



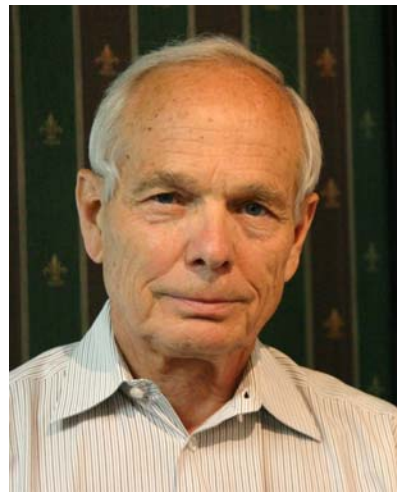
Energy Efficiency Pioneer Continues to Lead the Way

What Bill Decker, Sr. did in 1981 may seem like Yogi Berra's famous statement about "Déjà vu all over again."

There was a housing downturn and Decker's thoughts about how to respond to the situation were not aligned with his business partner's so Decker and his wife decided to start their own company. They used energy efficiency to differentiate their homes, generate publicity and stand out in a highly competitive market.

Twenty-seven years and more than 700 energy efficient houses later, Decker Homes is a clear leader in the green home movement and he continues to push the envelope for greater energy efficiency.

"We had our first energy crisis in the 1970s and Jimmy Carter was telling people to slow down and drive 55, put on a sweater and conserve energy," says Decker, president of Decker Homes. "I took him seriously. The message resonated with me.



"We decided to start our own company at the worst part of that recessionary era. It was very similar to what we have now – not quite as bad as now but very similar. We built our business with energy efficiency being one of the cornerstones and we have never ever doubted that decision.

"The heart of green building is energy efficiency," continues Decker. "Other things like recycled materials and environmentally friendly products with low VOCs are important,

too, but conserving energy is where you start. We know it works because we check our homes. We receive feedback from people who have owned our homes for 20 years.”

Homeowners have documented utility costs in 2007 averaging about \$120 per month for a 2,100-square-foot home in Northwest Ohio, an area with relatively high utility rates.

A Decker home currently under construction in Maumee, Ohio is thought to be the first in the state to have a projected Home Energy Rating score under 40 (39). It may also be the first in the state to use both geothermal energy and solar electric power.

And even with such new technology, Decker hasn't forgotten the importance of insulation in energy efficiency. He says it all starts with the framing, where his crews install raised rafter plates and open corners to insulate often-overlooked areas and accommodate high R-values. The new home has R-15 Fiberglas™ insulation batts in the sidewalls and R-49 blown-in insulation in the attic. Cracks and holes for electrical wires are sealed with foam and the spaces behind outlets and other electric boxes are always fully insulated with fiberglass. Decker homes also include insulating sheathing, which reduces heat loss through framing members, warms the cavity to minimize chances for moisture condensation and provides a barrier against wind and rain intrusion.



“Our homes benefit from the process of continuous improvement but there has not been a big difference over the course of the past 26 years. For example, we have not built any home that has not had the basement insulated as we do today. They have all been framed out on the inside and insulated. It has worked well for us.

“Customers like it because most of them finish at least part of the basement during the course of owning the home and we have that started with the framing.

“We also did that for marketing reasons,” adds Decker. “We are known for building the homes with the pink basements.”

Decker says his job is to learn about energy efficiency technology and then let his customers know what can be done and what the costs are, then let them decide what they want to select.

“In the case of the highly energy efficient home we are building now, the owner came through our model and was impressed. We have been working with her over the course of several months, and this is typical. She was willing to pay extra for a geothermal system when she realized the benefits of it, and she was willing to pay extra for a solar system. She also paid extra for an R-15 upgrade over our standard R-13 wall insulation. She also opted for LED lighting.

“Most of our customers will do some of that. The first thing we recommend is the higher level of insulation, the R-15.”

“Our average home will come in about 40 percent more energy efficient than code. We usually exceed Energy Star by at least 25 percent. Last year we built four homes that were greater than 50 percent more energy efficient than code. Our best home was 59 percent. We built a couple that were 57 percent more energy efficient than code.”

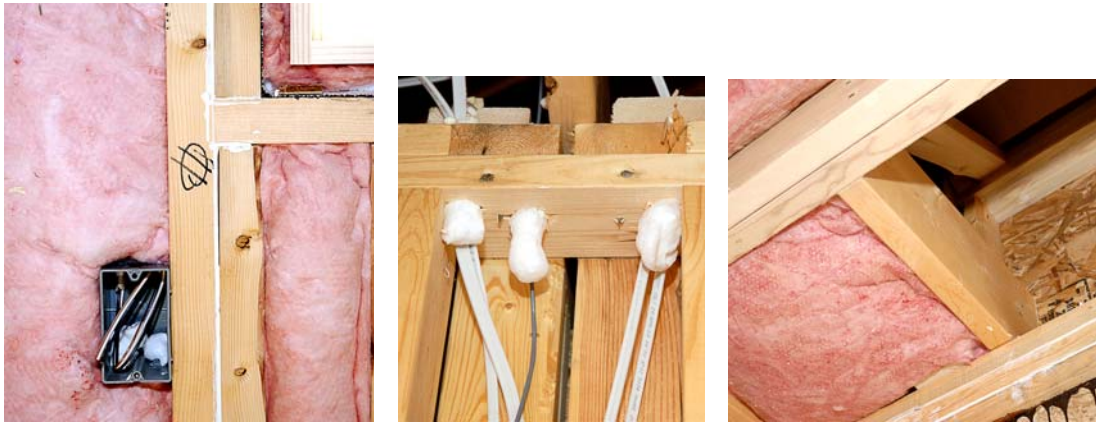
When he was getting started as an energy efficient builder, Decker attended every seminar and workshop he could find. He also traveled the country to visit developments and talk with builders and real estate sales people.

He says his company also benefited from its long relationship with Owens Corning, which included participating in energy saving programs and working with the technical staff on computer modeling to determine the most cost-effective options.

Now the tables have turned. Builders and home buyers are calling him for advice and his office décor includes many awards and framed copies of newspaper articles about his green homes. And he is a featured speaker at seminars and workshops.

“Some builders still think I am out in left field someplace,” says Decker. “I think they are dead wrong. I believe they need to adjust to this new market we are in because it’s not going to go away. This is the wave of the future and I’m convinced that very few builders will be able to stay in business without building energy efficient homes.

“I’m willing to help them,” he adds. “This is what we need to do in America. It’s not something I want to hold to myself. You might say it is for our grandkids. If we don’t do this, where is this country going?”



Insulating details in a Decker home.

Decker Homes

- First builder in Northwest Ohio to offer both geothermal and solar systems
- Named Green Energy of Ohio Business of the Year for 2005
- Received an Ohio Governor’s Commendation Award for Energy Excellence in 2005

- Has earned numerous Home Builder Association awards including Builder of the Year and Community of the Year
- Earned an NAHB Energy in Housing award in mid-1990s

Leadership in Energy Efficiency

- **1981** – Insulated basements
- **1982** – Built energy efficient model demonstration home with 2x6 walls and triple-pane windows; also built demonstration homes in 1990, 1992, 2004 and 2006
- **1990s** – Started using earth-friendly engineered I-joists and incorporated advanced framing methods including raised rafter plate and open corners
- **2002** – Became a 100 percent Energy Star Builder
- **2004** – First use of solar electric power in a model home in Ohio
- **2006** – First use of a tankless hot water heater in a model home
- **2008** – Became a Building America builder, which requires all homes to be at least 30 percent more energy efficient than code



Geothermal and solar installations

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