

## Eco-Feminism and Solar Cookers in Africa

by Jason Wilkinson

At the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Africans are facing many complex problems. The environmental burden of modern “progress” has greatly impacted this area of the world. Wars of ethnicity, often the result of a scramble for international resource control, have incurred a large environmental and social toll. As in most developing areas, women are most impacted by these problems and are often responsible for picking up the pieces in their communities. The undervaluing of African women has complex historical roots in the scientific revolution, colonialism, and “Northern” development. Before a discussion about African women can begin, it is important to understand the forces that oppress these women.

Many feminist theorists, including Carolyn Merchant and Vandanna Shiva, point to the scientific revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century for insight into modern oppression of both nature and women. Philosophers of the day, such as Descartes, Adams, and Bacon, expressed the need for human control over nature. They described the use of science to exploit nature in bold terms, suggesting that the control of nature is tied to that of women by men.

Shiva contends that development through a patriarchal science has taken precedent over the lives of people and ecosystems. As well, she asserts that western development is rooted in sexism against women, which has led to a crisis of poverty and environmental destruction. Colonialism brought many of these values to Africa.

To better understand the current development ideology, one must look at the legacy of European colonial misinterpretation of African women’s roles within the community. The *dualism and underdevelopment* by colonial powers has remained much the same as “free” African governments are now dependent on international lending institutions such as the World Bank and IMF. Rau describes the outcome in the following statement, “The general economic crisis throughout Africa, both as described by official development agencies and as experienced by the people themselves, derives in large part from the neglect and mistreatment of women.” As the crisis of *neocolonialism* unfolds for Africa, basic needs for many rural women are not being met.

### **Fuel Wood Crisis**

Traditionally in most of Africa, collecting fuel wood has been the responsibility of women. The trips constitute a considerable loss of time and add to the existing labor squeeze. In many areas, where wood is not readily available, they often have to trespass and steal to meet the needs of their household. In some areas, including refugee camps, fuel wood is rationed out, which leaves few or no alternatives for cooking.

The fuel wood crisis is widespread throughout much of Sub-Saharan Africa. This critical issue is particularly relevant in poorer countries where up to 90% of energy is derived from wood.<sup>1</sup> Fuel wood is used for many purposes besides domestic cooking. These include plant drying, the production of charcoal mainly for use in urban areas, and the production of ceramic bricks. Additionally, the clearing of land for cash crop production causes land alienation, which greatly impacts access to fuel wood. These activities cause severe hardships for rural women collecting scarce fuelwood.

One choice for women lacking fuel wood is to cook fewer meals, which exacerbates malnutrition and chronic hunger for their children and themselves. Another is the use of crop wastes or animal dung, which only add to the hazardous air pollutants. A few of the health hazards faced by rural women and their children include chronic obstructive lung disease, chronic bronchitis, corpulmonale, apenocarcinoma, and lung cancer.<sup>2</sup> These health risks are compounded by waterborne diseases when wood is not available for water pasteurization.

### **Women Creating Change:**

#### **Roles in Environment and Development**

A democratic political system, where there is accountability to communities, is clearly needed in most areas of Africa. However, there must be greater steps to encourage full participation of women in the public realm. Women need to be aided in establishing leadership roles at local, national, and international levels. This is no small task, due to male dominated organizations and traditional cultural gender structures. Programs that support women in starting small businesses are one way to address these problems. Women’s work has often been “invisible” to economic

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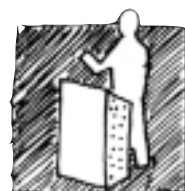
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**The Solar Information Center welcomes submissions for articles and our Solar and Sustainable Design Showcase.**

### What is the SIC ?

We are a student run organization sponsored by the Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO) and Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB). Our purpose is to serve as a research, education, and information center on solar and alternative energies, and their applications in architecture and technology.

One of our vital functions is to promote a higher awareness toward conservation and renewable energy. Throughout the year we sponsor lecturers who speak on local, regional and global issues of energy and sustainability. Our center also provides an in-house information source of books, periodicals, abstracts, proceedings, topic-files, product-files, and a World Wide Web site.



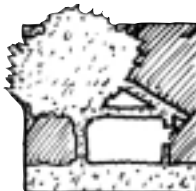
**Lecture Series**



**In-House Library**



**Student Work**



**ERC Project**



**Web Site**

## HOPES 2000: The Ecology of Home

April 13, 14, 15 & 16

Ecological solutions must be brought into the mainstream of places, politics, and planning. This year's H.O.P.E.S. conference provides a forum for sharing local solutions to global problems by celebrating grassroots efforts around the country and around the world. We will use our home, Eugene, Oregon, as a model to explore the challenges facing the diverse and spirited communities that are at a crossroads of environmental change.

As citizens, designers, artists, and visionaries, we all play active roles in shaping the livability and sustainability of our communities. We invite you to bring your own stories, experiences, and ideas to the conference. We believe that your solutions can lead the world towards realizing a new and continued commitment to the places we call home.

*H.O.P.E.S. (Holistic Options for Planet Earth Sustainability) is an interdisciplinary student organization dedicated to creating sustainable communities and environments.*

For more information, or to be added to the mailing list, call or write H.O.P.E.S. at:  
phone: (541) 346-0719  
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## Solar Homes Tour 1999

by Cheyl Jacobs and Maren Tomblin

The annual National Solar Homes Tour, on October 16, 1999, was an opportunity to visit houses that utilize solar energy. Here in Eugene, the tour highlighted a range of natural building and ecological design approaches. Each and every home provided a fresh perspective on healthy and environmentally responsible living.

The Brule/Black House (see *Solar Incidents Volume 9, Number 3 - Spring '99*) is a 3-story Rastra block structure. Still under construction, the Brule House offered visitors views into the building assembly. Rastra is made of 85% recycled polystyrene with a cement binder. Each rastra block has 6 inch channels (usually two per block) that accommodate reinforced concrete, which contributes to the block's fire and rot resistance. Like the conventional CMU, a standard Rastra block can be handled easily using two hands. Unlike CMUs, Rastra blocks have the advantageous qualities of light mass and a high insulation value of R-36. Rastra can also be cut and molded for architectural details. The owners have been very happy with their choice of Rastra Block and recommend it for do-it-yourself designer/builders.

No ecological home is complete without an elaborate organic vegetable garden. At Mark Lamberth's cob cottage, it was harvest time and the garden added a wonderful landscaping element to the earthen structure. The cottage has large windows that whimsically utilize cob's sculptural properties. Inside the house, the ceiling is laid delicately with dark green alder branches. Mark has created a peaceful home through his choice of building methods and materials.

*continued on page 5...*



*laying Rastra courses in the building of the Brule/Black residence*



*Mark's sculptural masterpiece*

## What's New

- Congratulations to Billy Nachman who recently received a scholarship from Eugene Water and Electric Board.
- We have acquired many new books for our library. Please come by and check them out.





# Solar's Going Mainstream

by Cheryl Jacobs

Thus far, solar energy has had two major obstacles in becoming mainstream. One obstacle is convincing the general public to take advantage of the sun's power. Another obstacle is competing with federally subsidized institutions that bring fossil fuel power to your home. However, several recent government programs are beginning to challenge these obstacles. Among these are the Net Metering, and the federal government's Million Solar Roofs Initiative.

The Net Metering bill allows solar-powered homes to essentially "sell back" their excess solar energy to the grid. During the hours of greatest solar energy production, usually midday when most single family homes use the least amount of energy, excess power can be sold to the utility at the market rate. Net metering is a sort of give and take between a solar home and the grid. Net Metering programs are currently available in twenty-eight states.

In 1997, President Clinton and the Department of Energy (DOE) jointly started a program called the Million Solar Roofs Initiative, becoming the strongest push for solar since the Carter administration. The basic goal is to create 1,000,000 new solar homes in the U.S. A house qualifies as a solar home by installing photovoltaic panels (PVs), a solar hot water heater, or simply by heating a swimming pool with solar energy. Unfortunately, passive solar design has been overlooked by this program.

Motivated homeowners are the ones who will help fulfill the goals of the initiative. The program's budget of 1.5 million, will not go towards any solar equipment. Instead, it will be used to publicize the program, financing the DOE's

efforts in pushing the initiative through to completion. Multiple partnerships have formed between solar interest groups. Locally, the Oregon Solar Industry Association (OSIA), Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB), Home Power Magazine, and Northwest Renewables are all heavily involved in pushing the program ahead, without government funding. Even the State Energy offices are involved in meeting Oregon's goal of 50,000 new solar roofs by 2010.



solar hot water panels on Banyan Street Manor, a fifty-four unit apartment building in Honolulu, Oahu

The Million Solar Roofs Initiative hopes to:

- Encourage PV manufacturers to make their product in the Northwest, due to the Pacific Rim's prime geographical location for international trade.
- Create 70,000 new jobs nationally through a degree program for the licensing of solar installers. In Oregon, groups are working to change the state law that requires a licensed electrician to install PV, creating a new career description just for the solar industry. In Eugene, Lane Community College is likely to have this ground-breaking program in the near future.
- Discourage homemade assemblage and regulate the technical aspects of photovoltaics so that the installation and system itself complies with U.S. electrical guidelines and passes close inspections.
- Simplify and solidify the tax credit program offered by the state as another incentive to go solar.



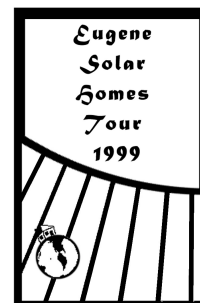
For more information on Net Metering and Million Solar Roofs, visit <http://www.eren.doe.gov/millionroofs/netmeter.html> and <http://www.eren.doe.gov/millionroofs>

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Jim McBurney's straw bale house features spacious high ceilings and an owner/builder's attention to detail and craft. Poking through the thick straw bale walls are intriguing glass tiles and bottles that bring patterns of color and light into the home. Just below their feet, visitors are greeted by hand-spread earthen floors. Once this perfectly level floor is finished with linseed oil, it will durably withstand wear for many years.

Tim Leonard's timber-frame home features photovoltaic panels that supplying all electrical needs, solar hot water, composting toilets, and the capability to capture rainwater and utilize household greywater for irrigation. It's a great example of all the wonderful things you can do to have an expressive, independent, off-the-grid home. (Look for more exciting information on this house in the next Issue of Solar Incidents!)

Frank Citaldo's off-the-grid house is located on a beautiful old hay field, just outside of the town of Crow. The building is built mostly out of recycled materials and features a full south wall of glazing and a composting toilet. The east room of the house is a sunspace/greenhouse filled with plants and a comfy couch from which to enjoy the sun and views. Frank grows his own vegetables, cans them, and then stores them in his walk-in pantry on the north side of the house. This pantry insulates the living space from the cold of the north and stays cool for ideal food storage. This house is a great example of comfortable low impact living.



Open and free to the public, this year's local Solar Homes Tour was a grand success. Keep your eyes peeled for information on the 2000 Solar Homes Tour in our coming Spring newsletter.



south-facing windows of the Leonard residence



Tim's house features exposed heavy-timber construction



Frank Citaldo's residence features large, south-facing windows to gather the sun's heat

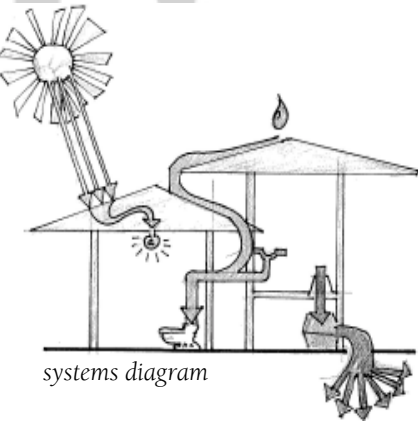


# Solar and Sustainable Design Showcase: An Urban Composting Toilet

a design project by Christopher Chalmers

**D**esigning a public toilet for a heavily used downtown shopping area raises some interesting questions. How can a toilet serve the public while contributing to the beauty of the street? How can it be easily recognizable as a toilet without looking like the typical rest-stop bathroom? How can it best serve the public that will use it? How can it handle the greatest number of people in a sanitary way, while using the least amount of energy and causing the least amount of environmental pollution?

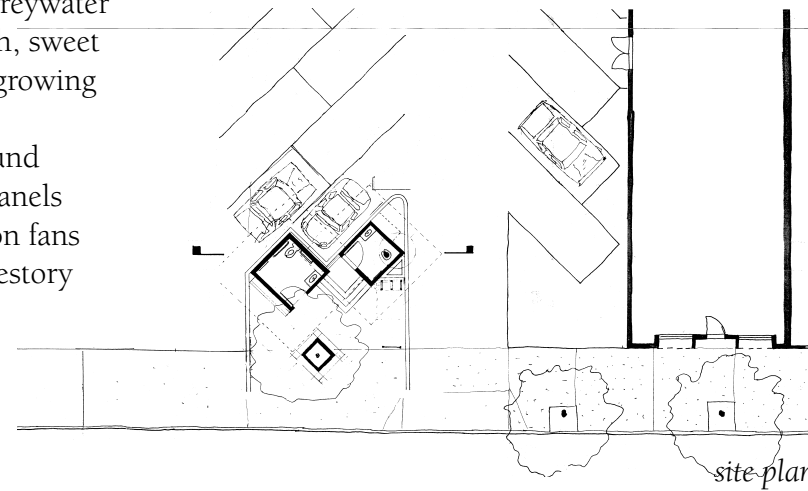
This project attempts to answer both of these questions by combining features that are not often found together: a parking lot, a shady spot to sit and a restroom featuring a composting toilet and a conventional flush toilet. These combinations create a piece of pedestrian furniture that is tailored to the site. The covered benches make a stopping place along a long stretch of parking lot between buildings. The



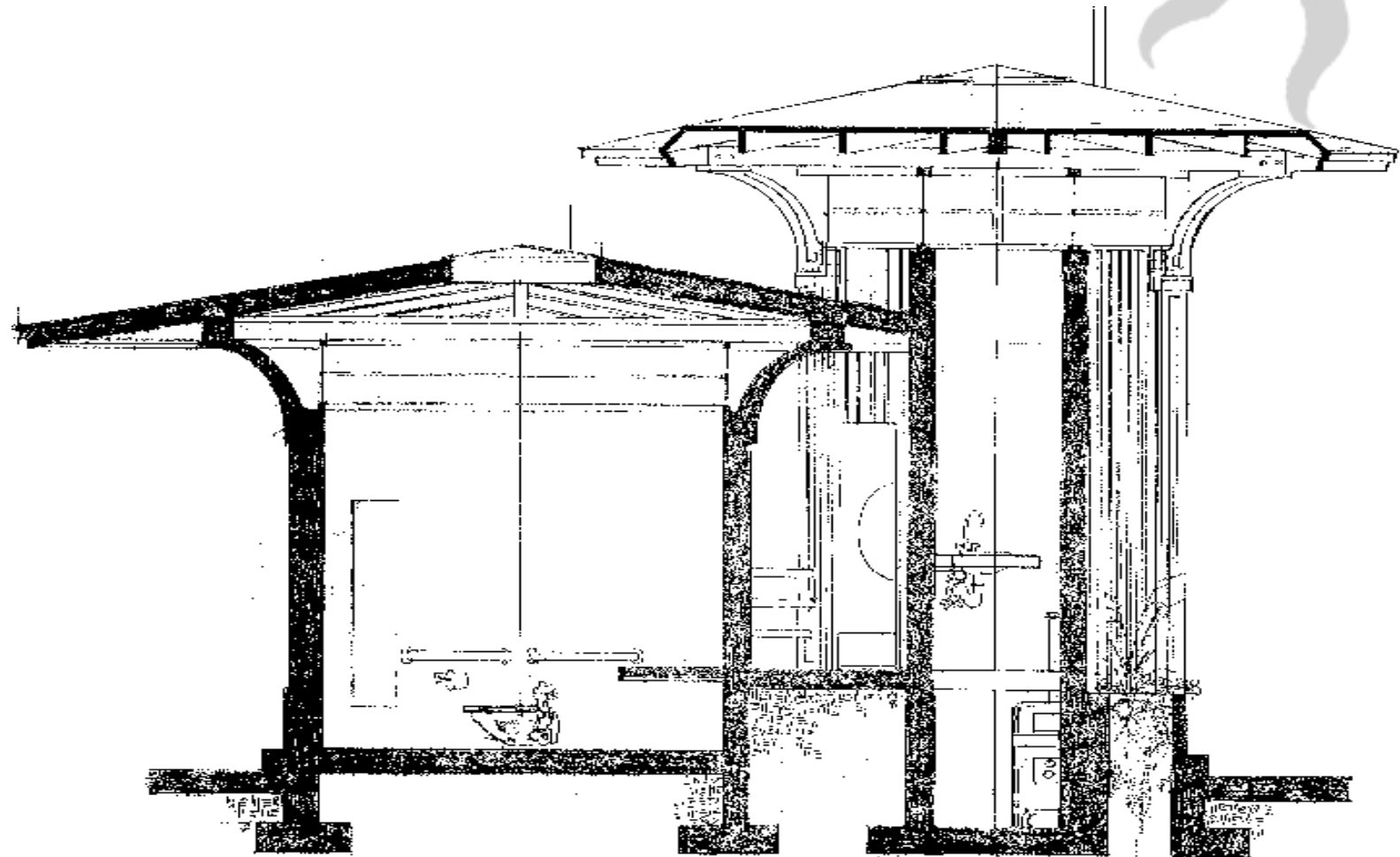
systems diagram

flush toilet helps the composting toilet handle large volumes of people during peak shopping hours, and makes use of greywater and rain runoff that would otherwise be wasted. The rich, sweet smelling loam from the composter fertilizes the flowers growing next to the covered benches.

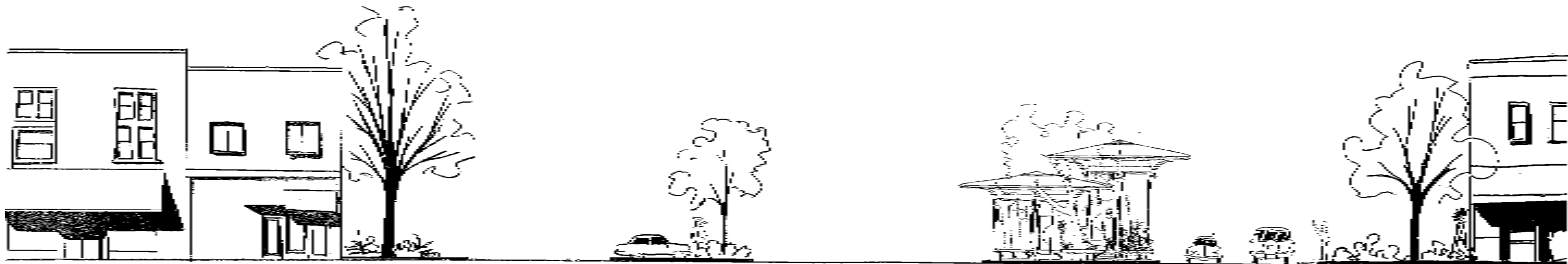
The toilets also have a few features that can be found together in many public restrooms today. Photovoltaic panels provide the small amount of power needed for ventilation fans and nighttime electric light use, while skylights and clerestory windows make daytime electric lighting unnecessary. Ideally, the facility would be constructed with reused masonry and timber. Recycled materials would also be used for all the interior detailing.



site plan



sectional drawing





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institutions, and their participation in the commercial sector severely limited. Microlending can give women the credit they need to start a lifetime dream.<sup>1</sup>

Ecofeminism is a movement that could bring much vitality into empowering women in rural Africa. It proposes an environmental ethic with an understanding of the related oppression of women and nature. An example of this movement in Africa, is Kenya's National Council of Women. The organization started a tree planting campaign in 1977 and, "has planted over seven million trees, created hundreds of jobs, reintroduced indigenous tree species, educated people in the need for environmental care, and promoted the independence and a more positive image of women."<sup>2</sup> Many ecofeminists call for a redistribution of priorities towards a society and economy based on the celebration of life. This restructuring includes demilitarization, which is seen as essential to the empowerment of women. This movement has much to offer African women and the whole of society, as a human connection to nature is rediscovered.

### **The Benefits of Solar Cooker Technology**

Meeting the basic needs of women is clearly essential if women are to be empowered. Solar cooking can benefit women in rural Africa in meeting some of those needs. Solar energy is free, readily available almost year round in African countries, and emits zero pollution. Until recently solar cookers were largely ignored because of seemingly limitless access to cheap energy. With the increasing environmental impacts leading to global warming, desertification, ozone layer breakdown, abject poverty and emergencies solar cooking is becoming a feasible method for food preparation.

The benefits of solar cookers for rural African women depend to a degree on individual situations, but overall this *appropriate technology* holds exciting opportunities. Solar cookers can dramatically reduce fuel wood consumption, with some studies showing savings of over 50%.<sup>1</sup> Another benefit is in their smoke-free cooking, which eliminate the health hazards of traditional methods. Solar cookers also retain vitamins in cooked food, are safer than open fires, and can easily pasteurize water.<sup>2</sup>

A solar cooker works on simple greenhouse concepts. Similar to how the interior of a car heats up on a sunny day, the sunlight passing through the clear glass strikes a dark surface and is converted into heat. This heat is then trapped by the glass, increasing the temperature within the cooker. Solar cookers use this principle with the addition of a reflector, which concentrates the sunlight.

There are numerous types of solar cookers. One of the most recently developed, called a "CooKit," is simple and has many benefits. It is an open cooker that uses a reflective folding base as a concentrator, an oven bag to trap the heat and any ordinary dark pot to cook the food. Some of the "CooKit's" biggest

advantages are its low cost, and minimal amount of material use. The concentrator can be made from a variety of recycled materials, such as cardboard. Solar Cookers International (SCI) recommends HDPE (high density polyethylene) plastic bags which are slightly milky and "rustle noisily when you handle them." These bags are much cheaper than oven bags, can handle high temperatures, and are readily available in most countries. In terms of environmental concerns over plastic: 1. Very little energy is used to produce the bags which is a fraction of that to cook food with wood or kerosene. 2. HDPE bags do not give off fumes, but carbon dioxide and water. The bags can also be reused

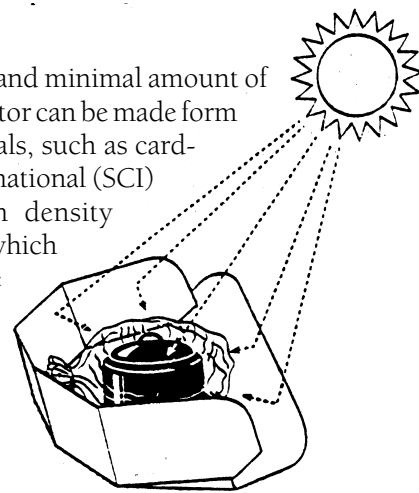


illustration of CooKit with its insulating plastic bag<sup>3</sup>

as rope before their final incineration as a fuel.<sup>3</sup> The solar box cooker is another simple type. This cooker has a smaller box within a larger box leaving space that is filled with an insulating material. The insulation helps keep the heat close to the food. A black pot is placed within the box and covered with a glass top to trap the heat from the sun.

### **Case Studies:**

#### **Kakuma refugee Camp Solar Cooking Project in Kenya**

Since Solar Cookers International (SCI) began work at Kakuma in 1995, the number of refugees in the camp has doubled. As of March 1999 over 9000 families have received solar cookers, yet some 6000 more families are waiting for the "CooKit."

The Kakuma refugee Camp in the northwest corner of Kenya is extremely dry, receiving only 10 inches of rain per year. Refugees receive fuel rations of bundles of

wood that can cook roughly a third to a half the recommended 1900 calories per person per day of food. Only a quarter of the refugees have jobs. This leaves families with only their food rations received through food-aid programs to barter for fuel wood to cook their food. Collecting extra fuel outside the camp by the refugees would greatly impact the fragile ecosystem and is prohibited by the local inhabitants. For this reason, the camp is very neat with no waste left unburned.

In August of 1998, Dr. Barbara Knudson Ph.D. and Bill Lankford Ph.D. carried out a pilot research project to determine the environmental and social impacts of solar cooking. The twelve-day study divided groups into three categories: 1. *Maximum Group*- agreed to use their solar cookers each day possible during the study, 2. *Normal Group*- equipped and trained to solar cook but asked to follow their normal cooking habits, 3. *Non-*



solar cooking at Kakuma<sup>4</sup>

*Solar Cooks*- neither trained nor equipped with solar cookers. The 70 total households were as much as possible equally divided along various ethnic groups and family sizes. Accounting for the fuel given away to neighbors and friends the "Maximum Group" was found to have saved 68% of the wood compared to that used by the "Non-Solar Cooks." The study also found that out of 70 households over 10% of the time a family did not eat in a day, either because of lack of food from bartering or from lack of wood. Solar cooking is clearly having a positive impact for the families of Kakuma, while lessening the pressure on the local environment.

A good deal of success is due to the women trainers. Women from the refugee camp were trained and then some were chosen to become trainers themselves. They were given incentives to hold workshops for other women. By the end of the year, the project was almost entirely run by the refugees. The project was a success in the use of solar cookers.

### **Wamba Project in Kenya**

Alison Curtis writes in several reports about the trials and successes of a solar cooker project in northern Kenya. She started the Wamba project with help from the East Nairobi Rotary Club, and also founded a school in the children's ward at the Wamba Hospital. In 1995, she began cooking with a solar box cooker after obtaining, with great difficulty, a piece of glass for the top. A year later when the "CooKit" came on the market she convinced the East Nairobi Rotary Club to buy 15 for the Wamba region. With the aid of a volunteer, she spread the use of solar cookers to other hospital staff, students and villagers.

Within less than a year the group "Solar Samburu" was organized to continue the solar efforts in Curtis' absence. A major setback was the harsh El Niño, in which the "CooKits" could not be kept dry. More money was raised through the East Nairobi Rotary Club to support the next project in 1998. With the assistance of visiting workshop leader Faustine Odaba, the Samburu solar project continued to grow. "CooKits" were given out at very low cost or free to families with no income. Curtis sites that ownership and responsibility are two factors that have helped make the Wamba project a success.

This case study gives hope for African solar cooking projects outside of refugee camps. It also illustrates how a few dedicated women with access to assistance can positively impact their regions.

### **Gender Tug of War in Zimbabwe**

Patrice Rodgers, in completing her master's thesis for the University of California at Davis, traveled to Africa to study the acceptance of solar cooking in Zimbabwe. She encountered an interesting dilemma with solar cookers. In the local culture men usually take ownership of new technology, while women are responsible for cooking duties. Solar cookers could bring these two positions into conflict. Rodgers also found that indeed some men, who had built a solar cooker during a workshop, refused to let their wives use the device. Mr. Garikai Bajaba of the University of Zimbabwe, explained that many men do not care how their wives obtained fuel for cooking and "as long as hot meals still appear, there is obviously still wood available to be gathered, and

there remains to be no problem."

This attitude clearly underscores the need for improving women's positions in African society. It also illustrates the difficulties of presenting innovations intended to aid women's traditional duties. Unfortunately, in this example a technology that holds many benefits for women and the environment, became a novelty item. This illustrates that to a great extent sustainable development depends on revealing gender issues and increasing the inclusiveness of women in the decision making process.

### **Possibilities**

The future of solar cookers is today. While the environmental crisis grows, threatening the stability of African society, many rural women throughout Africa desperately need assistance to meet their most basic needs. Clearly now is not the time for more discussion. Action is needed to mobilize for the empowerment of rural African women and to relieve the environmental impacts of *inappropriate technology* and unsustainable development.

As the simple "CooKit" designs spread the knowledge of solar cooking throughout Africa so too will the influence of rural women. With support, creative groups can be formed to empower and fulfill basic needs. Through women's solar baking collectives and individual businesses, more politically and socially involved citizens will emerge. Most importantly, through the simple solar cooker, women of rural Africa might find more hope and joy in their lives.



Zimbabwe trainers at the World Solar Summit<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Solar Cooker Review Fall 1996

<sup>2</sup> Timberlake 1986

<sup>3</sup> Bulajic 1997

<sup>4</sup> UNDP Choices, 10/1997

<sup>5</sup> Merchant 1992 page 203

<sup>6</sup> Solar Cooker Review December 1998 page 5

<sup>7</sup> Solar Cooker Review December 1998

<sup>8</sup> Solar Cooker Review Winter 1995

<sup>9</sup> Solar Cooker Review December 1996

A full bibliography is available upon request. Jason Wilkinson, a past Co-Director and Volunteer of the Solar Information Center, is currently on sabbatical in Cuba.





**Solar Tuesdays, an event every Tuesday evening except holidays (see calender at back)**



**a sampling of the books and videos in our library**

**Video - Diet for a New America**

*Tuesday, January 11, 2000, 7:30 pm, Lawrence Hall 177, University of Oregon*

This video is inspired by John Robbins' book, *Diet for a New America*. It graphically explains what we are doing to our bodies and environment by eating excessive animal protein. It also explains how the USDA set up the food pyramid to help the dairy, beef, poultry and pork industries. Robbins dispels the myths that surround the animal industry and tells it like it is.

**Camilo O'Kuinghttons: Hydrogen Power for Domestic Use**

*Tuesday, February 1, 2000, 7:30 pm, Lawrence Hall 177, University of Oregon*

Once a cavalry officer and mechanical engineer for the Chlean army, Camilo has an amazing background in solar and alternative energy engineering. While working for the army, Camilo developed a solar ethanol distillation process. As a professor at the University of Conception, he spearheaded numerous alternative energy programs, including hydrogen generation and utilization, a tide platform with flywheel, and biomass digesters. He is now a part-time professor in mechanical engineering at Western Nevada Community College, and teaches alternative energy courses for the Solarbarn, a center for sustainable living education in Washoe Valley, Nevada. For more information about the Solarbarn, and the courses Camilo teaches there, call (775) 849-9602, or visit <http://www.solarbarn.com>.

**Video - Jude Hobbs: Permaculture Design Techniques**

*Tuesday, February 8, 2000, 7:30 pm, Lawrence Hall 177, University of Oregon*

Jude Hobbs, a local landscape designer, gives workshops and lectures on permaculture. This video highlights her February 1997 lecture at the University of Oregon.

"Permaculture is the use of ecology as the basis for designing integrated systems of food production, housing, appropriate technology, and community development. Permaculture is built upon an ethic of caring for the earth and interacting with the environment in mutually beneficial ways." - Permaculture Drylands Institute

**Dean Still: Rethinking Passive Solar Design West of the Cascades**

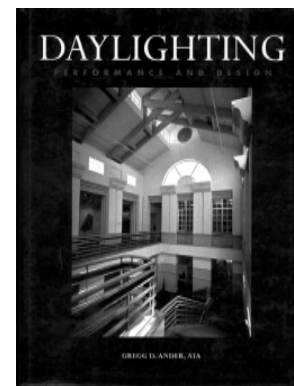
*Tuesday, February 15, 2000, 7:30 pm, Lawrence Hall 177, University of Oregon*

Dean Still runs Aprovecho, a sustainable living education and research center in Cottage Grove, OR. Aprovecho recently finished a regionally focused research project exploring exactly how well passive solar designs (using high mass materials to store and release heat from the sun) work when used in our cloudy climate. Their findings may well redefine our ideas of eco-design in the Northwest. A must-see lecture for anyone interested in designing energy efficient buildings West of the Cascades. For more information on Aprovecho Research Center, and their many classes and projects, call (541) 942-8198

**Video - Ken Haggard: Evolution of an Ecological Architecture Practice**

*Tuesday, February 22, 2000, 7:30 pm, Lawrence Hall 177, University of Oregon*

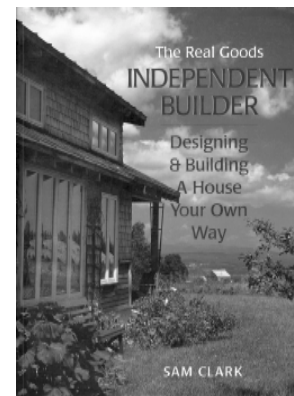
Ken Haggard is an architect in Southern California. His firm, San Luis Solar Group, specializes in green architecture, passive solar design and sustainable planning. Since 1976, they have been responsible for many innovative building and planning projects. Their projects include a roof pond prototype, designing the first permitted straw bale building in California and the first permitted interior marsh for integrated waste treatment in California.



**Daylighting: Performance and Design**

*by Gregg D. Ander, AIA, Von Nostrand Reinhold; 1995*

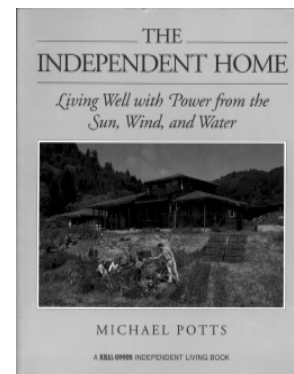
*Daylighting: Performance and Design*, is a concise technical design manual which is broken down into easily understood terms. It outlines the fundamentals of daylighting, addresses issues concerning the integration of daylighting with electric lighting. It presents daylighting design tools and methods, and examines over 10 case studies. In addition, there is an appendix full of data and graphs for those of you who just can't get enough from MEEB (*Mechanical and Electrical Equipment for Buildings*, Reynolds). A good book to check out for those of you who are interested in energy efficiency and bringing the beauty of daylight into our spaces and lives.



**The Real Goods Independent Builder: Designing & Building a House Your Own Way**

*by Sam Clark, Chelsea Green Publishing, 1996*

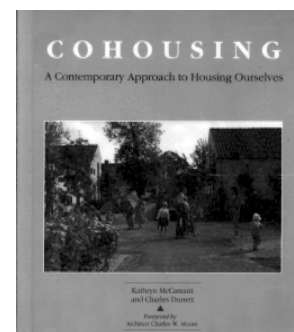
*The Real Goods Independent Builder* contains all the information you might need to design and build your own home. The book will help you decide what you want, showing you how to budget your time and money to achieve those goals. It makes familiar technical matters of design and construction that might not otherwise be familiar to nonprofessionals. It also discusses issues of ergonomics, making your house easier to use, and sustainability, so your house can be designed and built in more environmentally-friendly ways. And you know you can trust the author, because what he's written is based on more than twenty years of experience building both his own home and helping many other people with their homes. If you're looking to build your own house, this book would be a very handy resource.



**The Independent Home: Living Well with Power from the Sun, Wind, and Water**

*by Michael Potts, Chelsea Green Publishing, 1993*

*The Independent Home* stands out on its basis of homegrown examples of homes with alternative energy systems. It is laced with stories of real-life people and how they have learned to use solar, hydro and wind power to their advantage instead of relying on the standard systems. If using cleaner energy systems is something that sparks your interest, then this book will demonstrate, through examples, how you can make it happen for your own home.



**Cohousing: a Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves**

*by Kathryn McCamant, Charles Durrett, and Ellen Hertzman, Ten Speed Press, 1998*

Cohousing is a community of self sufficient houses (each with its own kitchen) centered around a shared building. It is designed to encourage community living while preserving individual private dwellings. Common to most cohousing communities are cooperative child care and common dinners offered at the gathering house as a way to ease the stress of daily routine and foster a sense of community and connectivity. The authors introduced this Danish concept to the US in 1988, and since then a half dozen communities have been built, with hundreds more in the planning stages. *Cohousing* features these existing communities as well as some Danish examples, showing how this system can improve the quality of life for the community members. This book is an interesting and well written presentation of cohousing from the people who brought it to this country eleven years ago. It is helpful to anyone considering cohousing, or those who are just curious.

"Things people once took for granted- family, community, a sense of belonging, must now be actively sought out.... The cohousing concept reestablishes many of the advantages of traditional villages within the context of twentieth century life." - *Cohousing*

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## Winter 2000 Events Schedule

Tuesday, January 11  
Dinner for a New America

Tuesday, January 18  
No Event: Martin Luther King, Jr. History Observance

Tuesday, January 25  
No Event

Tuesday, February 1  
Speaker: TBA

Tuesday, February 8  
Camilo O'Kunighittos: Hydrogen Power for Domestic Use

Tuesday, February 15  
Video - Jude Hobbs: Permaculture Design Techniques

Tuesday, February 22  
Dean Still: Rethinking Passive Solar Design West of the Cascades

Tuesday, February 29  
Ken Haggard: Evolution of an Ecological Architecture  
Speaker: TBA

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