

Hello Bus Nuts

By **ROGER LEHET**



As the manufacturer of a new breed of wood stoves I often am asked to share information about what folks in other wheeled communities are doing that might cross over into the Bus Conversion Community. This new movement in America is actually an old movement for people in Europe, where the term Caravan is used for the mobile lifestyle many Americans are now just discovering. Many are discovering it out of necessity as the "American Dream" seems highly threatened. Fewer and fewer families can afford the "white picket fence on Lullaby Lane", and downsizing simply makes sense. I recently chatted with a pediatric neurosurgeon who was buying one of our wood stoves because he could not afford his heat and mortgage bills. He needed to offset the utility enough to ensure the house payment stayed timely.

Along with this movement many new technologies are emerging as being untied from the grid becomes a necessity. We are a community learning that we can power up our homes by integrating thermal electric generation (converting heat energy to electric energy) with solar power. Solar panels are on the roof tops for both electricity and hot water production during the day and an integrated Thermo-Electric Generator accessory on your wood stove when the sun is down. You now have two sources of hot water and electricity, and this energy can be stored for use. This manner of living has many ramifications in today's world. For too long we have ignored our planet and enslaved ourselves to huge houses, maintenance, power bill and all that comes with it. The degradation of our environ-

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ment is serious and the Tiny House and RV/Bus Conversion communities are a big part of this. When I think about just how much energy it takes to keep even an average home heated to 70 degrees compared to the smaller domiciles I realize how wasteful large homes are. These communities (RV/bus/tiny) have chosen to be

more responsible of our resources and many find a real peace in minimal living. I can say from experience that it takes just 20 minutes to clean my entire 18 foot travel camper from top to bottom.



12 volt refrigerator

Getting off the grid has numerous "levels" to consider. One of the first I consider is "how much power can I produce with the space I have"? The next is "how much power do I need"? Then considering what sources are at your disposal, for example, what all can I accomplish

with a wood stove and solar panels? And how much if they work together. Another piece of equipment to consider is high efficiency 12 volt refrigeration, LED lighting systems, and as many 12 volt options as possible from television to computer. The less energy we need the easier the job of producing power enough to sustain us. The next level to consider once we understand the "load" to run our home and how to balance that with power production, which will likely be less than needed for demand, is constant production and storage during off peak hours. One needs a good enough battery bank to store power to cover peak usage or low production periods. Defining our largest energy consumption by appliance has merit as well. An example would be the clothes dryer which can be replaced by an outside clothesline in the summer and indoors by the wood stove in the winter. Summer cooking can be more fun outdoors in warmer weather. I even remember an old off grid community in the mountains of Eastern Washington some years ago. As the high school girls walked in the snow to the bus they used their butane powered hair curlers.

Composting toilets have also become more mainstream in the On Wheels community.



Composting Toilet

I was lucky enough to attend the 33rd RV and Sports Show in Quartzsite Arizona this year where I saw some things I really liked. Being an environmentally concerned individual, I know that one of our most precious commodities, especially in the South Western states, is water. I got an opportunity to meet a couple who live full time in an awesome truck conversion. One thing I liked was the little amount of water usage that they reported using. Since they often boon dock in the Arizona desert, water is more precious than gold. They have their equipment set up and tuned for maximum water savings. They have a single wash/dry unit that uses hardly any water (powered by the solar panels). This is with them eating three meals a day, washing their dishes and showering daily on 150 gallons per week. This impressed me greatly knowing

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that the average washing machine uses approximately 40 gallons of water per load. On my extensive travels of the U.S. (63,000 + by car in 18 months) I saw and learned many things. Water reservoirs I saw as a kid in California are now dry and dusty, billions of gallons of water simply gone in our food producing states leaving 100 foot tall bridges spanning dry sand.



Combo washer dryer



Solar panel system

I would like to address something that is a big concern for all tiny domicile dwellers, which would be mold. Many people know that black mold can be deadly, as my wife found out from being exposed to it. When we lived on board a boat it became clear that with three people and a big damn dog exhaling up to 2.5 quarts of moisture a day in a restricted space, condensation can be a killer. Not only can it cause mold but dry rot in your coach's walls. The biggest reason



Eco Fan

is that the laws of convection do not work as well in small spaces; air-flow is very important. I once owned a really nice motor home, 27 foot Pace Arrow. The walls peeled both inside and out from de-lamination caused by moisture. It sat vacant with little to no airflow for some time and I lost my coach



Stove Light At Home

The use of propane cooking and heating appliances (unless very well ventilated) can be a huge source of more moisture. This is where we advocate the use of a wood stove to protect your investment and most of all your health. Keeping a thermo-electric powered fan on the stove will spread out the dry heat, reducing the ability of mold and dry rot to grow. We also now

have a thermo-electric generator lantern that charges it's battery from the heat of the stove for up to eight hours portable operation and can be used to charge cell phones and tablets.

I have been trying to demonstrate here that there are ways to be more kind to our planet. The Bus Conversions, Tiny House, RV and boating communities often lead the way in new technology. In fact people wanting to outfit their life for off grid living should look at the boating community (in my mind) for much of the information needed as they are often highly knowledgeable in these areas... has something to do with living on the water... which is where my journey began.

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I highly encourage anyone living the bus nut, tiny, RV or boat dream (and many other alternative housing methods) to attend this year's Tiny House Jamboree as well as the Mother Earth News Fairs of which there are six around the country. Another good event is the Quartzsite RV show in February.

These shows are where the cutting edge equipment shows up first. Unforgettable Fire and Backwoods Solar will be presenting this very information with equipment to view at a workshop during the event. My good friend Gary Hatt and his crew will be there to share the awesome BCM magazine and both promote as well as help us provide more articles like this directly from the event.

In close (thank you for reading this whole story) there is something on my mind that is dear to me. I mentioned earlier that the white picket American dream is not so easy to attain today. I also mentioned that numerous people are enjoying the minimalist lifestyle. There is however a flip side to that and it requires forward thinking, building community and working together. There has recently been news that the Dept. Of Housing and Urban Development has announced moves that could include making it illegal to live in a "non-standard" house. This could include millions of retirees living in 5th wheels in RV parks... most on a fixed income. It would force all of the people who



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have made moves to protect our environment from more burden (fracking, drilling, spilling, explosions) back into energy consuming homes or on the streets.



This gas line explosion is a great example of how we are taxing our environment.

It is my "observation" that the powers that be do not like the movement at hand. Everyone from bankers making big money on housing loans to tax departments and energy barons are threatened by this movement, one that is long overdue. I once visited an 18,000 square foot home housing three people, I was

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to be in a position to see so many people coming together in the spirit of exactly that.

Roger Lehet



Inventor Roger Lehet, founder and owner of Unforgettable Fire is a nut about mechanics for wood stoves, buses, boats and cars. Through Unforgettable Fire, he is devoting his passions to developing new, sustainable energy solutions that empower all Americans with the energy solutions that empower all Americans with the energy needed to survive, thrive and take care of the environment.

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sickened by the cost to the environment. That house also represented to me the addiction we face to consumerism, we are enslaved and the masters do not like our awakening. It is my belief that there is both safety and power in numbers. Therefore I believe that all of the "tiny/alternative" housing dwellers and enthusiasts should become a friendly community. I have found many of the coolest and most intelligent people in these communities. There may be a day we need to band together, and certainly help educate others immediately to the concept of all that I have mentioned in this article. Lastly I am thrilled to have the opportunity to share my story with people. It is my goal to share what I have learned through a life of service. I have many people to thank. To nutshell all of this... we can live cleaner, we can break the chains of servitude, and we can all work together. It is a thrill

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