

Interview of **STEVE THOMAS**
Conducted by **DAVE BURNETT**

MR. BURNETT: Joining us today is one of the housing industry's biggest TV stars. He's here to talk with us about his participation at the 2011 National Healthy Homes Conference in Denver. Please welcome Steve Thomas, former host of PBS's "This Old House" and star of "Renovation Nation" on Planet Green, a Discovery Communications channel. Steve, thank you for speaking with us today.

MR. THOMAS: My great pleasure. Thank you.

MR. BURNETT: Steve, you have a tremendous passion for homes from development to upkeep to rehab. Where does your passion come from? Where does it start?

MR. THOMAS: Well, my father used to buy, renovate, and sell houses, and it wasn't a business on his part. He just had a growing brood of children that he had to house and didn't have a lot of money. So he'd buy, you know, wrecks, old wreck of a place and fix it up and sell it.

MR. BURNETT: Obviously, you've seen some homes that are in pretty bad shape. Can you describe some of the worst conditions you've witnessed?

MR. THOMAS: Well, focusing specifically on health issues, the big issue is water. There is nothing that destroys a home physically faster than water, and there's nothing that erodes the air quality and the indoor health quality of a home faster than water. So the scariest, ickiest nightmares that I've seen start in the basement. Whenever I look at a new house or a house that's going to be a project or something that I'm interested in buying and fixing up, I go immediately to the basement because that's where you see the real health of the home.

MR. BURNETT: The Department of Housing and Urban Development has developed Seven Principles of Healthy Homes. Let me quickly go over those principles: dry, clean, pest-free, safe, contaminant-free, ventilated, and maintained. Steve, how do you incorporate these principles when doing renovations?

MR. THOMAS: It's a pretty good list. First of all, it kind of covers all the bases. I mean, the main thing from my standpoint is making sure that water doesn't get into the house, either from the roof -- I mean, that's kind of obvious. If your roof is leaking, most people think that they have to fix it, but if you're getting water in the basement, a lot of people just ignore it. But water in the basement or excessive moisture in the basement ends up being excessive moisture in the house.

The other significant thing is insulation and air sealing, and this goes back to the ventilation point in the seven points. Most houses self-ventilate because they're so leaky, there's plenty of air that comes into the house. Unfortunately, that air filters through the side walls of the house, and

you're not able to control the quality of the air.

So, if you insulate and air-seal a house, you control two things. Number one, you really reduce your energy costs by as much as 30 percent -- that's a pretty defensible figure -- and you also control the way the house is ventilated, ensuring that the air is dry and clean.

MR. BURNETT: Now, clearly, you've got a pretty busy schedule. You've got a TV show to do and a lot of people to talk to, but you're going to attend the Healthy Homes Conference in June in Denver. Why? And why is it important to attend?

MR. THOMAS: Living in an environment that's healthy contributes in a tremendous way to the general quality of life. The health of the home is one of the significant aspects of building and renovating green, and moving forward as we face a world that has more and more people competing for more and more resources, building green and building houses that are both green and healthy I think is tremendous.

So, from my standpoint, my job in all of this is to try to get the word out, and to the extent that I can make that happen, it's important to go to conferences like this.

MR. BURNETT: Lastly and in closing, is there anything that you would like to share with our listening audience that would be really important for them to know?

MR. THOMAS: I would say chemical contaminants in the house, be really careful about cleaning agents, pesticides, all kinds of poisons. They really should be outside of the house. And generally just be aware of the overall physical condition of the house.

MR. BURNETT: Steve Thomas from "Renovation Nation." Steve, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me and our audience. Thank you for listening. For more information, please visit www.healthyhomesconference.org. We look forward to seeing you in Denver.

MR. THOMAS: Thank you very much. It's been a pleasure.

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