

## 40 Under Forty: Mason Hill

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**Mason Hill**

**Age:** 27

**Family:** Married.

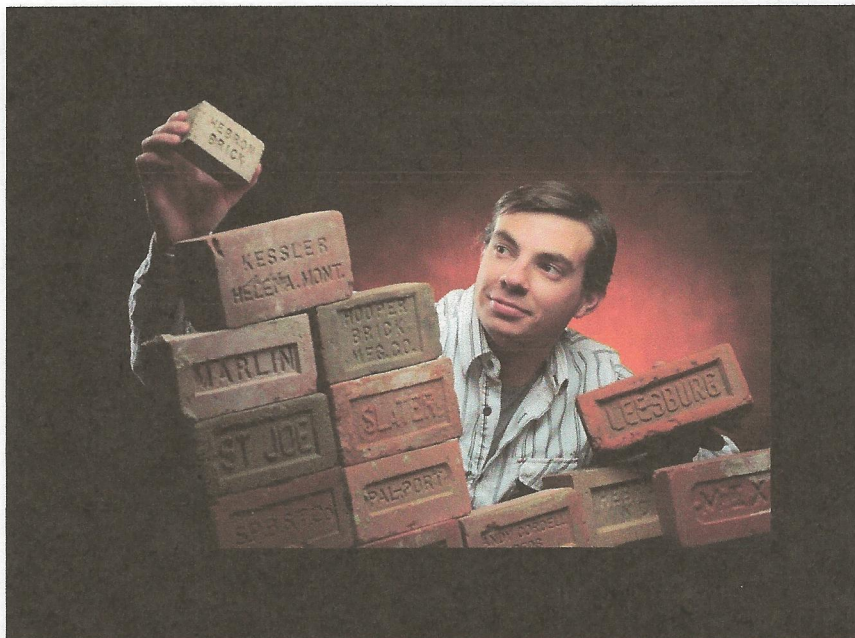
**First paid job:** Working in the masonry business.

**What I'm reading:** The Bible

**Liked this movie:** "Forrest Gump"

**My theme song:** "Simple Man" Lynyrd Skynyrd

**How I relax:** Read or play with my dogs.



Mason Hill, project manager and estimator at Hill Masonry Inc., measures success in his job based on safety, quality and production.

Officially Mason Hill has worked for Hill Masonry Inc. for a dozen years, and his current title is project manager and estimator. In reality, he has been associated with the family business for as long as he can remember. "I've been doing this since I was right out of the womb," he said, joking. "They probably changed my diaper a few times on the mud board."

If there's a job associated with masonry, Hill has done it. "I've been a hod carrier, a forklift operator, a mud man, a brick layer, the delivery guy and the foreman," he said.

Having grown up in the business, Hill learned the value of hard work and responsibility at an early age.

"Right after high school I was a project foreman for a project in Bozeman that had 1 million bricks in it," Hill said. Known as the Village, it's a high-end residential development just off Main Street on the east side of Bozeman.

The masonry business has been busy lately. Hill Masonry has been working on the new Billings library. The building's masonry features distinctive weeping mortar joints, where mortar between the bricks is allowed to squeeze out slightly. Advocates say weeping mortar joints require exceptional skill on the mason's part because the joints aren't tooled. Hill said it's a trademark of Arizona architect Will Bruder, who is designing the library.

New construction is a significant part of the masonry business. But Hill Masonry also does a fair amount of renovation work. During a recent renovation of McMullen Hall at Montana State University Billings, Hill Masonry's crews restored an estimated 27 miles of mortar joints. Workers chipped and ground out the aging mortar, repointed the joints and repaired some of the building's deteriorating sandstone.

Many people might not realize that masonry is one of the more labor-intensive trades in construction. "There isn't a part of this business that doesn't involve hard work and heavy lifting," because of that, workplace safety is always a priority, Hill said.



**Describe how you got where you are in your work today.**

I got to where I am today by working hard every day, always willing to learn, and always doing more than others ask of you. Defiantly not because of my name.

**What's the toughest challenge that you have faced in your business?**

Implementing Hill Masonry's safety, quality and production philosophy.

**What did you learn from that challenge?**

I am learning that it takes everyone involved through a team effort to be willing to "live" this lifestyle, and if someone isn't, find a way to help them live the SQP philosophy.

**If you could make one positive change in Billings, what would it be?**

To build a more beautiful Billings by using more masonry products on new buildings and restoring old masonry to its previous beauty.

**Aside from profit and loss, how do you measure success in your job?**

First is safety, second is quality, and third being production. At the end of the day, if these three things are not achieved, I feel that the day and possibly the project was a failure. Because, without all three, it does not matter how pleased the customer is, if we can't stand behind our product as being the best in all aspects, then no one else will.

**Which living person do you most admire?**

"Besides the obvious picks (my wife, father, mother and grandparents), I would have to say Donald Trump."

**What do you consider your greatest achievement?**

"Marrying the most amazing woman ever."

**I'm happiest when I'm?**

"With my family, friends and dogs."