

Jerry Howard ([00:08](#)):

Welcome to Housing Developments. I'm Jerry Howard.

Jim Tobin ([00:11](#)):

I'm Jim Tobin. Good morning Jerry?

Jerry Howard ([00:13](#)):

Morning Jim, how are you?

Jim Tobin ([00:14](#)):

Doing fine. It seems that we may have actually turned the corner here in the Mid-Atlantic on spring. I'm looking forward to a little more sunshine at daylight.

Jerry Howard ([00:22](#)):

Yeah, we're talking about maybe in the seventies tomorrow that wouldn't be nice. Here we are in March 8th, which is international women's day. March is also women's history month. See for me, and I think for you too, March was always Irish American history. That's right. Happy to share it with women. I think it's important that in our industry, especially we recognize not only the contribution of women thus far, we've had two women presidents of NAHB. Shirley Wiseman and Sandy Dunn, both of whom left big marks on the history of the organization. We have a female officer now, Alicia Huey, who is really doing a great job thus far.

Jerry Howard ([01:10](#)):

Our industry has changed significantly. When I started at NAHB Jim, the professional women in buildings council was the Women's Auxiliary and it was more of a social function. Now women are playing such an important role in the industry as professionals that we've recognized that, and we are not only encouraging, but doing our best, I hope to bring more women into the industry. It's very important. You and I have been here now on staff where we have a number of women represented at the senior staff table. We had our first female top lobbyists before you were, so women are playing a big role.

Jim Tobin ([01:54](#)):

That's right. Yeah, absolutely. I think like you said, it's been great to watch the PWB grow, become more of a voice for not only themselves, but also the industry. This industry continues to, to face a labor shortage. One of the things that our colleague at chief economist, Rob Dietz, always talks about is the rate at which women are working in the construction sector. It's only about three or 4%. Rob has been talking for years about the need to attract more women into the trades and into construction management, because that would help our labor issues. Not only that, but as we talk about the trades are such a great career choice and being able to have PWB be a megaphone for our industry and how women can become more involved in it, I think is a real plus for us.

Jerry Howard ([02:51](#)):

I completely agree. To celebrate this, we've invited as a guest today, Linda Hebert who is one of the leading women in our industry and in our association. Thank you for joining us, Linda. We know it's early out in California, but thanks for joining us and tell us a little bit about yourself.

Linda Hebert ([03:10](#)):

Thanks, Jerry and Jim. It's good to see you guys. I currently have a consulting company in sales and marketing. I also act as a VP of sales and marketing for a local builder here in California as their vice-president. Then I also am doing their product design. Kind of their product design developer and work with several different builders to do the same. It's been a nice ride.

Jim Tobin ([03:36](#)):

Yeah. Welcome Linda, it's great to see I know you've been very active in many of the spaces on the advocacy team and Bill PAC and a variety of things. You've really carved out a great career at NAHB career. But, tell us how you got started in the home building industry.

Linda Hebert ([03:55](#)):

I've done it forever. I literally started in real estate in 1979. It was one of my first jobs out of school. I'm one of your poster children. I started selling real estate. I got married early. I did a couple of years college. My husband didn't go to college he was contractor. We bought our first house at 22 and I had a boat and a motorcycle, we lived the dream in the industry. It's been good to me, started there and got into publishing new homes magazines, sold them off and started a ad agency. Then kind of worked my way into what I'm doing today. With the power of NAHB actually.

Jim Tobin ([04:42](#)):

That's great.

Jerry Howard ([04:42](#)):

Linda this is a women's history month. Can you tell us a little bit about the history of women in the home building industry?

Linda Hebert ([04:48](#)):

Yeah, I can. Actually, women have always been in the industry back in 17th century, England. There was a female aristocrat lady, Elizabeth Wilbraham, who was drawing up her own architectural plans kind of unheard of during the day. But on the NAHB front, you kind of mentioned already that the Women's Auxiliary was actually founded in 1955 is actually based on kind of the wives of the builders at the time was kind of their social group. In fact, the dues were \$2 and they fought about that incessantly, but it was just so expensive. In the 1964, the President Poly Schaefer led a national Get Out The Vote campaign that contributed to Congress passing a \$1 billion housing and urban renewal bill. Almost 20 years after the Auxiliary was formed, female builder was elected president of the Auxiliary in 1974.

Linda Hebert ([05:51](#)):

Could you imagine it took that long for the female to be the president of their own group. Then in 1975, the Auxiliary president was invited to an NAHB executive meeting as an observer. The first woman of the year award was presented in 1985. I have to say, I've got to give a shout out to my good friend, Terry Everhart, who actually won that award this last week. We celebrated it on Friday with the zoom meetings. We were excited over that. Go Terry. In 1991, I think you mentioned Jerry, that Shirley Wiseman became the first female president of NAHB and paved the way for Sandy Dunn and our own current Alicia Huey again, a dear friend of mine and looking forward to her leadership coming up. In 2009, actually after much debate, we changed our name. I was actually involved at that point and

changed our name to the professional women in building, because that really was the face that we had changed into.

Linda Hebert ([06:52](#)):

We were no longer the wives of builders. We actually have become a group of professionals, many of which own their own businesses or were working up the ladder for other companies, working the trades. It truly had changed the face of our group. We changed the name to go along with that. I mentioned about sitting on and being an observer on the board meetings. I would go to the board meetings and we were observers, but we didn't have an official vote at the NAHB level. In 2014 led by myself and Alicia and a great group of women that I loved dearly, we actually did propose becoming part of NAHB and came under the Federation umbrella. I think we've never looked.

Jim Tobin ([07:45](#)):

It has been great. I mean, it's always a great group to interact with just a lot of enthusiasm and appreciation for what you do and what you mean to the industry.

Linda Hebert ([07:55](#)):

Thank you.

Jerry Howard ([07:56](#)):

I have to ask you this, have you run into any barriers in the industry for being a woman in what is obviously a male dominated industry? If so, how has being a part of the HBA structure helped you overcome or meet those barriers?

Linda Hebert ([08:14](#)):

I think the biggest barrier is being taken seriously, really getting a seat at the table. I mean, earning that seat at the table to start with and being able to speak up for yourself. I think that the industry for me has been able to put me together with like-minded women that have dealt with the same issues and put me in a position of leadership and learning to stand up for myself and others in the room. A lot of the stuff that we do as women, we sabotage ourselves sometimes in the industry and being able to interface people that have dealt with the same challenges has helped not make those mistakes. I think that we as women tend to mentor quite heavily.

Linda Hebert ([09:06](#)):

I think being involved with the industry, especially through PWB that's one of our main goals is to bring up the younger generation and those that are just getting involved in the industry to kind of navigate the waters and introduce them to the folks that matter and really enhance their leadership skills to be able to move on to other committees within the organization and do the good for the rest of the industry. Not just PWB. I know a lot of our women, I have gone be the sales marketing council chair at the NAHB level. I sit on public affairs, I've been able to grow and become a national speaker. All of those skills are learned through interfacing through the National Building Association and gaining the confidence to not really worry about gender and who you are. It's about what you bring to the table.

Jim Tobin ([10:04](#)):

Linda, you mentioned use the word earn when you were talking about your earning respect. Was it harder to earn respect of a male dominated industry and not only the industry, but the association itself, right? As Jerry said, Alicia will be only the third woman and it's long. We've got to be up to about 78 years of history, only the third woman. You've talked about the history of women and building, and certainly in NAHB, but talk a little bit about, you said it had to be harder for you to earn that, whereas a male builder coming into the industry, or even into the association has a leg up unfairly.

Linda Hebert ([10:44](#)):

I guess it is what it is. It's the cross we bear. But I think that for me, the key is confidence and it may mean that we have to dig a little harder for the knowledge and come in with more information than is necessary. Then maybe the male counterpart it really to prove your point, to be able to take your ideas across the finish line, you have to have the backup of the data. I don't know that necessarily the male counterparts have to do that. They have a voice already where I think sometimes women have to fight for that voice. I do think it's getting better. I think that the movement for women owned businesses has helped me in 84 Lumber's owned by a woman. Her business development manager director. Everybody knows Judy, there's no missing Judy.

Linda Hebert ([11:45](#)):

I think getting involved in Bill PAC and really putting our efforts, PWB puts huge effort to align our goals and Bill PAC goals and the NAHB goals all together. We're not a faction doing something on the sidebar. We are really trying to support the industry. I think that the dollar speak louder than words sometimes. I think that being visible and active and engaged is where we gain the respect of our male counterpart peers.

Jim Tobin ([12:21](#)):

Yeah. I know Megan [inaudible 00:12:23] runs the PAC. You know her very well. She loved nothing better than reading out. Every board meeting, PWB always raises the most money you're one of our highest groups that contributes. You're absolutely right. You've done a wonderful job and make yourself indispensable to the industry and the Federation.

Linda Hebert ([12:43](#)):

That's our goal.

Jerry Howard ([12:45](#)):

What's the one thing that you wish more women knew about the industry?

Linda Hebert ([12:50](#)):

That there's opportunities. I think you mentioned earlier about kind of the workforce circumstances, we could be a great resource for helping filling those gaps. There's no barriers to women to get involved in electricians or plumbing, or the trades and really get some hands-on. You can make a decent living. We've got people that are ready, willing, and able that are out of work that we hope to engage more into the trades, as well as business owners and things like what I do. I think that's what we've got to go.

Jerry Howard ([13:33](#)):

Do you think, I know you're familiar with programs like Girls Build and Tradeswomen of Oregon, how do we get those things going forward? How do we expand those programs and attract more young girls and young women into the industry?

Linda Hebert ([13:48](#)):

I think PWB does a really good job. A lot of us in our locals have educational outreach committees. Really, the function is to try to get information into the schools that there are alternatives to just going to college or getting involved in the trades and doing things like I said, like I do that are kind of sidebar issues for the building industry. There is a She Built in Utah. her name is Christy Allen from Woodcrest Homes. That's getting a lot of publicity and a lot of push right now. I think it's a lot of PR movement that we've got to put a better face on it. I know we've got a very active social media campaigns and we're pushing really hard just to make sure that we've got the visual of the diversity that we bring to the table and the workforce that we can provide to the organization.

Jim Tobin ([14:45](#)):

Yeah. Linda, I've got a kind of a policy question for you as a member of the Federation. You do all your work in California. I know us here on the East coast always look at California as the much like the weather. Everything from a regulatory perspective, blows East from California, both good, but mostly bad in a lot of ways. The building environment in California, the regulatory environments out of control houses are six or \$700,000 for just your average single family home. What are your thoughts on where California is going? Do you see a movement to lessen some of those regulations and lower the cost of housing in the golden state?

Linda Hebert ([15:27](#)):

I know we're working really hard at the state organization to overcome some of the regulation issues that we're getting hit really hard with the all electric programs right now, all of the charging stations for the homes. I think the sprinklers started here and kind of moved across the country. The other big issue is the vehicle miles traveled. That's starting to we're fighting that back and pushing back on that as well. We hope to be able to overcome some of these at least to lessen them to a certain degree, to be able to continue to build because as you know, Lumber prices have gone sky high. Just materials themselves have gotten crazy. The regulations put on us are just driving housing out off the roof. It's crazy right now.

Jerry Howard ([16:22](#)):

Well, we really appreciate your taking the time Linda. What word of advice would you give? Jim and I are both fathers to young daughters who have certainly not discounted the possibility of going into the industry. What advice do you give young girls or young women about how to break into the industry and what's the best Avenue to be successful?

Linda Hebert ([16:48](#)):

I'd say don't listen to the glass ceiling, all those rivers, you just have to go for it and do your own thing and really do what your heart says. I think that passion speaks resoundingly in the industry. I think just follow that up with knowledge and find a good mentor and reach out to other women in the industry that have kind of walked that path. We're here for you and we'll give you a leg up.

Jim Tobin ([17:17](#)):

That's great advice.

Jerry Howard ([17:19](#)):

That's terrific. Thank you. You have any closing thoughts for us?

Linda Hebert ([17:23](#)):

Well, no, I think that kind of said it. I would say just, don't be afraid, jump in. You've got skills that the industry needs and there are people that can help you. We're here.

Jerry Howard ([17:34](#)):

Well, listen, Linda on behalf of my daughters and Jim's daughter and young women all over America, we want to thank leaders like you, Alicia and Shirley and Sandy for helping and paving the way for them to be the best that they can be. We truly appreciate that. We appreciate you joining us here today on Housing Developments.

Jim Tobin ([17:58](#)):

Yeah. Thank you.

Linda Hebert ([17:59](#)):

Thank you guys. Thank you.

Jim Tobin ([18:01](#)):

Great.

Jerry Howard ([18:02](#)):

Jim, this was a great show this week. Look forward to talking with you again next week, but for now ladies and gentlemen, please subscribe to Housing Developments. The more subscribers we get, the more assured we are that the show will continue forward. Thanks for considering that. Jim, thanks for being with me again this week. Take care.

Jim Tobin ([18:23](#)):

Always. Take care. Thanks.