

Texas native speaks renewable energy

Don Ferrier chats with the Belton Journal



Courtesy Photo

Ferrier homes like the "Casita" are designed to consume less energy, make less of a footprint on the earth, take indoor living environments into consideration, and have a character that reflects the desires and personalities of the owners.

By Carl D. Burleigh
Managing Editor

One of the speakers at Salado's Renewable Energy Stampede took time to speak with the Belton Journal last week about some simple things that can be done to improve the quality of any person's home's energy efficiency. Don Ferrier, president of Ferrier Custom Homes, is the third generation of the Ferrier family in the quality construction business.

Ferrier not only does new homes, but also remodels and home innovations for both residential and commercial structures.

Since 1982, his focus has been in building and restructuring homes to promote "extreme energy efficiency."

"That's where our heart and passion has been," said Ferrier.

Ferrier himself is focused on, in his own words, "not taking energy away from the earth" but rather "just capturing and using what is

already there."

Ferrier explained that "going green" in a home, residence, or business does not necessarily mean investing exorbitant amounts of money, effort, or even time. On the contrary, as Ferrier noted, there are many steps, and many of those simple indeed, that can be taken to improve the energy efficiency (and thereby reduce the expenditure of resources on energy bills) of any home, no matter how new or old and no matter the condition.

Remodels can also include touches like using more environmentally sound construction materials and low VOC paints. Low-E Energy Star windows and doors can be installed that will also greatly enhance the energy efficiency of a home, but the "remodel," as it were and as explained by Ferrier, do not need to be enormous or expensive in order to produce results.

"Green encompasses so many different things," said Ferrier. "Really, replacing a standard incandescent bulb with a fluorescent is making a step toward a green home. Just replacing bulbs and doing things like caulking around windows can help dramatically."

"There tends to be a misconception sometimes that to 'go green' you have to do some serious overhauls. If you're a do-it-yourselfer, you can quite likely spend as little as \$30 and improve your home."

Ferrier is as Texas as it gets, his family having moved here in 1881 and immediately having a direct impact on the growing state.

Don Ferrier's grandfather, Alexander Ferrier, a general contractor/stonemason, immigrated to this country from Scotland with his brother David Ferrier to assist with construction of the Texas State Capitol. Later Alexander and David formed a partnership with Albert Wirz [Ferrier Brothers and Wirz], and they constructed stone courthouses, schools, churches, hotels, banks, houses and bridges throughout Texas. Alexander's sons Otho, Otto, and Mack remained in the contracting business and constructed hundreds of bridges and roads throughout

Texas as Ferrier Brothers Bridge Company.

Further, building figuratively runs in his blood as Don grew up in a family environment that encompassed many capable artisans. His ancestors on both his mother's and father's sides working as stonemasons on the state capital in Austin. Later, his family ran the Ferrier Concrete Bridge Company.

Don made no bones about his goal in attending events like the Renewable Energy Stampede in Salado.

"I go there to educate people on green energy efficiency practices," said Ferrier.

"We're always looking to make the energy efficiency of a home be the best it can be," said Ferrier.

"If money is a problem, there are some very basic things to do that can save you money."

"The wallet is a critical parent in any situation," said Ferrier.

Ferrier is part of the Texas Renewable Energy Industries Association.

TREIA represents over 500 member companies, organizations, agencies and individuals providing products, services and information in the areas of solar electric generation, solar hot water, large and small-scale wind electric generation, biomass electric generation and liquid renewable fuels, geothermal heating and cooling, geothermal electric generation, and sustainable (green) building design and construction.

Ferrier's website, replete with pictures of a wide variety of his projects and accomplishments, can be found at <http://www.ferriercustomhomes.com>.