matt Goddard of *Poetry In Stone* and Eric Contey of *Eric Contey Stone Work*, with Master Stone Cutter Keith Phillips of the *Hercules Quarry #1* in Tenino, WA.

NA: What do you consider to be the beautifying qualities of stone?

MG: For me, stone is the most inherently beautiful of all building materials. Stone possesses a vast array of colors, textures, densities and natural

formations, giving the stonemason an unlimited pallet from which to work. Metaphorically speaking, the beauty of stone lends itself to the history of humanity, a symbol of our ancient relatives. It also holds mystical and romantic connotations, i.e., strength and toil, timelessness, simplicity, integrity and, simply stated, genuine beauty.

KP: Stone is probably the most enduring material known to the building community. Stone is earthy and ageless. The very presence of a stone structure, as well as the long-standing, traditional cutting and carving techniques applied, brings us to our roots.

EC: Stone equals stability and permanence. It is smooth "como agua", contrastingly rough and textured, even jagged and sinister. Stone is graceful, abstract art, representing both the primitive and contemporary. The beauty of a garden is dramatically enhanced with the agelessness of stone. The addition of a stone structure,

be it a cascading water feature, a boulder arrangement or a structural wall, is most always a source of permanent beauty. With its contours and angles, pleasing curves and varied shapes, stone immediately produces a sense of strength, symmetry and beauty that endures.

NA: In which ways would you consider stone to be nurturing?

MG: Stone can take a vacant space and add color, form, dimension and most often charm and warmth. These special qualities are apparent before a stonemason even lays a hand on it. I often feel guilty imposing my will upon the already perfect medium. Any space is noticeably enhanced with qualities that nurture, visually and spiritually, with the very presence of stone, masonry aside.

EC: I see quality stonework as an integral part of private places, demonstrating that you can take someone's wishes, dreams even, and manifest them into a special space, private, inspiring and soothing. The environmentally friendly, natural beauty and permanence of stone provides an artful setting that you can appreciate every day.

NA: How would you describe your most satisfying projects?

MG: All of my projects are extremely satisfying on many levels, from stone walkways and garden patios to retaining walls and water features. My favorite aspect of stonemasonry is the opportunity to create something beautiful as well as functional for someone who shares my creative visions and efforts. It's always reward-

ing to hear that clients are thoroughly enjoying the environment I helped to create or enhance.

EC: I enjoy taking on the setting of any given project as a clean slate, which will be transformed with great care and solid craftsmanship, into a source of aesthetic enhancement with a personal flair. I always appreciate being given the artistic freedom to implement unique ideas, both my own as well as my clients'. I enjoy doing what I visualize needs doing. Unrestricted forms of creative expression help make stone masonry the ultimate kind of work. It's especially satisfying to create a coexistence of hard, textured, impenetrable stone with the softness and flexibility of wild, thriving flora. There is a balance achieved when stone and plants strike the right chords together, creating contrasts in color and light, with dancing silhouettes of flowering buds and leaves against split stone.

NA: What types of future creations, or "dream" projects do you have in mind?

MG: A solid stone pedestrian bridge with traditional arch work; an underground restaurant/bar with a unique stone interior; a stone bathing/soaking pool with surrounding stonework; a cave-like sleeping chamber; a stone house.

EC: Dream? Anything I design could fit into the category of a 'dream project'. The one we're presently working on at the Rhododendron Garden in SE Portland, is dream-like. Our jobsite is infused with lots of fine, cold, gin-clear water, spurting forth under our wall. I also have a long-standing project in the vast and beautiful John Day country, very dreamy, wrapping hillsides with circular-patterned walls of stone. I believe that dreams come from the most gradual, reflective thinking, churned over and over again in the mind. Ideas pop up, some worthy. There's no hurrying a dream with stone.

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