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Restore and relax

Gary Schilling, regional manager for *Structura Inc.*, is a Galveston native and resident who hails from a long line of carpenters and craftsmen based in Galveston since the 1800s.

Schilling, who has 35 years of experience in the construction industry, headed the renovation and restoration of properties, many of them historical, which were badly battered and damaged a year ago by Hurricane Ike.

The work was done in partnership with Mitchell Historic Properties of Galveston.

"This has been a challenge from the start," Schilling said.

"In one year, my team has cut no corners to ensure that the historical and architectural integrity of the buildings restored were recreated to maintain their authentic character."

Structura is currently wrapping up projects on the Strand that include several retail spaces, the Old Galveston



The Spa at Hotel Galvez

Square Commons, the Dargan & Tobyn Building, and the Heidenheimer Hunter Building. Also included in their efforts are several retail and office interior spaces including the Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory, The Kincaid Art Gallery and the Merrill Lynch offices.

In addition, Structura's rebuild efforts include the re-construction of the renowned Spa at Hotel Galvez and the hotel's executive offices.

"Some of these buildings had over 8 ft. of standing water in them for several days," Schilling said. "This was a challenge I enjoyed taking on – but not an easy one! All the original drawings for the buildings were destroyed during the hurricane, so Structura was given the task of recreating everything to the best of our ability. We went into the shells of these structures and did our best to duplicate the original structure – right down to the custom

continued on Page 23

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continued from Page 1 — Restore and relax



Hotel Galvez lobby

moldings, milling and fixtures."

Schilling says that some weeks his team spent over 32 hours in meetings because they had so many projects ongoing at once where manpower had to be coordinated and materials had to be shipped in.

He says The Spa at Hotel Galvez had all custom mahogany trim and doors that had to be replaced and custom built.

"We removed all the ruined mahogany flooring and put in travertine to protect the floors from future flooding damage, since the spa is on the seawall," he said. "It's more practical since the Strand National Historic Landmark District area floods often, and we imported mahogany trims and replaced granite where needed, all the while keeping the hotel open for business!"

Schilling says that 13 projects were going on at once, and finding craftsmen and workers was difficult because the demand in the area was so high.

"We had to import manpower from other regions, and put them up in the

town so that work could continue uninterrupted," he said.

"This project was unlike any I'd ever encountered before. I've done flood projects before, but the fact that we had no drawings made this a moving target. We didn't have the luxury of being able to go in and order materials up front because people had no way to know how they were originally."

Founded in 2006, Structura is a general contractor specializing in advanced technology, corporate office, healthcare, institutional, industrial and retail projects. Rusty Morgan is the company president. —ab



A stairway at the hotel.