

C.R. Herro, Vice President Environmental Affairs, Meritage Homes, Scottsdale, AZ

By Jon Hansen, Senior National Resource Director, NRMCA

Can C.R. Herro do for the housing industry what Lee Iacocca did for the automobile industry? If you look at the mission of these two gentlemen, you see a lot of similar traits.

- Iacocca had to leave Ford and go to Chrysler to get his ideas noticed. Herro left the cement/concrete/aggregate industry to join the predominantly wood focused home building industry.
- Iacocca championed unibody car construction at Chrysler as one method of making cars more efficient. Herro is championing ICF concrete construction as a way to make homes more efficient.
- Iacocca, an engineer by training, found his true strength when he switched from engineering to marketing. Herro earned his master's in environmental engineering from the Illinois Institute of Technology and now as vice president of environmental affairs for Meritage Homes, he's in charge of establishing new green standards across the entire home-building industry.
- In a time gone by when the auto industry responded to the challenge for better miles per gallon, an item every car shopper now considers when buying a car, Herro is talking about posting a national Home Energy Rating System on every home built.

The single family home is likely the largest investment most people will make. But in a market of mass production and fast turnaround, C.R. Herro is working to raise the bar to change the current model, a model that in the past has been to build to minimum code standards and only changed when builders were forced to do so by those codes. Herro is out to prove that building "quiet, cleaner, safer, and costing less to operate" homes can be done with production builders like Meritage Homes, one of the top ten home builders in the nation.

Herro explains: "Meritage's core success in transforming the housing industry is in identifying credible enhancements to building practices and working to make them a standard feature in all our homes. The scaling of good products to standard features involves cost/benefit, production efficiencies, national availability, trade implementation and cycle time."

He went on to talk about Meritage's experience with concrete framing in insulating concrete forms to replace conventional wood framing in exterior walls. "ICFs have the potential to provide improvements in all of these areas. Meritage is specifically working with a modified panel ICF which appears to have the best opportunity to provide a direct improvement in function to the consumer, all while being cost competitive, easier to build and shorten cycle times. I anticipate our first ICF community in late 2011, with expanded ICF use over the next few years. I truly believe once we can transition the building practice from custom to production, the efficiencies of scale and performance improvements will result in a significant change in building practice in the U.S."

"It is interesting to hear him talk about the two generations who are the most interested in green and their completely different opinions about why green building matters. According to C.R., the Boomers are tired of escalating energy bills and love the idea of controlling their costs without sacrificing their lifestyle. The Millennials, tech-savvy cynics that they are, are looking for an honest approach to reducing the carbon footprint—and enjoying running their homes on mobile apps," wrote Colleen Edwards on her blog <http://therealstoryblog.com/>

C.R.'s passion for green began in school. He earned a bachelor's of science in physical and life science from Arizona State University, a master's in environmental policy from Governors State, and a master's in environmental engineering from the Illinois Institute of Technology. He also spearheaded research and program design for environmental pollution control, remediation and business development throughout the U.S. His processes have established new methods in flue gas desulfurization, industrial process design, land redevelopment and building design.

So we have to ask the question. "Are we on the verge of a massive paradigm shift in the way the housing industry responds, recovers and builds in the future?" Since "Meritage Green," an ambitious home building program aimed at building extremely energy-efficient homes and offering them at very affordable prices was introduced in the summer of 2010, other top ten builders have taken notice of what is happening at Meritage. One could almost compare it to the auto industry change influenced by the Chrysler K car. ■

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