

Lesbian Acts on Love of Nature

by Earl Willis

"Last October Betsy Mayers moved into her dream house."

"That's nice."

"It's an environmentally friendly house."

"How lovely."

"Her electrical and heating bills in winter are less than \$50 a month."

"You're kidding!"

What is most interesting about the house Betsy built is the degree to which the house reflects her.

There is nothing unusual about the way the house looks, but there is nothing particularly unusual about the way Betsy looks. You have to look inside, just like Betsy, to see the difference. This ordinary enough looking house produces its own hot water, heat and electricity. The house is quite independent...just like Betsy. The house is concerned about the environment in which it lives...just like Betsy.



Betsy's house uses sun for power.

Ninety-nine percent of houses are supported by the outer walls. Betsy's house is a post and beam structure--its source of strength is within...just like Betsy.

The house is grateful for the gifts of nature and uses these gifts in ways which are neither harmful nor wasteful...just like Betsy. As soon as the house can, it intends to produce enough power to pump water, and at

that point, it will only be dependent upon nature for its survival and will live in complete harmony with its natural surroundings...just like Betsy.

While Betsy describes her new home on Hoot Owl Hill in technical terms, what she describes is a sheltering place for herself in a home that, in a way, is itself alive. Like a healthy human body using healthy food, the house uses sunshine as food to power itself.

Like the human body, too, the house uses two kinds of energy: passive and active. Betsy defines "passive" energy as the heat generated from the sun shining through a window, and "active" as the energy which the house moves about to create power. "An active energy system," she explained, "is when the heat gained is moved around to another spot. If you collect the energy on the roof, and then it is moved around to where it is stored and ready for use, that is an active system."

Sometimes purchased power is used to move hot water, but her system even uses a solar pump to do this job. This system heats her hot tub.

Her electricity is produced by a photovoltaic system. "It works basically like this," she said. "The collectors in this case are totally different from the hot water collector system. There are two sets of silicon crystals which are sandwiched together. One set of crystals has a tiny bit of boron which creates a positive charge throughout the crystals. The other side of the silicon sandwich has a bit of phosphorous which creates a negative charge. When the sun hits these two crystals, it excites the electrons which flow from positive to negative into the house wiring, and bingo--you have electricity." The electricity is stored in batteries for use whenever Betsy flips a switch.

All of this, of course, doesn't make the power company very happy, because Betsy's electrical bills are extremely low, and as soon as she has the additional system added, she hopes to cut out the power company all together.

Betsy loves the rural life because that is where her roots are--in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, her place of birth and childhood. A physical therapist, Betsy moved to the Western North Carolina mountains from the Boston area two and one-half years ago.

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