

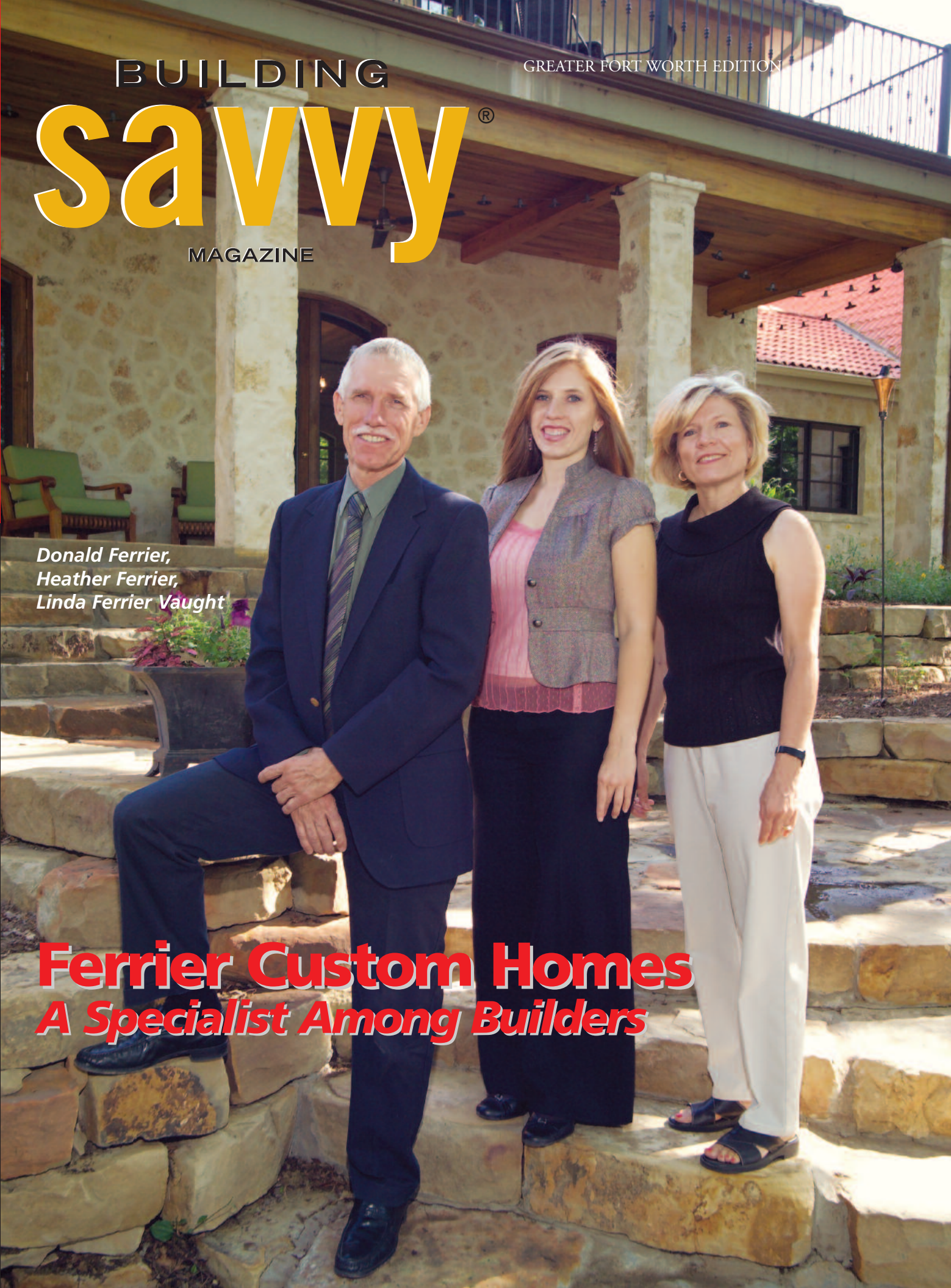
BUILDING savvy®

MAGAZINE

GREATER FORT WORTH EDITION

Donald Ferrier,
Heather Ferrier,
Linda Ferrier Vaught

Ferrier Custom Homes *A Specialist Among Builders*





PHOTOS BY TILL HEZEL, HEZEL PHOTOGRAPHY.

Building Green, Energy Efficient *AND* On a Budget *By Beverly Smirnis*

Standing out as a builder of green, super-efficient homes is not the path of least resistance. It requires determination, creativity, a technical mind and a genuine commitment to the cause. All of these characteristics plus help with publicity from his sister, Linda Ferrier Vaught, have brought success, satisfaction and notoriety to Donald Ferrier.

Ferrier Custom Homes earned the Gold Award in 2005 and was a Silver winner in 2006 of the National Association of Home Builder's EnergyValue Housing Award (EVHA) in the custom home/hot climate category. This is the nation's preeminent energy efficient award honoring builders who voluntarily incorporate energy efficiency into all aspects of new home construction. Thousands of people visiting the 2005 Organic Home and Garden Show with Howard Garrett visited Ferrier Custom Homes' "green" home built as the focal point of the show, inside the Arlington Convention Center. Most recently "Heather's Home," built for Donald's daughter Heather in Parker County, has been the buzz of local

broadcast and newsprint media as a green, near-zero energy home that is also affordable. These awards and publicity have set Ferrier Custom Homes apart as a one-of-a-kind builder for buyers looking for something other than just the best deal they can find per square foot. However, Donald is also aware that there is always a line that must be carefully analyzed between each of the project goals and what it costs to achieve them.

Proving evidence that the Ferrier family's roots in construction span back more than a century is a plaque in front of the courthouse building in Albany, Texas, that says "Built by Kilted Scotsmen." One of those Scotsmen was Donald Ferrier's grandfather, who immigrated to the U.S. in 1881 in response to a call for skilled masons needed to build the Capital of Texas building in Austin.

Donald's own career in construction started with commercial bridge building all across the State of Texas. His experience in concrete construction led to

a side business of constructing concrete shells for residential application. Soon, Donald made a name for himself as a supplier to builders of “earth sheltered homes.”

“I would supply the concrete structural shells and coordinate the electrical and plumbing installation with the other subcontractors, then turn the job back over to the builder to complete,” Donald explained.

It didn’t take long before homebuyers started to approach him about overseeing the entire construction process and Donald found himself on his way to becoming a full-time homebuilder.

“I knew that I needed to start going to as many seminars and builder conferences as I could to understand the nuances of residential construction. This education, combined with just listening to people about what they wanted, helped me see an opportunity to apply my commercial construction background and specifically my experience in building with concrete to build different from the mainstream methods,” said Donald.

This home, featuring Old World details and expansive entertainment areas inside and out, earned a NAHB Energy Value Housing Award.



Donald was one of the first builders in the area to build with Structural Insulated Panels (SIPs) and Insulated Concrete Forms (ICFs). But, he insists that efficient design is about far more than just choosing the right products for the project.

“Orientation of the home is the most important part of energy efficiency,” he explained. “The majority of glass should be on the south side, and it must be properly shaded with an overhang that is designed to keep the hot summer sun out and allow the warm winter sun in. Being able to control the sun in our climate is key.”

Some of the unique products used on Heather’s Home include a Daikin Japanese-made air-conditioning system that allows the compressor to run up to five separate and independent blowers, making it equivalent of up to a 20 SEER rating. An attic fan and windows also play a part in the home’s advanced ventilation plan. By storing heat from natural light emitted in the winter months, the concrete floors are not only beautiful but also part in the home’s passive solar design.

“The choice in how to build each home and what products to use is always customer-driven and cost is a primary consideration. There are five primary things that drive the price of the home: the lot, the cost efficiency of the design, how the outside is finished, the interior finish-out and what level of energy efficiency you aspire to achieve,” Donald explained.



Heather's Home proved that green construction and cost efficiency can both be achieved.



"In Heather's Home, the AC unit we used costs about 25 percent more than a standard AC unit, but we expect to see 40 percent more efficiency than we would using a standard 13 SEER, and the system is more efficient than any other kind, with the exception of geothermal," explained Donald. "This is one example of the decisions that we weigh on every job; Is the cost worth the benefit? Where else can we save in order to get the energy efficiency we want?"

Most of Donald's clients are baby boomers who tell them this is the last house they plan to build. They come to Ferrier Custom Homes with the understanding that their home will cost them more but with the confidence that it will be the best investment they ever make. Donald describes the first client meeting as an interview *"to see if he and the potential buyer would make a good team."*



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Because Ferrier Custom Homes is so specialized, the competitive bidding process is virtually non-existent. Word-of-mouth combined with a concerted public relations effort to promote what they're doing and what prompts buyers from all across DFW who seek out Ferrier Custom Homes as a specialist. Ferrier Custom Homes' specialization is also becoming well known to area architects. About 60 percent of the company's activity has been in and around Fort Worth while the other 40 percent spans to Dallas and its suburbs.

Donald, his subcontractor team and his clients would concur with Winston Churchill's statement, *"The price of greatness is responsibility."* The quest to build as energy efficient and as green as the budget will allow continues to make the Ferrier Custom Homes team stand out for both great achievements and sensitive responsibility.



For more information, contact
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