

Allan Block

Always Better Wall of Fame



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Ralph Viola and Tom Viola Zappala Block Rensselaer, NY



If you have ever had the opportunity to spend time with Ralph and Tom Viola you are lucky, if you haven't...we hope you find time in the future. They are honest, humble, enjoyable and two of the hardest working gentlemen you will find and to top it off their experiences and stories are one of a kind. You may hear a story from

Ralph about walking into their plant only to see Tom and Tim Bott from Allan Block standing on top of a block machine (looking like two kids at Christmas) banging away as they tried to improve efficiencies with Allan Block products. One from Tom describing how a "plane the size of our father's Lincoln" once flew Tom, Ralph, Tim Bott and Dave Pederson several hundred miles north of Montreal, Canada may follow. Of course, this flight couldn't start until the pilot positioned each of the four participants appropriately on the plane.....based on the weight of each!!! This trip was taking them to a plant where they would witness production of a new product they were going to produce, Novabrik for those who are familiar, through storms and with "sheer terror on my brother Ralph's face" Tom recalls with a laugh. Through these stories and countless others, these two will be sure to teach you a lot and you will enjoy it all. We are very excited to announce these brothers as part of our 2018 Wall of Fame class and are honored to have been able to call them business partners and most importantly friends for 25+ years.



"I didn't think a product like this (Allan Block) was going to work" Ralph admitted of his first thought of AB during the early 1990's. Already a successful block producer, "it wasn't until we took a small display to a local show and saw the reaction from ALL the attendees that we knew we had to partner with Allan Block." Ralph and Tom immediately called Tim Bott up and he flew to Rensselaer, NY (just outside of Albany) to begin the process of assisting with Allan Block production and the rest as they say, is history. During the first production line Tim was helping the cuber operator and Uncle Vince, co-founder of Zappala with their grandfather, saw there were too many men on the line. He walked up and said, "we only need one man here, we cannot afford to have both of you working this line." Once he found out that Tim was free help, he tried to find other things to keep everyone busy. This is indicative of the leadership of Zappala Block.

It is extremely rewarding to hear partners talk about their commitment to quality and speaking from experience, you can tell that dedication to quality is lived each day at Zappala Block. Speaking to Tom and Ralph independently, they both commented that “our dedication to quality has played a big part in our history and successes.” They are operating a business that began in 1922, only a year after their grandfather, Salvatore Zappala, first landed in New York from Italy. Salvatore worked as a shoe repairman during the day and as a boilermaker apprentice at night. His hard work quickly paid off and he was able to fulfill his dream of buying land, building a house on it and bringing his wife and children to America. He built the house with concrete block he produced by hand. As people drove past and saw what he was doing they began inquiring and even buying the hand produced block from him. Immediately Zappala Block was born. Today, Tom and Ralph are operating state of art technology that allows them to produce concrete block, ground face units, sand blasted units, Allan Block products among many others. Their dedication to quality and their customers is refreshing. “We try to live by what our father (Ralph Sr.) taught us about running the business which includes (1) treat customers how you want to be treated, (2) treat all customers, no matter how much they purchase similarly and with respect and (3) provide quality service and products.”



The Viola Family have been instrumental in the development of Allan Block products over the years. Their assistance in the development of the AB Fieldstone is best described with the comment “without the help and support of Tom and Ralph, AB Fieldstone would never have happened”. At each turn of the market they have been the glue that has held the Allan Block Family together through good times and bad.



Both Ralph and Tom are still intimately involved in the business and their leadership has allowed the business to prosper under their direction for over 30 years. Today they are both excited about their family who are beginning to create their own path – Ralph III, Joe (both Ralph’s boys) and Tom Jr. (Tom’s son) work in the business each day and are learning the dynamic details that make Zappala what it is. Their goal is to help this next generation learn as they did from their father and uncles as they work each day to assist. Tom went on to tell us “we want to instill a good objective mind and keep our boys focused.”

Ralph and Tom, from all of us at Allan Block, it has been a pleasure to work with you and we look forward too many more years of fun and success! Thank you for what you do to allow us to succeed and to make Allan Block, *Always Better!*