

PROFILE IN Green Living

BY SHARI L. BIEDIGER

At an Imagine Homes work site, giant grinding machines take left-over wood products, sheetrock and brick scraps and pulverize it all into chips that are then used on the site to control erosion and drainage — rather than sent to a landfill.

"It's behind the scenes, but it's part of our commitment to green building," says Jim Bastoni, partner with Imagine Homes — a San Antonio-based homebuilder leading the nation in new, high-performance, green-building technology.

Continues Bastoni: "We were the first builder in the area to move to all-foam insulation and vented attics, and we introduced a number of innovations over the years."

But with so much of that work taking place "behind the wall," as Bastoni says, it is hard for those outside of the homebuilding industry to understand how these high-performance touches can add value to a home.

Imagine Homes' most recent commitment to green, however, is seeing more light of day in its latest community, Willis Ranch, which is located along E. Borgfield Drive, just off of U.S. Highway 281 North on the far North Side. By installing an integrated solar roofing system by Dow Powerhouse, every new Imagine home gets not just a traditional roof, but a built-in power generator. The systems also provide the builder with a way to repeat the process consistently and economically on every single house they build.

So unlike other firms, that may do green features in a one-off fashion or add them solely on a prototype house, "We're showing that what we are doing is a (production-based process) and that every house is done that way," Bastoni explains. "That's the biggest difference for our company."

The early years: I was born in Plymouth, Mass., and grew up in Connecticut. I was very active in scouting, and spent most of my summers at camp and outdoors. (Myself and some college classmates) started a bar/restaurant on my college campus with a loan from the school and a cheap lease on an old barn. It was my first business start-up experience.

Early influences: The degree in accounting was a place to start. I happened to be in the (Deloitte Haskins and Sells) office in Stamford, Conn., when our client, Merrill Lynch, called looking for some help on a project in Milwaukee. More assignments followed, and then ultimately, a job offer. Traveling around the country meeting with leaders in real estate from Beverly Hills to Palm Beach convinced me that my future would be in building.

How did you enter the green side of residential development? When we started Medallion Homes in 1996, we took the approach of looking at energy efficiency and new product ideas as a way to differentiate us from the bigger, cheaper



Jim Bastoni explains how Imagine Homes is making green thinking a production rule, not an exception.

alternatives. That proved to be a successful formula as we grew to one of the largest builders in the city.

How is Imagine Homes different from others? When John Friesenhahn and I discussed starting Imagine Homes, it was our intention from the outset to challenge some of the conventional building practices by bringing the latest technology available into the building design. We have worked with various local and national testing groups and certification programs to validate that the improvements we were forecasting in energy efficiency in our building practices would translate into real dollar savings for our buyers.

Ultimately, it's about delivering a better-built home, where we have confidence that the owner will enjoy years of comfortable living with low maintenance, while reaping the benefits of low utility costs. When we deliver that, everybody wins.

Since 2008, the National Association of Homebuilders has recognized Imagine Homes three times for building the best production and affordable green home in the nation. We are very proud of this accomplishment ...

How did the partnership with Dow come about? The next step for us has always been about adding solar generation to our platform, and we have been looking for the right product that also lends itself to a production delivery schedule and at an affordable price. Dow Powerhouse solar shingles was the perfect product to fit that model. (The shingles) are installed conventionally by our roofers above the decking and connected by our same electrician below the roof. Behind the scenes are product

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Jim Bastoni

Partner, Imagine Homes

Age: 56

Family: Married to Amy; Two sons

Education history:

B.S. in accounting, Bryant University, Rhode Island, 1978

Professional Certifications:

Management Consultant Professional, Registered Business Analyst, Chartered Certified Marketing Analyst, Master Business Consultant

Partial career history:

- Auditor, Deloitte Haskins and Sells, 1978-81
- Vice President, Corporate Development, Merrill Lynch, 1981-87
- Vice President, Corporate Development, Sentinel Group, 87-92
- Consultant, JANM, 1994
- President, Worth enterprises, 1994-2004
- Consultant, JANM, 2004-06
- Partner, Imagine Homes, 2006-current

engineers at Dow who custom-design the installation of each system depending on the roof layout and house orientation; and they provide onsite support to our installers. It's been a great working relationship from the start.

How has Willis Ranch been received? We just opened our new model in October, and already we have sold out our inventory homes, so we will be starting quite a few more between now and the end of the year.

Is your own home green? My coastal house in Rockport is where I have remodeled the most and tried out the

newest trends. It's in the harshest environment of wind and sun. It was an old drafty house when I first found it, and today it costs pennies to maintain.

My San Antonio home has also been under constant remodel. The inherent problems and costs associated with remodeling are by far the biggest challenge. That's why we counsel people who are looking at new homes to get informed and make the right buying decision at the front end. You will save years of aggravation and lost dollars down the road.

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