

February 2010

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EXTREME BUILDER

Blu Shields

**Brings Kemah Family
Back Home**

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THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED TO
**All the Volunteers who worked
on the *Extreme Makeover:
Home Edition* Project**



I've taped off a room, I have dug trenches, I have worked in the catering tent, did some painting, you name it; team work makes everything possible.

Amy Hendrix



For foster parents to take in kids in need – they deserve this.

*Carl Landry
Houston Texans*



This is the most rewarding experience I've ever had. There is great kindness in human beings that you don't often hear about.

Toni Howman



I learned that I can actually stay awake a lot longer than I ever realized. I've been here all night and half a day now.

Elizabeth Thompson



It's a great feeling to help someone in need, even if you don't know them.

Jackie Dickey



I would do it all again in a heartbeat – even in 19 degree weather!

Diane Magliolo





Building affordable energy-efficient homes is a winning situation for builders and homeowners alike.

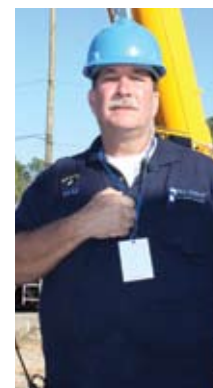


BLU SHIELDS: TEAM PLAYERS

Blu & Pat Shields, *Blu Shields Construction*
Patrick Henderson, *Energy Solution Homes*
Oscar & Andrea Urbina,
Galveston Service Company
Mike Weekly & Patti Henderson,
Bay Area Landscaping and Aquatics

Also, Kourtnei Dierlam, Sanna Leigh-Pearce, Jerry Rosier, Mario Valle, Alex Reyes, Laura Garcia and her team (Jaime, Sabino, Paul, Joe, Mario, Stephen, Darrell) And, many dedicated sub contractors.

BLU SHIELDS AND HIS DREAM TEAM



by Sue Mayfield-Geiger

Blu Shields has a dream. So does the rest of the staff and crew who work for this family-owned construction company that is rebuilding Galveston County. The dream is simple: That all builders adopt a philosophy Shields has been living by for decades: Need, not greed. Shields is committed to building quality, high-energy, efficient homes in 30 to 45 days for low to medium income families at prices they can afford.

It is that reputation that landed him the role as lead builder for the ABC television show, *Extreme Makeover:Home Edition* (EM:HE) that came to Kemah, Texas last month.

Blu Shields Construction, Energy Solution Homes (run by grandson, Patrick Henderson) and Galveston Service Company (run by son-in-law Oscar Urbina and daughter Andrea Urbina) partnered with countless other construction-related vendors in the area to build a new home for a hero family selected by the EM:HE team.

The hero family turned out to be Larry and Melissa Beach, residents of Kemah, and parents of 13 children, nine of whom are physically and/or mentally challenged. The Beach home suffered extensive water damage due to Hurricane Ike, and the entire family had been living in a travel trailer on their property until EM:HE came to the rescue. The show will air in March at which time the home will be revealed to viewers across the nation. Built with Structural Insulated Panels (SIPs), this was the largest energy-efficient home ever built on the show and was completed in 106 hours, with landscaping designed by Bay Area Landscaping and Aquatics (owned by Mike Weekly and Shields' daughter Patti Henderson).

The Man in Black

In his traditional work "uniform" Shields is remarkably noticeable; Black shirt, short black pants and black Skechers with white socks. He

is a big man, but carries it well. Younger looking than his 58 years, the squint in his eyes is the first indication that he has a penchant for sizing one up. His demeanor is sincere, but Shields is extremely detailed-oriented and not much gets past him. Keeping most of his jobsites computerized in his head, he does not rely on a Blackberry or laptop or any other sort of techno gadget to remind him of his multiple ongoing building projects. Ask about a particular design for a bathroom sink for the house on a certain street and within seconds, he has the answer. If you like the color of the exterior paint on Sixth Street, just give him the address, and he can tell you the name of the shade. More importantly, if a problem arises during a build, let him know. He will have someone on it in a matter of minutes.

Shields does have a cell phone and almost always answers after the first two rings. If not, your call will be returned as quickly as possible. Saying he loathes voice mail, he refuses to turn his phone off. "I'm in the service business," he says. "With computerization and the way our world is today, personal communication is more important than ever. We will always answer our phones, no matter what."

The high-energy, stickler-for-details Shields comes by it naturally for two reasons: It's in his genetic code, plus his career in the U.S. Navy instilled a sense of urgency with almost everything he has ever done in his life. He requires very little or no sleep (can function normally with two to four hours sleep a night) and practices mind control (something learned in the Navy while working in underwater mine warfare and subsequently as a commercial deep sea saturation diver).

Born in Houston, Texas, Shields is one of six children who grew up in a struggling blue collar family. He is married to wife, Pat; they have four daughters, 13 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Shields started his career working in construction, but got into the media business for awhile, eventually returning to construction. Currently residing



Top: Day three of the build: SIP wall panels go up and flooring goes in on the second floor.

Left: Day four of the build: Volunteers finish out SIPs and roofing boards while working through the night.

Right: Blu Shields, Ty Pennington of EM:HE, and Patrick Henderson join forces to create new home for the Beach family.

in Texas City (in the home he built to withstand the fiercest of storms), all of the Shields family seems to share a lifelong calling: to help other people. “We felt we could make more of an impact helping people than making large profits off commercial jobs,” says Shields.

Quality, Timeframe and Re-learning

Shields can build an extreme high-energy efficient home (without solar and wind generation) with very low electric bills starting at \$95 per sq. ft. depending on the house and the lot it’s going on.

“When you are a production builder and you build low and medium income homes, your profit will be a lot less than if you build in a high income market,” says Shields. “With high income properties, your profit margin is higher. When you are in our type of business, it is repetitious duplication.” Shields’ philosophy goes back to how mass neighborhoods were once built in the 1950s. “It used to be

that houses were built to allow the wind and sun to dictate the positioning of your home,” says Shields. “If you drive around now in the new subdivisions you won’t see this, but if you drive around in the old subdivisions, all garages were on the west side (sun setting side) of the house.”

Historical homes throughout the country did not require insulation. They had balloon framing (allowing air to move constantly around the livable area). However, due to fire potential, the insurance companies came out with rules and regulations to stop this type of framing around the late 1950s. “Everything changed because of fire codes,” says Shields. “I am all about public safety, but now we have a way to make things better and build the way houses used to be built.”

Shields’ homes are stick built with a house wrap sheathing (Techshield). They skin vent the outer envelope which allows them to maintain current building and fire codes of

the interior wall structures while still having the old style open ventilation that they used to have through the balloon framing method. This method, along with using all gas appliances (when possible) and on-demand hot water heaters make for a true high energy-efficient home that produces low utility bills. (Note: In some cases, foam insulation is used to provide even more cost savings.) Making your home ADA friendly upfront is another smart aspect of building that Shields condones.

Builders coming together

Shields wants to show other builders how they can maintain a high volume and low profit. Stating that his own average profit for building a custom home is between \$5000 to \$8000, that was not the case after Ike. “We gutted many homes, rewired and replumbed them, and put people back in their homes in a very short period of time because some were virtually homeless,” he says. “In many cases we made no profit at all, and in some cases took a loss, but we were more interested in bringing people back home.”

When asked by EM:HE to do the job, Shields says he did so with a couple of conditions. That he would be allowed to reach out and bring in all of the competition – high end to low end – in the local market place so that the EM:HE show could teach everyone their techniques (combined with the techniques of the Shields companies) to hopefully get everyone on the same page and start building high-quality, energy-efficient homes in four to six weeks. The bottom line is that families who build this way will have high energy-efficient homes with very low electric bills. “In Galveston County, there are over 2500 single family dwellings that have still not been rebuilt,” proclaims Shields. “In the city of Galveston alone, that number is about 1700. And these are the people who did not have insurance.”

Ike was a strange and surprising storm. Many of the homes that flooded were not even in a floodplain, so those homeowners did not have flood insurance, plus the majority of them were on fixed incomes. Government funds are only available if you can pay them back or if you qualify for a grant. “When you have a catastrophic loss like this you see the fear in people,” says Shields. “They are scared and confused. Then they get angry at the insurance companies, contractors, and

local vendors raising their prices. Whether in coastal regions or anywhere in the U.S., the fact remains that the unforeseen can happen. Rebuilds go on all over the world, but when people manipulate the prices, the true rebuilds don't start until about a year out or when hurricane season is over."

THIS SHOW IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF WHAT WE PLAN TO DO.

Why building codes are important

Actually, Ike has made the Bay Area Houston community a better place, because all homes that are recoverable will have to be remodeled or built to current industry standards. Bolivar Peninsula is a good example: Most of the damage was due to rising water, but every home that was built to current building standards was left intact. Very few of them had roof damage. Inland One is the hardest building code to follow (is from the coastal waterfront, 10 miles in). Inland Two is 10 to 20 miles inland.

About 90% of the homes in the city of Kemah have been rebuilt by Shields. They have also rebuilt many homes in Shore Acres (LaPorte/Harris County), Morgan's Point, Galveston, Bolivar, Clear Lake Shores, San Leon and Bacliff. "What we do is just basic labor," says Shields. "It's simple: our four companies are just expert at time and material management. That is all it is. There is no reason why other homebuilders cannot build these homes as low as we build them because if you have a good volume you can make the same amount of money. There are a lot of good custom builders out there, and we do get some bad press from some of them, but they ought to be able to build a quality home expediently. For instance, what is the EM:HE show all about? They take a family, send them to Disney World, bring them back in seven days and do you see their homes falling apart? No."

The EM:HE show with massive accuracy on-time and material management through their project managers and their support teams can and do build homes in seven days, so why is it so impossible to think that Shields cannot build them in four to six weeks? The main objective is to teach everybody else how to do it. "If you stack your trades (foundation,

framers, siders, window installers, electricians, plumbers, etc.) and you put them on a timeline on top of one another, there is no reason why you can't get a custom home finished within four to six weeks – 90 days max," Shields says.

Stick vs. SIP

The EM:HE house is being constructed with SIPs (Structural Insulated Panels). Due to the economy, the high-end building suppliers and manufacturers have come down on price. Therefore, builders can afford to use them in low and medium income homes. "This is the first SIP exterior wall home that we are building," says Shields. "If the price stays low, we will continue to use these materials. If we can provide to our clients an even greater high-efficiency home, by utilizing SIPs, we are going to do it." But as the economy comes back, Shields hopes these manufacturers will see the need to stay in the low and medium income market and not start raising the prices again. (Note: SIPs are Styrofoam within exterior walls which give the home a greater R value. R-value indicates an insulation's resistance to heat flow. SIP walls are three times stronger than stick built homes. Insulation R values are rated in this manner: 1) SIP panel walls; 2) Stick built with liquid foam insulation; 3) Stick built with fiberglass insulation.)

Shields does caution however: "As with any petroleum-based product, when the price of fuel goes up, so does the price of that petroleum-based product. If that happens, we will go back to building energy-efficient homes the old style way. With SIPs, you still have to assemble the house on the exterior walls, and you will still have to frame the interior walls, so the framers will still be needed, but we could build homes even faster by using this process."

Building green costs more: Not!

Doesn't building green cost more? Shields emphatically states that is a total falsehood. "In some cases, a custom builder building green will charge you more, but because of the way we build, we can provide the consumer with an energy-efficient (sans solar or wind generation) home for a lot less." They typically build up to 12 homes per month, but are gearing up to do about 30 a month. In regard to getting a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified home, Shields ex-

ABOUT THE BEACH FAMILY



Larry and Melissa Beach have fostered over 85 handicapped children over the years and began adopting hard-to-place children over 12 years ago. They have four biological children and nine adopted children. They include Chris (23), Michael (21), Jose (20), Mikala (18), Paul (14), Faith (13), Hope (9), Justin (8), Jacob (4), Grace (4), Jeremiah (23 months), Mercy (22 months) and Cody (19), currently serving in the Marine Corps. Larry and Melissa decided to start adopting after seeing that so many children were not being placed in homes.

Due to water damage from Hurricane Ike, the Beach family home became unlivable and they resorted to residing in a travel trailer on their property. Therefore, they were unable to adopt additional children. But all that is now going to change!



plains: "The rating system on a LEED certified home is based on the different type of application of green products that you use. LEED sets forth what their rating system will dictate. But what the consumer's rating system should be is how much their electric bill is going to be July through October. It should never be over \$100. We need to start building green friendly and acting green," cautions Shields. "It does not take all this super high technology to build a basic structure."

When Shields builds a home, he says he must point out the good and the bad. For instance, coastal areas require a lot more

TIMELINE



Pep Rally : JAN 4 Hundreds join the crowd to show support and kick off the EM:HE show. Conrad Ricketts, Executive Producer of Lock and Key Productions, gives everyone a behind-the-scenes tour of previous shows. Lots of excitement fills the air and emotions run the gambit. Blu Shields and grandson Patrick Henderson take to the stage to explain their role as lead builders.



Day One : JAN 7 Door Knock. Texas weather takes an unexpected turn as temperatures drop and winds blow. Ty Pennington, Michael Moloney, Paul DiMeo and Tracy Hutson surprise the Beach family with an early morning door knock and the good news. Over 100 wearing bright blue shirts and white hard hats circle around the family to honor them. After cheers of congratulations, the family departs in a limo to vacation at Disney World.



Day Two : JAN 8 Demo Day. Cold, cold, cold! But volunteers are everywhere to lend a hand. Finally, the bulldozers and other heavy machinery take down the house. There is a catering tent and the food is fabulous, but the neighbors really give this project a special touch, offering soup, friendship and camaraderie.



Day Three : JAN 9 We have some sun, but is still colder than usual for this part of Texas. Due to the freezing weather, foundation taking longer to dry. Finally, the big cranes arrive. Is a very impressive sight as the SIP panels are trucked in and cranes lift them high into the air.



Day Four : JAN 10 The cranes hover 100 ft. tall above the build site as craftsmen, vendors and volunteers work 24/7 in this unusual frigid weather to keep the *Extreme Makeover:Home Edition* project on schedule. Dry wall, Hardie board and paint are delivered. The Beach family of 15 is relaxing in Florida while their dream home is underway, but they are able to watch snippets of the build progress via computer.



Day Five : JAN 11 With the roof almost entirely in place, all windows and doors are intact. The inside includes a fireplace and elevator. The roof will include solar panels. There is a spacious two-car garage, and the pre-painted aqua marine Hardie board. The weather is still chilly, but the sun and rising temperatures have re-energized everyone, and the excitement is growing!



Day Six : JAN 12 Interior is coming along; wall paper hangers working hard. Driveway is being poured, landscape greenery being delivered, fence materials arriving, and volunteers are still smiling!



Day Seven : JAN 13 The front columns and shutters are painted white while palm and oak trees are being planted. The fence is almost up and appliances are ready to be installed while painters, paper hangers, and floor installers are busy inside adding finishing touches to the magical interior. The enormous backyard is being turned into a wonderland for the Beach children.



Day Eight : JAN 14 Move that Bus! The 5,700 square foot home containing eight bedrooms welcomes the Beach family home!

PHOTO CREDIT All photos for this feature and the volunteer spread on pg. 14 are courtesy of [WiredIn](#), [Templin Photography](#) and [Kim Christensen Photography](#).

forethought. Like windows and doors. “If you live in Inland One or Two Zone, and your windows or doors are not impact, you are required to put plywood up around the house (before a major storm),” he explains. “Unless you know a major storm is coming, you are not going to be able to put that plywood up. With impact windows, you don’t have to worry, plus they are more energy efficient. However, there is the cost factor. We are working on trying to get window suppliers to lower the price of these impacts so that if we save you money somewhere else on the

could not be ordered in a timely manner.) The home will have multiple operable and fixed windows.

Helping others so they, in turn, can help others

“Over the years, we have helped thousands of people,” says Shields. “It is hard to decide who you can help and who you cannot, so my wife has guidelines: When we help you, you help somebody (when you can) but don’t reveal who helped you.” The EM:HE team truly have the toughest decision to make.

SHIELDS CHARITY WAREHOUSE:

Shields maintains a charity warehouse where used and unused materials from jobsites as well as donated furnishing are housed for future projects. Many Ike families are still in need of furniture, dishes, clothes and other necessities. If you have something you’d like to donate, please call Laura Garcia at 409.443.9249.

– as well as other Ike families in need. There are literally thousands who went through Ike who still need help.

One can’t help but wonder how Shields came by his big teddy bear heart. He explains: “There are a lot of macho men out there, but when you look at a real family, it isn’t the dads; it’s the women. They are the ones behind the scenes doing the work. If not for my wife and my mother (now deceased) I would not be who I am today.”

“Look around,” says Shields. “You may be too busy to look ahead to see what you want to do, but always look in the mirror to see where you’ve been and how much you’ve done. This show is just the beginning of what we plan to do. We want to bring everyone home by building something they can afford and live in for the rest of their lives. And we intend to do just that.”

THERE IS NO REASON WHY OTHER HOMEBUILDERS CANNOT BUILD THESE HOMES AS LOW AS WE BUILD THEM BECAUSE IF YOU HAVE A GOOD VOLUME YOU CAN MAKE THE SAME AMOUNT OF MONEY.

build, we can incorporate good quality impact windows and doors. Impact windows contain exterior glaze that will stop the passage of an object coming completely through it. It will not stop the breakage; just the passage of an object.”

The EM:HE home will not have impacts, but will have impact film applied to protect from future storm damage. It will stop a 2x4 at 130 mph. (Because of the short timeframe involved in preparing for the show, impacts

They get over 2500 tapes per week and it becomes extremely difficult to choose who will get a new home. The Beach family’s giving heart toward all the children they have helped over the years won the hearts of EM:HE for this production. They were one of five area families under consideration.

Shields hopes there is enough money and materials left over from donations of this project to help those other four families who were not chosen so he can offer help to them



ABOUT EXTREME MAKEOVER: HOME EDITION

The Emmy award winning reality program *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, now in its 7th season, is produced by Endemol USA, a division of Endemol Holding. It is executive-produced by Anthony Dominici. David Goldberg is Chairman, Endemol North America. The show airs Sundays from 8:00-9:00 p.m., ET on ABC.



Sundays 8/7c on ABC