A photograph of a small, light-colored wooden cabin with a gabled roof. A red ladder is leaning against the side of the cabin. The text "LOW-COST LIVING NOTES" is overlaid in a white box.

LOW-COST LIVING NOTES

A photograph of a small white trailer with a green tarp on top, surrounded by greenery. In the foreground, there are solar panels mounted on a wooden frame.

LIBERTY UNDER ATTACK
PUBLICATIONS

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CUT ELECTRIC USE PAINLESSLY

Here are some guidelines & tips for cutting your consumption of electricity without putting a crimp in your lifestyle. First, 3 general rules:

1) If you really don't need or want it, don't use it. Do you really need electric toothbrushes, hairdryers, can openers, pencil sharpeners? Don't use electric gadgets unless they make a real improvement in your life.

2) Reduce the use of electric heating & cooling devices to the barest minimum. Heating elements are the big consumers of electricity. Electric motors use much less.

3) When you're not using it, switch it off.

Here are some specific suggestions with estimated costs for various appliances based on use by an average family that pays 10¢/kilowatt-hour (KWH) for electricity.

1) An automatic coffee maker can cost \$2/month to use. It's generally cheaper to use other fuels for cooking rather than electricity; natural gas is presently the cheapest. But some small electric appliances are most efficient because they put the heat just where it's needed. For example, my electric pizza maker uses 500 watts (= 0.5 kilowatt) & bakes a pizza in 20 minutes (= 0.33 hour). So it uses $0.5 \times 0.33 = 0.17$ KWH, which, at 10¢/KWH costs 1.7¢. That is, I use 1.7¢ worth of electricity to make a pizza, which seems acceptable.

2) A large standup, frost-free freezer can use up to \$20/month worth of electricity. Chest type freezers & those without the self-defrosting feature consume less juice. But do you really need a freezer? Unless you freeze large amounts of food purchased at low prices, it's not bargain. And even then, it's not a secure way to store food: You're going to be stuck with a freezer full of defrosting food if the power goes off for one day.

3) A frost-free refrigerator costs \$5/month more to run than a manual defrost type. Other hints for reducing your refrigerator's use of electricity: Close the door on a piece of paper. If it pulls out easily, you need a new gasket. Open the door as seldom & for as short a time as possible. Think with the door closed. Put your fridge in a cool spot, away from sunny windows & the hot stove, if possible.

4) Do you really need an air conditioner? In many climates an attic fan will cool your house adequately for only \$1.50/month.

5) If you use a dehumidifier, don't leave it running all the time. That can cost up to \$14/month. Experiment to see if only a couple hours a day operation will do the job.

6) If you use an electric dishwasher, don't use the drying cycle; let dishes air dry. The heating element used in the drying cycle is the big energy user in a dishwasher. If your unit doesn't have a switch to turn off the heating element, you can cut the wires leading to it.

7) If you haven't already looked at your electric lighting, you can make big savings in that area. Switch off lights when no one is in the room. Use the lowest wattage bulbs that will do the job. A hall light probably doesn't have to be 100w, maybe 40w will do. A 15w night light should be sufficient, Light up the job, not the room. E.g. when you are working at the desk, a small light directed at the desk is all you really need. I use one 15w fluorescent tube to light up my desk. Fluorescent lights are more efficient, turning 20% of the electricity into light, compared to 5% for incandescent lights. (But there is some evidence fluorescent lighting may be unhealthy.) And make maximum use of free natural light. Put your reading chair near a bright window. Maybe you could add a skylight or 2 to your house.



8) Turn off the TV when no one is watching. A color TV uses more electricity than a black & white. An average family can spend \$10/month on electricity for their color TV. "Instant on" TV's are the worst, because they are really always on. A set with this feature can use up to \$17/year worth of electricity even if you NEVER switch it on. If you have an "instant on" type, really turn it off by pulling the plug, or add a switch to the power cord.

9) Transistorized & solid state electronic devices use less electricity than those with many tubes. A transistor radio uses very little power. An electric clock is another device you needn't worry about because it uses only about 1/2¢ of electricity per day.

10) If you have access to natural gas, always prefer that for heating applications. A gas hot water tank is always cheaper to operate than an electric one. Ditto for gas clothes dryer. But that old "solar clothes dryer" (cleverly disguised as a clothesline) is cheapest of all.

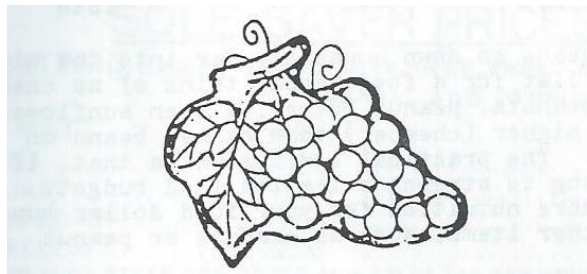
TURN WATER INTO WINE

Equipment: gallon glass jug, large bowl, measuring cup, funnel, fork, small plastic bag, rubber band, bottle brush.

Supplies: can of fruit juice (e.g. grape, orange, pineapple), 4 cups sugar, pinch of yeast (winery yeast, if you have it, or else active dry baking yeast), water.

Procedure:

1. Pour 4 C sugar into large bowl.
2. Pour fruit juice on top of sugar & mix to dissolve. About 20 to 40 fluid ounces of juice is about right. Or use small can of frozen juice & add extra water.
3. Pour mixture through funnel into jug.
4. Add water until level gets up to shoulder of jug.
5. Add yeast.
6. Screw cap on jug & shake to mix well.
7. Remove cap & put a clean plastic bag over the top of the jug to serve as an airlock. Fasten it on with a rubber band.
8. Set jug in a cool place & leave undisturbed for 3 months, more or less.
9. Sediment will form on the bottom. Remove sediment by decanting, pouring wine slowly through a funnel into another jug. Rinse sediment from jug & clean inside of jug using a bottle brush (but don't use soap or detergent). Pour wine back into cleaned out jug. Taste a little of the wine & if it tastes strong enough, i.e. has enough alcohol to stand a little watering down, add more water up to the neck of the jug. Put the plastic bag on it & return jug to the shelf.



10. If more sediment forms, pour wine off the sediment once or twice more by repeating step #9.
11. When the wine stops fermenting (plastic bag no longer inflates), replace the bag with a screw cap. Wine should be ready to drink 4 to 6 months after mixing it. Serve it from the same jug it fermented in.

Variation: To make wine from any fresh fruit, including spoiled or buggy fruit:

1. Steam fruit in pot with a little water until it is soft. This will also sterilize it & kill any bugs.
2. Make a puree & strain out seeds & skins by putting it through a Foley Food Mill or other grinder.
3. Proceed as above using this puree as you would use any fruit juice. Add water if needed to make it juicy enough to pass through the funnel.
4. After step #8, after wine has fermented for 1 or 2 months, filter it by pouring through a fine cloth like a piece of bedsheet or old tee-shirt. Gather the sides of the cloth with the juice inside, twist shut & squeeze & knead it gently to work the juice through quickly. Make sure the cloth has no holes & is absolutely free from any detergent residue. Wash out jug. Put wine back into the clean jug & add water up to the neck.
5. A couple weeks after filtering, pour wine off the sediment & proceed with steps 9, 10, & 11.

CHEAPEST FOODS

The question I put to myself was: Suppose a person has a very low income & he has access to only normal retail sources of food. What foods should he buy in order to provide himself with a nutritionally balanced diet at the lowest possible cost? And what would that lowest cost be at present (Jan. 1983) prices? The table below is my answer. The prices are non-member prices at North Buffalo Food Co-op (available to any shopper) or regular supermarket prices. 3000 calories is roughly the daily requirement for an average male engaged in moderate activity. Women, or persons in sedentary occupations would need less. In a survival situation or in case of necessity, most people could get along pretty well for a long time on more like 2000 calories a day.

The calorie cost is how much you would need to spend (at the price/lb given) to buy an amount of food on that line which contains 3000 calories, e.g. it would cost 54¢ to buy an amount of oatmeal that contains 3000 calories, with oatmeal running 32¢ per lb. Thus you could get the entire 3000 calories that you need for one day by consuming 54¢ of oatmeal, which happens to be 1.7 lbs of oatmeal. That's just an illustration; I don't mean to suggest that one should consume only single foods each day.

Similarly, 70 grams of protein is roughly the minimum daily requirement for an average male. And the protein cost in this column is how much you would need to spend on the food in that line to get 70 grams of protein from that food, e.g. 17¢ worth of soybeans would probably supply the minimum daily requirement of protein. However, quality of protein varies, because protein consists of a combination of amino acids and most food on this list don't contain all amino acids in optimum proportions. Exception: soy products do contain complete protein. Some other items are complementary so that if e.g. you combine grain with beans in a 5 to 1 ratio, in one meal, you will get complete protein. For info on combining foods to optimize protein, see the book "Diet For A Small Planet," by Frances Moore Lappe.

This list is in order of protein cost bargains & it includes all of the food items I have investigated. I have tried to include foods from all categories. At the bottom of the list you will find foods that are not bargains at all. To reduce spending on food, you should fill your diet with foods from near the top of this list, say the top 10 or 20 items. In LF 22 I will print a list of these same items in order of calories cost bargains. If you know of any cheap foods that I have left out, please tell me.

These foods are probably deficient in vitamins & minerals, but I believe it isn't cost effective to rely on food for such micro-nutrients. Instead I buy vitamin & mineral supplements (cost about \$30/year) & take one pill each day. The food bargain hunter would rely on food only for macro-nutrients: protein, carbohydrates, & fats.

Judging by these prices, I estimate that, at today's prices, one person should be able to feed himself adequately for about \$1/day or \$400/year.

Reference: "Calorie Cost Tables" by Craig Schensted, which is based on Agricultural Handbook No. 8, "Composition of Foods."

item	price/lb	cost of 70 gms protein	cost of 3000 calories
soybeans	37	17	61
soy grits	54	25	?
soy flour	63	26	99
whole wheat flour	23	27	46
white flour	19	28	35
wheat bran	29	28	90
green split peas	45	29	85
soymilk powder	80	30	123
kidney beans	45	31	87
cornmeal	20	34	37
oatmeal	32	35	54
wheat, hard red	28	35	56
millet	39	35	79
lentils	59	37	115
wheat germ	63	37	115
pinto beans	59	40	115
whole eggs	87/doz	45	198
black eyed peas	66	46	128
popcorn	37	47	68
navy beans	69	48	134
lima beans	64	48	123
black turtle beans	69	48	135
great northern beans	64	48	135
rye flour	33	55	61
brewer's yeast	153	61	357

buckwheat flour	50	66	99
peanut butter	126	70	143
spaghetti	56	70	100
aduki beans	104	72	202
non fat dry milk	170	73	310
sesame seeds	92	76	108
peanuts, shelled, roasted	131	77	149
garbanzos	105	79	193
mung beans	131	83	255
milk (liquid)	50/qt	84	234
sunflower seeds	132	85	156
barley	45	85	85
potatoes	12	87	104
mackerel, canned	126	93	463
ground beef	118	102	291
white rice	46	105	84
brown rice	54	112	99
whole wheat elbows	92	115	165
tuna, canned	219	118	735
velvetta cheese	165	128	338
baloney	118	128	298
american cheese	212	141	379
cottage cheese	126	144	786
whole wheat bread	86	146	236
cheddar chz, mild	251	154	417
mozzarella cheese	221	158	395
hubbard squash	15	165	254
provolone cheese	238	170	425
coconut, dried	87	185	87
almonds	231	196	255
sweet potatoes	22	203	124
cashews	252	228	297
carob powder	77	264	283
cream cheese	158	307	279
acorn squash	34	341	510

item	price/lb	cost of 70 gms protein	cost of 3000 calories
walnuts	345	362	350
butternut sqsh	34	375	416
baking cocoa	298	429	390
chocolate chips	252	502	320
dried figs	159	576	384
prunes	117	860	303
raisins	158	976	362

shortening	56	--	42
sugar	33	--	57
margarine	45	--	41
corn oil	120	--	90
blackstrap molasses	39	--	121
butter	169	--	156
honey	112	--	244

The last 7 items are incomplete foods that contain no protein, but the 1st 4 or 5 of them do provide cheap calories in the form of fats or carbohydrates. I include butter & honey for comparison with margarine & sugar respectively.

CHEAPEST FOODS – PART 2

This is a list of mostly the same food items mentioned in LF21p.3, this time listed in order of calories cost bargains.

<u>item</u>	<u>price/lb</u>	<u>cost of 70 gms protein</u>	<u>cost of 3000 calories</u>
white flour	19	28	35
cornmeal	20	34	37
margarine	45	--	41
shortening	56	--	42
whole wheat flr	23	27	46
oatmeal	32	35	54
wheat, hard red	28	35	56
sugar	33	--	57
soybeans	37	17	61
rye flour	33	55	61
popcorn	37	47	68
millet	39	35	79
white rice	46	105	84
barley	45	85	85
green split peas	45	29	85
coconut, dried	87	185	87
kidney beans	45	31	87
wheat bran	29	28	90
corn oil	120	--	90
brown rice	54	112	99
soy flour	63	26	99
buckwheat flour	50	66	99
spaghetti	56	70	100
potatoes	12	87	104
sesame seeds	92	76	108
wheat germ	63	37	115
pinto beans	59	40	115
lentils	59	37	115
blackstrap molasses	39	--	121
*grape jelly	50	--	121
soymilk powder	80	30	123
lima beans	64	48	123
sweet potatoes	22	203	124
black eyed peas	66	46	128
navy beans	69	48	134
*egg noodles	79	94	135
black turtle beans	69	48	135
great northrn bean	69	48	135
peanut butter	126	70	143
peanuts, shelled, roasted	131	77	149
sunflower seeds	132	85	156
butter	169	--	156
whole wheat elbows	92	115	165
*soynuts	113	51	185
garbanzos	105	79	193
whole eggs	87/doz	45	198
aduki beans	104	72	202
milk (liquid)	50/qt	84	234
whole wheat bread	86	146	236
honey	112	--	244
hubbard squash	15	165	254
almonds	231	196	255
mung beans	131	83	255
cream cheese	158	307	279
carb powder	77	264	283

<u>item</u>	<u>price/lb</u>	<u>cost of 70 gms protein</u>	<u>cost of 3000 calories</u>
ground beef	118	102	291
cashews	252	228	297
baloney	118	128	298
prunes	117	860	303
non fat dry milk	170	73	310
chocolate chips	252	502	320
velvetta cheese	165	128	338
walnuts	345	362	350
brewers yeast	153	61	357
raisins	158	976	362
american cheese	212	141	379
dried figs	159	576	384
baking cocoa	298	429	390
mozzarella chz	221	158	395
butternut squash	34	375	416
cheddar chz, mild	251	154	417
provolone cheese	238	170	425
mackerel	126	93	463
acorn squash	34	341	510
tuna	219	118	735
cottage cheese	126	144	786

*These are 3 added items that didn't appear in the LF 21 list: grape jelly, egg noodles, & soynuts. For soynuts (roasted soybeans) I used the numbers for soybean protein & calories because my reference doesn't list soynuts. I deleted soy grits from this list because I don't know its calorie content (but it should be somewhere near soybeans, I would think.)

Comparing LF 21 & this LF 22 list, we see that the best bargains in the top 10 on both lists are:

Top 10 – white flour, cornmeal, whole wheat flour, soybeans

The 2nd best additional items, in the top 20 on both lists are:

Top 20 – oatmeal, wheat grain (hard red), popcorn, millet, green split peas, kidney beans, wheat bran. If you want to eat really cheap from purchased foods, you should make up as large a part of your diet as you can from these 11 foods. Notice that all of these items are forms of grains or beans. Thus I can state my conclusion in one sentence: the cheapest nutritionally complete diet from purchased foods would consist of low-cost forms of grain & beans with a complete multi-vitamin supplement. At Jan. 1983 prices, such a diet would cost less than \$400/year for one adult.

CHEAPEST FOODS – CANNED BEANS & PANCAKE MIX

I compared 2 additional food items to see how they stack up to my cheapest foods lists (see LF21p.3 & LF22p.5). Canned pork & beans has a reputation of being a cheap food, but when price is compared to nutritional content, it turns out to be not so cheap. Pancake mix is cheaper than canned beans in cost of calories, & when on sale, is also cheaper in cost of protein. Here are the numbers (all figures in cents):

<u>item</u>	<u>price/lb</u>	<u>cost of 70 gms protein</u>	<u>cost of 3000 calories</u>
canned pork & beans	35	89	190
pancake mix (reg price)	65	107	118
pancake mix (sale price)	50	82	90

The cheapest pork & beans I could find in the supermarket cost 33¢/lb. And this pancake mix at a regular price of \$1.29/32 oz. box (=65¢/lb) is the cheapest complete mix (just add water) I see on the shelves. Sometimes it's available on sale at 99¢/32 oz. box (=50¢/lb). The advantage of pancake mix is that it's quick & easy to prepare as opposed to most of the beans, grains, & flours near the top of my cheap food lists which take many hours of preparing, cooking or baking to make edible.

I looked at where these items would rank if inserted into my charts in LF 21 & 22, & found this (low numbers are better):

<u>item</u>	<u>protein cost rank</u>	<u>calorie cost rank</u>
canned pork & beans	39th	45th
pancake mix (reg price)	42nd	29th
pancake mix (sale price)	34th	18th

Pork & beans go down unusually far into the middle of the list for a food people think of as cheap. Actually, peanuts, peanut butter, & even sunflower seeds rank higher (cheaper) than canned beans on both lists. The practical conclusion is that, if you're trying to stretch a limited food budget, you'd get more nutrition for your food dollar buying some other items, such as peanuts or peanut butter, rather than canned beans.

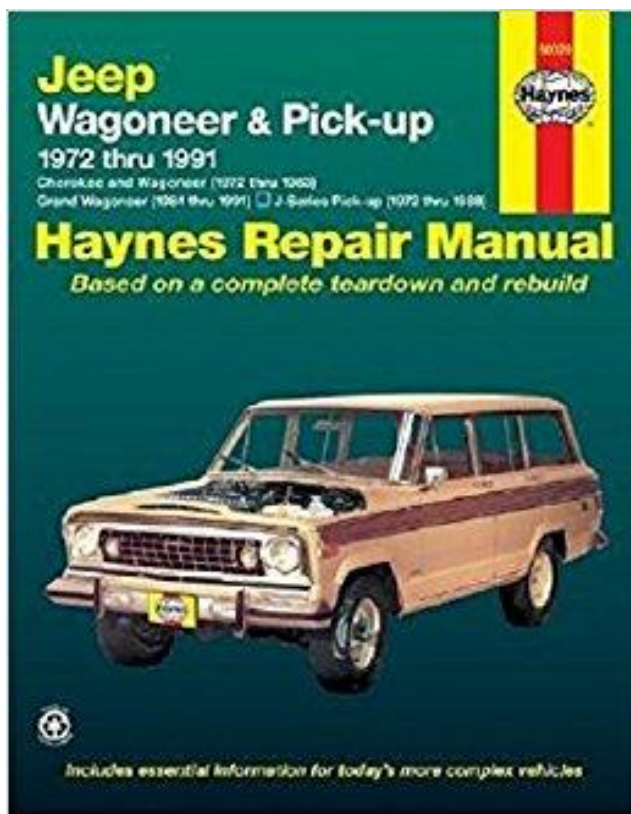
Pancake mix is only middling in cost as a protein source, but it's not too bad, & much better than canned beans, as a calorie source. And if you can buy pancake mix at this reduced sale price, it actually makes it into the top 20 in calorie cost, not bad for a quick convenience food.

CARBOOKS CATALOG

Whenever I buy another car, I buy a service or factory shop manual covering that particular model & year. These manuals have photos or drawings showing all parts of your particular car in detail. They make money-saving do-it-yourself car repairing much easier.

Here's a mail-order source that lists manuals for all kinds of cars in their catalog: Carbooks/175 Hudson St./Hackensack, NJ 07601.

I've done business with Carbooks a couple times & I've had no problems with them. Their catalog also lists how-to books on many other subjects. Check it out.



SOLE SAVER – SAVING MONEY ON SHOES

WHAT IS IT?

Sole Saver consists of particles of rubber suspended in a petrochemical solvent. It spreads like peanut butter but quickly gets sticky as it dries a little. When dry completely, it forms a soft, porous rubber, like crepe soles. Like the Model T Ford, it only comes in black.

Sole Saver can be used to resole any footwear. When it wears thin, you can resole again & again, so soles will never wear out. It will not mark or stain floors or carpets. You should keep the can covered as much as possible because the solvent evaporates quickly. But if it dries out too much in the can & gets thick, you can add more solvent & mix it in to thin it down. You should allow shoes to dry in a well ventilated place or outside, because the solvent is inflammable & not healthy to breathe.

This solvent is also a powerful cleaner. There's no need to worry about getting Sole Saver on hands, tools, tops of shoes, or other smooth surfaces, because it can be rubbed off easily as soon as it dries a little. Best to avoid getting it on clothes though, because it's harder to get off cloth, although it can probably still be rubbed off without damage, except possibly to the most fragile fabrics.

Sole Saver withstands both high & low temperatures. It can also be used to apply a non-skid surface to other items such as steps, boats, ladders, etc. You could start a home business with this repairing shoes for others after you get some practice resoling your own shoes.

I recommend that you start by buying just a pint of Sole Saver. You don't need the solvent unless you buy a larger amount that is likely to dry out before you use it all. If you decide to continue using it, you'll want to buy a larger quantity because it's cheaper that way.

A Personal Comment: I've used Sole Saver for many years & I find that it's pretty good, but not perfect. It's easy to apply, but could be more durable. Still, I don't buy shoes anymore; bought my newest pair in 1967. I just keep resoling the old ones. Applying Sole Saver is fast & easy once you get the knack. It takes about 5 minutes to apply a coat.

The one problem is that it makes a soft sole that wears out fast. You have to expect to resole about every 6 months (which I find acceptable). And excessive walking in water makes it wear out even faster.

Still, a gallon of Sole Saver will last me a couple year & I think it's worth it. But I am now beginning to experiment with resoling with rubber from worn out auto tires. That should give me a more durable sole, if I can figure out how to securely fasten it on.

CUT HIGH COST of SHOE REPAIR BILLS

SOLE SAVER

Super Shoe Repair Kit.




MAYDAY Solvent for SOLE SAVER

1/2 PINT — 1.90
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Directions:

1. Sandpaper soles & heels wash off dirt, clean with solvent to remove oil etc.
2. Apply a thin coat of Sole Saver to prime surface & rub it in. Allow to dry a few hours.
3. Apply Sole Saver with putty knife in 5 or 6 thin even coats; allow to dry a few hrs between coats.
4. After last coat, allow to dry for 2 days before wearing shoes.

SOLE SAVER PRICES

POSTPAID, EXCEPT WEST OF MISS. RIVER, HAWAII, ALASKA & CANADA. ADD TO PRICE — *Extra Postage*

1/2 PINT.....	3.6020
PINT.....	5.5040
QUART.....	8.8050
SUPER-KIT.....	11.0060
GALLON.....	22.00	1.50

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HITCH HIKING NOTES – By El Quien

When on the road take a construction-type helmet with you. I take a red rigger's for show. People will think you are just a working man going to a job & they will be more likely to pick you up. When you get the ride, you can tell them anything that fits the situation. Big Brother will be less apt to mess with you too.

When you need a bath on the road, be sure to have a Mack truckers hat (etc.) with you. Pose as a truck driver & use their truck stop showers. I do this all the time.

Caution: Never let your backpack be seen around the truck stop. I always hide mine someplace near. Go to showers with my things, clothes, change, toothbrush, etc., rolled in a towel. (With my Mack Truck hat on.)

Note: Truckers will not stop to give you a ride once they are moving, so ask them 1st at the truck stop. This is a good way to go when crossing Big Brother no-hitching areas.

A cloth hammock is a good thing to have with you. Hang it up on 2 trees, fence posts, under a bridge, anywhere the night may catch you, & get a good night's rest.

A friend was hitch hiking cross country. He stopped at a truck stop just at dusk & started looking for a place to sleep. A fellow told him to sleep in some parked trailers, said they would be there a long time, about 2 more weeks. When he was sound asleep, a truck hooked on to his trailer, & he woke up far away.



JOBLESS FATHER FINDS RICHES ON THE RIVER – WEEKLY WORLD NEWS, September 20, 1983

Modern-day Tom Sawyer moves family onto houseboat and beats hard times

By JACK ALEXANDER

A jobless father with four mouths to feed has solved his money woes by living on the river, eating catfish — and saving an incredible \$300 a month.

"This kind of living is hard to beat," said out-of-work boilermaker Chris Spinks. "We couldn't make it if not for the river."

Spinks was losing the struggle to survive on \$90-a-week unemployment checks when he decided to plug up some leaks in their ramshackle houseboat and turn to the rivers and bayous around New Orleans, La.

His escape into ecstasy has meant no utility bills, no rent, practically no gasoline or grocery bills — and no pressure.

"We found a whole lot of

ways to eat catfish," said his wife Rhonda. "And we put

\$300 a month in the bank. I

think that's pretty good for a man who ain't working. "I need to be working, but

there are no jobs around these parts for union boilermakers," said Spinks. "I have a family to feed. I couldn't just sit around and see us lose everything."

The 350 Chevy engine in their old 35-by-12-foot houseboat doesn't use much gasoline, "because we don't move around that much."

The boat has only one room with small porches on each end. It is lit by 12-volt batteries and the family sleeps on pallets.

Using a canoe and trotlines, Spinks catches up to 40 catfish a day. They supplement their fishy diet with side orders of french fries, potato salad and greens.

"We have catfish patties, fried catfish and catfish with seasoned-hot red gravy," said Rhonda.

"We never get tired of those wonderful critters."

Their fresh water comes from public fountains in the tiny parks around the outskirts of New Orleans. They bathe in the river.

The family finds a favorite spot on the river, stays there a week or two and moves on to

where the fishing might be a bit better.

Their pickup truck is never parked too far away in case they need to make a run for supplies.

To keep his daughters — Lisa, 6, and Crystal, 3 — busy, the inventive father has fashioned a makeshift ping-pong table.

"The kids love the water."

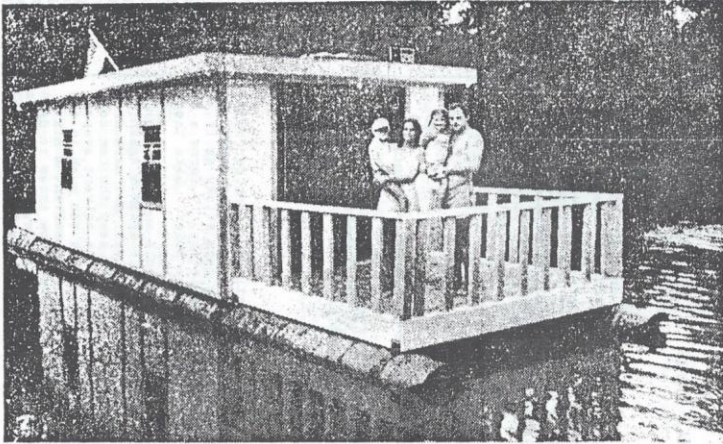
'... we put \$300 a month in the bank'

They sometimes spend all day swimming. It's hard to get them out of it," said Spinks.

"My mind's more at ease on the river," said the husky father.

"It's like living in the old days. There's no pressure and we don't worry about keeping up with the Joneses."

"People ask me where I'm gonna be next week," said Spinks. "I tell them, 'If I told you, I'd be lying.' And with God's help and the river, we're making it."



Chris Spinks poses proudly with his wife Rhonda and two children on the porch of their houseboat. The couple claimed the bayou country around New Orleans as the private paradise of their happy family.

LIVING THE GOOD LIFE WITHOUT MONEY

Book Review: **"Possum Living"** by Dolly Freed. 220 pages. Bantam Books. 1978.

What an amazing & delightful book this is: At last, here is a book that expresses a philosophy of life that I can agree with almost completely. In these pages Dolly details how she & her dad have lived for years in a respectable, conventional (in a sense), lower middle class lifestyle, with no permanent jobs, while spending less than \$1000/person/year, & without being subsidized by "welfare" or anything like that. By conventional I mean that they live in a house & not in a converted schoolbus or tent or something. They wear ordinary clothes; you wouldn't notice them in a crowd. They're not hippies, don't live in a commune, don't follow the latest "new age" fad or guru. And they eat conventional food, well not TV dinners, but not brown rice & yogurt either.

"Rather than make a lot of money, which sets you up as a John for the various taxing agencies & other predators, learn instead to do without much money. Make your own way, without buying what you need. Do it yourself instead. You become free that way." –Dolly Freed

How do they do it? Here are some details of their lifestyle:

Shelter – They own their own home with no mortgage. This is essential. It's hard to be a "possum" if you rent, almost impossible if you live in an apartment. But who can afford to buy a house for cash? Dolly tells how they got theirs cheap & fixed it up themselves.

Food – They plant 1600 square feet of gardens, raise rabbits & chickens in their basement for meat & eggs, fish a lot, forage & glean a little, & buy a few staples, mostly in bulk at a feed store.

Clothing – They buy clothes 2nd hand at thrift shops & dress very well for few \$.

Energy – They burn some oil for heat because an oil burner came with the house. But they also use a homemade woodstove, fired with fuel scrounged in the neighborhood. They are planning to add solar heating. They use a little utility-supplied electricity because homebrew electric isn't cheap enough yet to bother with.

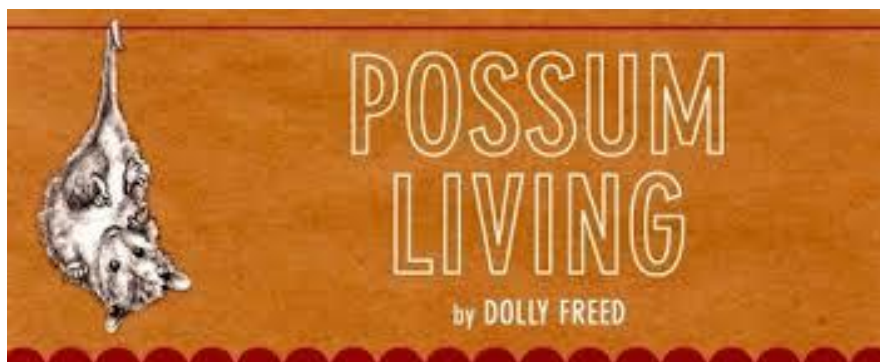
Transportation – They own no motor vehicles (this is the 2nd essential if you really want to live cheap). Instead they walk, run, & bicycle. They plan to board horses, which will bring in \$, supply manure for the gardens, & provide free transportation.

Income – Even a "possum" needs a little cash. Dolly does some babysitting & housework, her dad does occasional yardwork & other odd jobs, & they sell rabbits & herb plants.

"Americans of my social stratum don't put much stock in government or law. I don't think I know an adult man who doesn't own a gun – "just in case." Nor do any people I know pay any taxes they can possibly avoid." –Dolly Freed

Actually, though many who live in the American Suburban Lifestyle may find it hard to believe, lots of people in this country live as the Freed's do. To them it's just a normal way of life. In fact, my maternal grandparents got through the Depression by living a lot like this, & that's where I get my leaning in that direction.

If you sometimes worry about how you would survive if you lost your job, this book might bring you peace of mind. People CAN live comfortably with very little cash. If you are already pursuing a low income lifestyle, the Freed's demonstrate that it can be done, & they can give you some useful information.



COMMENTS ON “POSSUM LIVING”

LETTER FROM JAMES H.

I bought a copy of “Possum Living.” Interesting, but not very meaty. At least not for people who already have a background in it. That’s all fine & good as long as only a few people do it. I was a scavenger, the only scavenger, in a suburban neighborhood of about 9000 when we lived in town. I suppose, doing it full time, & eating pigeons and dogs, I could have made out. But 2 or 3 people trying to live off the land in that neighborhood couldn’t have done it. Rag picking could have yielded all necessary furniture & appliances, plus \$1000/year (gross), plus fuel for cooking & heating. We could have grown quite a lot more on that lot, with more time & using all the space, but it would have been a very precarious existence.

Possum Living isn’t the same as living off the land, it’s a parasitic existence on the industrial society &, when the system dies, possums will die with it. We’ve got to look beyond that.

COMMENTS FOR JAMES H. FROM JIM STUMM

Possum Living: Under present conditions I think we can predict that there won’t be more than a few people living by scavenging in most neighborhoods. What impresses me most is the incredible richness of our society in resources available to the person willing to exploit unconventional sources of supply. The vast majority are so snobbish in their attitude toward material goods that the scavenger needn’t fear any competition from them.

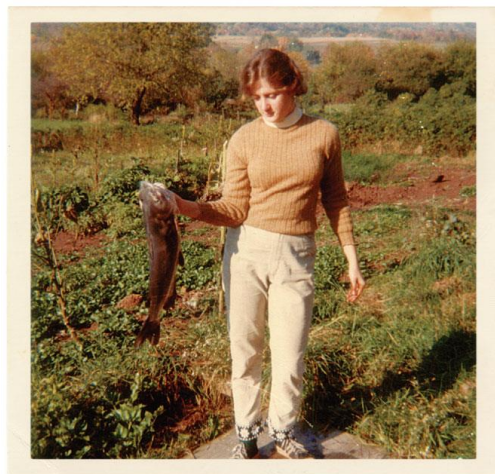
But I think you misunderstand if you equate Possum Living with scavenging. What I think the Possum is above all is an opportunist. He scavenges now because now scavenging is so easy & rewarding. If conditions change, the true Possum would be the 1st to change & adapt to the new conditions. He is above all flexible, a survivor, not chained by social conventions.

In a way a scavenger is not really parasitic because he doesn’t take away what other people want, but only what they don’t want. He doesn’t make others poorer. It’s not a zero-sum game as it is with a biological parasite. The scavenger provides a useful service by helping to haul away garbage, & he is productive in that he takes worthless materials & adds value to them, raises them up to some usable state.

But I agree that it would be wise to get your systems in place so that you can produce your necessities independent of others, & not rely on them for your ultimate survival, even as a scavenger.

For me the striking revelation in this book was learning that one could live almost without money & still look basically conventional. I knew before that you could live cheap, but I thought you had to be willing to look funny, eat funny, [&] live funny to do it. I’m sure that Jim B. is correct in saying that lots of people live this way, but I’ve been too much of a city boy & haven’t had contact with the kind of people who get along ok without using much money.

As to this being a precarious existence, what about the corporate employee, in debt up to his eyebrows, living from one paycheck to another, with high rent or mortgage payments? He has a high income, so he feels secure. But if he loses his job, without money he wouldn’t eat & soon he’d lose his home, & most of his stuff would be repossessed. Of course, he expects Uncle Sugar will come bail him out. But who really lives a more precarious existence, this corporate serf, or the possum who knows dozens of ways to get food, fuel, clothing, & everything else he needs?



Dolly Freed with a fish

LETTER FROM PAUL DOERR

Dave's letter – an un-nutritious food? Why? The most nutritious food is the cheapest. 1 part legume (like soy) & 7 parts grains produces protein as nutritious as steak & with less harmful elements. The mix I've mentioned so many times is nutrient-complete & can be eaten wet or dry, cooked or raw, made into pancakes or fruitcake, or even eaten while walking along. Why un-nutritious food? Stew, made properly, is nutritious & filling, flavorful & cheap. It's like the people around here with fruit-trees in their yards. They buy fruit & let theirs rot on the ground. It's not good enough unless it has a big brand & a big price?

The land I own in the mountains produces enough wild food that I & a family of a dozen could eat well on just gatherings (with lead time since ripenings are not simultaneous).

Anyone can buy an old pickup truck & build a small cab-over camper onto it. 2x4, ½" cheap plywood & batt insulation. The outside could be aluminum sheeting. The entire thing would cost under \$200.

I can keep a well-constructed & insulated structure warm with just pickup dead wood & debris. Raid the Dairy Queen & McDonalds trashcans. Plastic containers are made from oil & burn hotter than wood.

Don't people use their intelligence?

MY SUNPORCH/GREENHOUSE

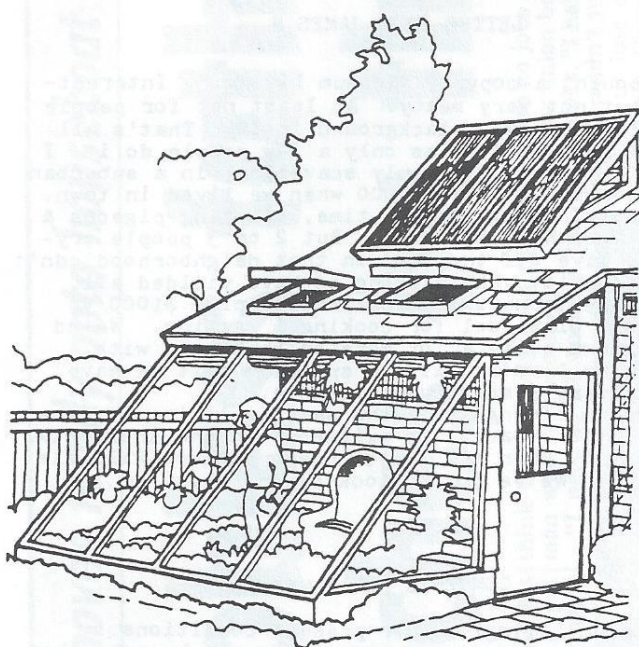
The house I live in (in the city) has a small back porch (9x5 feet) on the sunny south end of the house. Last autumn I enclosed the porch using recycled wood-frame storm windows to make a greenhouse. I intend to use it to provide some solar heat to the house during winter & for growing plants. To prevent overheating in summer, I can remove any or all of the storm windows & store them in the garage. The greenhouse is completely closed in but it isn't finished yet & I haven't put any plants in it (it goes well below freezing most nights), but it is already making a contribution to my heat budget. I'm surprised that it already works so well, considering how many improvements still remain undone.

Performance: The data I have so far is mostly temperatures. At night the porch drops to a temperature close to that outside. On a sunny day, by noon or sometimes earlier, the sunporch will get up to 70°F. On a sunny day when the temperature outside is in the teens, the greenhouse temperature will get up to the 80's. The highest greenhouse temperature I've seen so far was above 90°F when the outside temperature was about 30. But I usually don't let it get that high. Instead, when it gets 70ish, I open the inside doors & bleed excess heat into the (cooler) house. If it remains sunny, I'll keep the doors open, & the porch will hold at 70 or so until the sun begins to set around 4:30 (in Jan.). On completely overcast days, when there is no solar heating, the sunporch at least serves as an airlock, since my back door opens onto it.

Defects: I'm especially pleased with these good results because there is so much more I still can do to improve performance. The major defects are: I didn't have time to fit the last storm windows on the east side, so I stapled up 4 mil plastic to close up that space quickly. That's still all the glazing there is on the east side, except for an old storm door that opens to the outside. A lot of cold air leaks in around & through that door. Next summer I'll fix it, but for now it's a liability.

The rest of the glazing is only a single layer of ordinary window glass. I know a lot of heat is being lost through the glass. Eventually I will double-glaze, maybe by stapling plastic on the inside. And the ceiling & floor have not been insulated yet. I can feel cold air blowing up through the floorboards. I don't have any effective nighttime insulation over the glazing yet, which is another feature I will be adding, at least to the east & west walls. And later I'll add thermal mass for heat storage, but 1st I have to brace up the floor so it won't collapse under the ton or so of water-filled containers that I'll be stacking on it.

And yet, with all these features still lacking, the sunporch already provides useful benefits. Since it's easier to move my body than it is to move a mass of hot air, I often spend sunny afternoons sitting on my summery sunporch while I keep the thermostat in the house turned down to 55°F. That warm teeshirt-environment feels even better when I look out at the great mounds of snow just on the other side of the glass, knowing that the heat I feel didn't cost one penny for fuel. Materials & supplies for the greenhouse so far total less than \$20. I came by the rest by means of creative scrounging.



CREATIVE SHELTER!

INSTANT SHELTER

Out of work and down to your last dollar? Don't despair, there are lots of opportunities for shelter as long as you look presentable.

*Call hospitals, nursing homes, convalescent homes and see if they have any live-in jobs. That way you'll get work and a room simultaneously.

*Call home care companies listed under Health Service in the yellow pages. They provide workers that often live-in with people who are handicapped. Again you get a roof and a salary all in one!

*Hotels and motels often offer a room along with a job. You can be a desk clerk or do maintenance. Same applies to many out-of-town resorts and spas.

*Look in the want ads for jobs on estates, farms and ranches. Gardeners are often provided a small house with utilities on large estates. Farms and ranches often have labor camps on the premises.

*Railroads and lumber camps almost always provide housing with their jobs. In this area call Southern Pacific or Union Pacific. Lumber camps recruit from downtown employment agencies.

*Fishing boats always provide living space and food plus a percentage of the catch. (My first live-in job was on a 40-footer out of San Pedro...a bunk, all I could eat and \$5 a week when the captain had it which wasn't often. Lotsa fun!!)

*Door to door solicitation often pays off since people will often work out a deal whereby a tenant perform certain tasks in exchange for room and board. A girl I know was once given a double garage to use as an apartment in exchange for making it livable.

In summary, you have an imagination...use it! There are lots of roofs around. Get under one now.

COMMUNAL LIVING

Many homeless people are learning that they can pool what little they have and rent or buy a place together.

*Look in the want ads for rooms or homes to share. Even if the amount asked is too high for you, try to work out a labor arrangement.

*Religious organizations often provide shelter to those who will eventually become members. I know of two Zen facilities—one near Mendocino, the other is Tassajara Hot Springs between Carmel and Greenfield in the mountains. If a sanctuary and religion are your needs, check them out.



*Phone your local Community Services office and ask for a list of organizations that offer shared housing.

*Place your own ads in the classified sections offering what you have in exchange for housing on a communal basis.

NOMADIC LIFESTYLES

There are an estimated 3 to 4 million Americans living on wheels. They range from retirees living in elegant trailers and motorhomes to singles trying to get comfortable in a Japanese car.

*County parks are often open to people who will exchange services for trailer or camper space. You might work the same arrangement with some of the privately owned recreational vehicle parks.

*Once you get the hang of being a “tire tramp” you’ll find that even a small pickup camper can be a rewarding home on wheels.

*It’s possible to make a medium-sized car into living quarters by taking out the rear seat and connecting that area with the trunk. You end up with a six-foot + bed by installing a foam mattress.

*Check out fellow nomads for good places to park free of bureaucratic hassling.

In addition to the many trailer and camper magazines, try a copy of ESCAPEE NEWSLETTER (\$2) FROM SKP RT. 5, Box 310, LIVINGSTON, TX 77351. A great source of information for nomads.

RECYCLING AVAILABLE SHELTER

Ever since I found a couple living in a converted gas station, I’ve been looking at old buildings with a new view.

*Check out all the old, unrented, unsold property in your locale. If it hasn’t been used for sometime, it’s a good bet that an offer to maintain or restore it for free will be accepted. After all, it’s better for an owner to have someone living in the building or on the property than to have it exposed to vandalism.

*There are a surprising number of old lumber camps along the West Coast that are no long in use. Apply to owners which you can find from the County Tax Assessor’s Office or Recorder’s Office. (I once rented a large camp with many buildings for a sum under \$100 a month.)

*Ghost towns are now being rehabilitated by homeless people. There are many books on ghost towns so check them out at your local library. Old maps of a state are also good sources of location data. Many ghost towns were originally housing for miners so examine mining claim data in the county offices.

*The government often abandons military bases. Find out more information on this from your congressman or senator or write to the various services. Utilities and railroads often vacate properties such as pumping stations and RR stations. See if you can take them over through purchase or lease.



Abandoned Chanute Air Base

*There are many abandoned miners cabins in such states as Idaho and Oregon. All it takes is a backpack and some gumption.

BUILD IT YOURSELF

The high cost of land need not be a barrier to building your own pad. After all, there are thousands of acres of land owned by persons who would be willing to give a long-term lease.

*A young couple leased a ¼ acre of forest in a Northern California county and built a house costing less than \$500!! The cost of the lease is less than \$25 a month and that includes use of a natural spring.

*If you are willing to provide milling services for miners, you can claim five acres of federal land in many Western states. The cost of filing is low and the only other requirement is that you do a certain minimum amount of work on the property per year. Write to BLM, Washington DC 20402 for more information. Naturally, you would be able to park a trailer or build a small cottage to allow you to operate your milling business.

*There are many new materials and techniques in housing including plastics, cements and new forms of manufactured wood. All of these lead to reducing your overall cost of building your own place. Go to your local library and examine such books as New Shelter.

SQUATTING

It's an old American custom that has gained ground with recent court decisions favoring squatters. Simply stated, it's a method of using land by simply using it.

*In many parts of the Pacific Northwest, there are millions of acres of wilderness land that can be enjoyed either temporarily or permanently.

*In Idaho, the famous Mountain Man built a cabin on the South Fork of the Salmon River and lived there autonomously for many years. And speaking of rivers, there are river islands that can be claimed in many parts of the West including the famous Delta region.

(Reprinted from "Homes For The Homeless," an 80-page booklet distributed by Holy Terra Church (Bill Kaysing). Requested donation \$1, free to homeless people (but send more if you can as \$1 will hardly cover postage), from POB 832, Soquel, CA 95073.)

FREE LAND – GRAPHIC/ADVERTISEMENT

FREE LAND

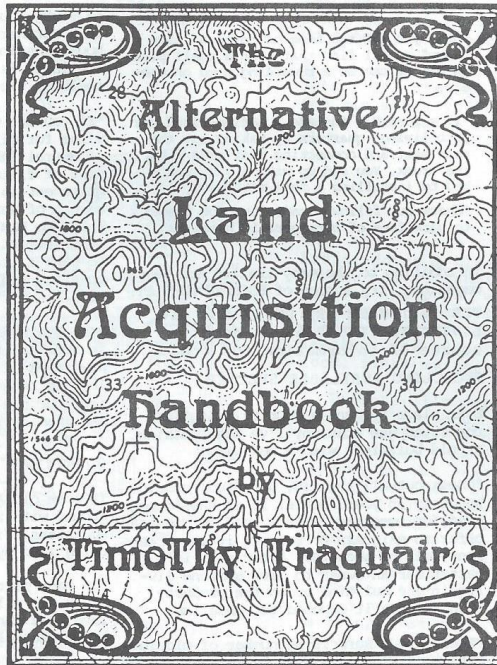
THERE ARE SIX WAYS TO GET LAND FREE OR ALMOST FREE

1. Land Reclamation is one way to get up to 320 acres. You pay 25 cents per acre to start, you then move onto the land and go to work setting up an irrigation system, and transforming the soil. You only need to work one eighth of the land you have applied for in order to show that you can succeed in transforming this semi-arid land into productive farmland. You get four years to grow a successful crop because it may take some time to transform the soil. You then apply for purchase at which time you pay **one dollar per acre**. The land is yours.

2. Alaskan Homesites are available for \$5.00 per acre. You must reside at least five months out of the year three years out of the first five. You can also get a five acre **headquarters site**, and up to eighty acres for a **trade and manufacturing site**. You must build a cabin good enough to winter in.

Veterans are given a special advantage in shorter residency requirements.

3. The Indian Homestead Act allows you to get 160 acres of grazing land, or 80 acres of irrigable grazing land, or 40 acres of irrigable farmland. You must be Native American.



4. Mining Claims may be used to get on the land. You get 20 acres of land to use. You can build a structure and live there as long as you do a certain amount of work per year mining.

You can also patent it which means getting full Title to it if you can show that you have indeed found a valuable mineral deposit. If so you pay **\$2.50 per acre**.

5. Tax Delinquent Land is up for grabs! You can look these up in your area, contact the owners and see if you can have the land in exchange for paying the taxes and you may even wish to kick in some boot money to be generous. You can bail them out of a tight situation for the land.

6. Lost and Forgotten Land exists all over because of human error. Sometimes when a landowner divides up a large block of land, small parcels are cut off like scraps and never do get sold off. For a hundred years they may lie forgotten like sleeping beauties, waiting for your arrival. This book shows you how to methodically hunt for these rare gems, and how to legally claim them.

The **Handbook** is about 100 pages packed with valuable information with all the charts and graphs, the agencies and their addresses, the procedures, and forms. And inside information on easements, and water rights, and government land sales. The author invites you to participate in a **joint venture**. You can not get this brand new book anywhere else.

To order, send \$20 to:
RIDGEHAVEN P.O. Box 862 Glen Ellen CA 95442
Postage and handling are paid.

LETTERS FROM BILL KAYSING

FREEDOM AFLOAT

The cost of land in buildable areas has skyrocketed. Even the smallest, meanest little lot can cost 30, 40, or 50,000 dollars. At even moderate interest rates, the payments on the lot plus a house goes beyond most people's ability to pay. So what's the answer? Simply, forget the land...try water.

The Earth is about 3/5ths water with millions of acres of quiet, useable, protected inland waterways. So why pay a fortune for a scrap of polluted land in some crowded area when you can roam waterways free aboard a floating home?

BARNACLE BILL

I met Bill when I was living aboard my own Coast Guard cutter converted to a house-boat. His cozy home was found rotting on a mud flat. He patched the leaks, hosed it out, & restored it to livability. Priority was a comfortable & spacious bunk that served as a couch in the daytime. Next was a compact galley with an oil-burning stove that could be converted to wood if the oil ran low. Bill loved the outdoors so most of the hull was open deck with an awning for shade.

He retired from a job as a therapist in a mental institution on a small pension. He could have struggled along paying high rent somewhere, but he preferred the life "directed by wind and tide." Often, to save fuel, he would just let go the mooring lines & let the elements move him about. Wherever he was when night fell, he would cast his anchor & enjoy the unexpected scenery.

I spent some time with Bill in the Delta region & we often discussed how easy it was to live a free life aboard a small boat.

FIXING UP OLD BOATS

There's a method that has been used successfully by many fisherman that's cheap & effective. Haul the leaky old hull out of the water & clean it by scraping or sandblasting. Then staple on several layers of chicken wire, about half inch mesh. Then plaster the boat with a thick layer of very sticky, almost-dry concrete. If you have a friend with a gunite rig (blown concrete), you can use that method. But either one works. Keep the setting concrete damp until it cures – several days. When you re-launch it, you shouldn't have any more leaks. This can save boats that otherwise would be lost to the chainsaw gang.

Once the hull is dry, you can make it livable for peanuts. For example, many rug dealers will give you rugs that they remove from homes. Cut out the worn spots & use the balance to give yourself a wall-to-wall carpeted cabin. Since boats are usually quite small, you don't need much furniture. Often plenty of pillows & back rests will make a snug living area. Cooking facilities can be as simple as a one-burner stove burning gas or kerosene. And lights can be 12-volt recharged by a small generator or, if you have some buck, a solar cell panel.

The best way to see how to live aboard cheaply is to visit people who are already doing it. You'll learn all the shortcuts as to furnishings, utilities & food.

There's a very large subculture in America that lives afloat, & they've generated a large inventory of valuable information on low-cost shelter. To me, waterborne living is one of the best ways to enjoy life with little money. I recall one summer when friends & I were living on the old Flying Goose & we discovered we were spending less than 25¢ per person per day for everything! That was food, utilities, entertainment...the works. So I know that it can be done.

Creative people often combine boats with shore living in a pleasant mixture that offers the best of each. Up the Napa River north of Vallejo in California there's a meandering community of mostly retired people who have built small places on stilts. No one seems to mind since the land is marshy & unusable otherwise. The clannish group lives half-ashore, half-afloat, finding much of their provender in the river. Fish, clams, crayfish & other fresh and saltwater foods are theirs for the taking. With no rent to pay, they can afford to buy gas for their small vessels & thus enjoy boating at its low cost.

Also in California there are many good spots along the Sacramento & San Joaquin, particularly where they form the 1500-square-mile Delta region between San Francisco & Stockton. I recall meeting a man who had been reduced to a pittance after a disaster in business & another in marriage. He told me that he lived for almost a year on an uncharted island in the Delta using his rowboat to fish & dig clams. His only expenditures were for oil, salt, & kerosene for his lamp. He built a shelter of driftwood & found his recreation in a battered guitar & the stars.

FINDING OLD BOATS

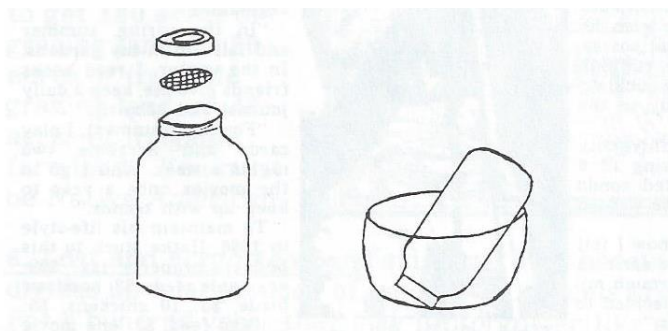
For many years I lived aboard an old Coast Guard cutter converted to a houseboat. I found out how easy it is to obtain old boats. Many marinas have a back lot where boats that have been put on blocks are stored. Often the owners lose interest, & the boats decay. You can buy these for storage charges, sometimes even get them for free—the marina managers just want them out of the way. I once bought 3 old boats for \$50 & one was a restorable 30-foot fishing boat.

Also check out the backwaters of harbors. It's lots of fun to wander around & see what you can find. Boats that have been leaking a lot are often towed to a sand bar & parked. If abandoned, you can check the numbers & ask the owner if you can take possession. Check with insurance companies in your area. Often boats are sunk or burned & can be obtained for a few dollars or even salvaged for free.

(Adapted from "Homes For The Homeless," an 80-page booklet distributed by Holy Terra Church. Free to homeless people, \$5 donation requested from others. Write to: POB 832, Soquel, CA 95073.)

SPROUT JAR

The best device I know of for sprouting grains & beans, & one that I use all the time, is a homemade rig. Take a one quart canning jar or mayonaisse jar that will take a standard canning lid. Use just the canning ring without the solid lid. Replace the lid with a disk cut from ordinary metal window screening.



To use: Put about one inch of grain or beans in the jar, screw on the top with the screen in place, rinse by running water in through the screen, sloshing around, pouring off. Fill jar with water again & let it soak overnight. Next day, pour off the soak water & rinse once, then rinse once a day until finished, about one week. Between rinsings keep jar tipped upside down in a bowl to drain. Never take the screened top off after adding grain or beans until sprouting is finished.

I sprout lentils all the time. One inch of lentils (dry) will fill the quart jar after sprouting. When finished, the screened lid is replaced with a solid top, & I put it in the fridge. Will keep at least 2 or 3 weeks in the fridge. I've never had any go bad, so I don't know the maximum shelf life. I use lentil sprouts mostly in spaghetti sauce & soups.

HOMELESS SURVIVAL by Wildflower

Staying alive on the streets after losing home, job, etc. can be a real nightmare for most homeless people here in America – and the way this nation is going, perhaps some LF readers might face this in their future too! From friends & others, here is some simple advice to heed before disaster strikes:

- 1) Stay in shape. Good health is important. Maintain your teeth; obtain extra eyeglasses, etc.
- 2) Maintain a post office box – can serve as “proof of residency” for licenses, state programs, & resumes.
- 3) Maintain a positive outlook. Clean body & clean appearance may help keep you out of “vagrant jail.” Also, many places won’t serve bums who look like “roadkill.”
- 4) Low income, can’t afford apartment, try living in a tent at a local campground. Yes it is rough, but beats public shelters & street alleys.
- 5) Buy a good, but drab-colored sleeping bag (rated to 0°F). Sleep warmer out there in the park bushes. A long, winter coat helps too.
- 6) Carry a large rucksack with: a change of durable work clothes – toilet gear – poncho – hammock (net type) – first aid kit – one person camp cook kit (steel) – compass & area maps – plastic tarp – a few days of food – speed stitcher sewing awl (to mend clothes & gear) – etc. – Remember, you may have to change locations quick, on the run!

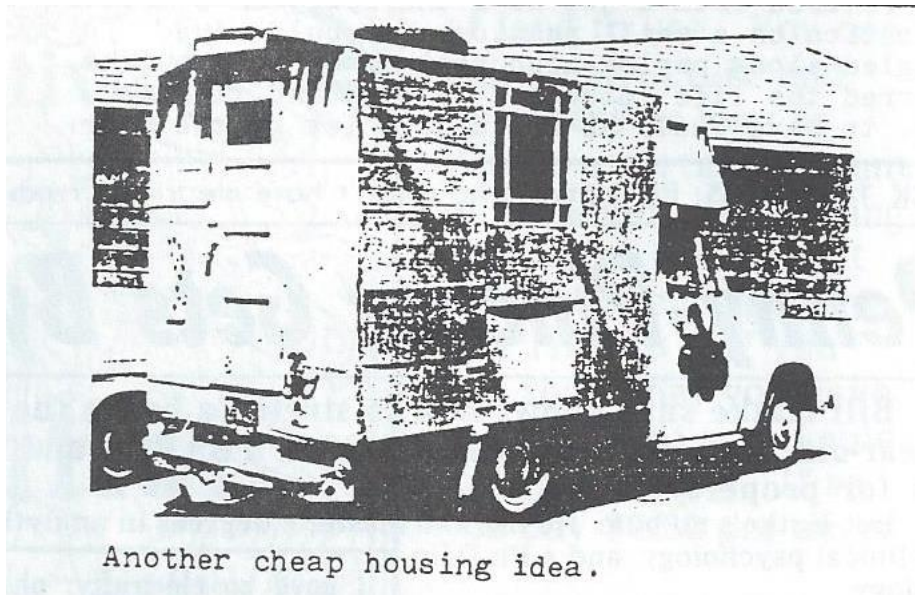
Also a 12 inch machete (with sheath), can be concealed under a long coat, or in pack. Use to dig for roots & clams, clean fish & game, build shelters, even defend yourself (well worth the hassle). Resharpen with mill bastard file (hardware store).

7) Cash/stash – Emergency “mad money” – set aside each payday a certain amount of cash. Don’t touch it until faced with eviction, illness, etc. With such cash you could take a bus south for winter, come back in spring. Or obtain decent food, etc. Without it you might suffer badly.

8) A few years ago, hurricane Hugo hit Charleston. A friend of mine, she was prepared with rucksack & sleeping bag, stayed at a local shelter. Afterwards she found her apartment, job, etc. all wiped out by Hugo. She had to live with what she had & could get, for over a week. The machete came in handy for certain “johns” & other bums who sought to “relieve her” of various items. After a week, she was able to move to a friend’s home in Florida. Had she not had even the machete, she strongly believe she might not be living today.

9) Another person I know of couldn’t afford the high rent. He lived in a tent in a friend’s backyard until a few months into a job. He was lucky. In Boston, homeless people sometimes are beaten, or worse, set on fire, by kids “out for fun.”

10) If you’re homeless, don’t drink or take drugs. That only makes it harder for you to survive. With a little preparation, maybe you won’t stay homeless forever.



EDITOR'S COMMENTS ON HOMELESS SURVIVAL

1) Another shelter possibility is to live in a vehicle. Best for the city would be a van with solid sides, no windows. Throw down a sleeping bag in the back to sleep with some comfort & security. Park on the street or in parking lots, a different place each night, unless you get owner's permission to use some one place. Don't make it obvious that you're living in the vehicle, e.g. don't keep a light shining or radio playing for hours every night.

2) A city is full of "unofficial" shelter possibilities, in attics, basements, garages, commercial spaces. If you have some income, but not enough to pay the high rent asked for real apartments, maybe you can find a friend of a friend who'll rent you a corner of his cellar or garage cheap where you can build a livable room. Keep a low profile, don't talk about it, if you're living in a way that bureaucrats would not allow.

I read a news article about a guy in Toronto who was happily living in a garage. A couple days later I read that government inspectors also read the article & they came by & kicked the guy out of the garage where he was living illegally (with the owner's permission). So if your home is unconventional, don't talk to reporters.

3) I lived for a year in a room I built in a basement, though I never thought of myself as "homeless." This was in a "collective house" where several people, often students, rent a big house & split rent & utility bills. I usually paid \$50 or \$60 a month in rent when I was living that way during the 1970s. The cheapest month I paid \$37.50, but we were a little over-crowded that month.

4) For cheap food, the main thing to remember is to mix grains & beans in one meal to get complete protein without expensive meat. Grain also includes all forms of flour & oatmeal. Beans includes peanut butter. You can eat oatmeal raw, or mix oatmeal & peanut butter, keep it in a plastic bag, tear off pieces to eat anytime. You can add to it unsweetened baking cocoa, honey, dried fruit & nuts, but that makes it more expensive. You can increase food value of beans & grains by sprouting. Lentils are the easiest beans to sprout. Soak overnight, pour off water & rinse with water once a day for 3 or 4 days. Add to soup, stew, tomato sauce, whatever. Also, buy a generic multi-vitamin & mineral supplement. Take one a day & you'll be getting all the vitamins you need, even if the rest of your diet is a little iffy.

5) We should mention, what probably everyone knows, that the way to get free stuff when you're down & out is by dumpster diving & garbage picking. Lots of great stuff is available in the trash of our rich society. To get a little money in a state with a bottle deposit law, pick up cans & bottles to return for the deposit.

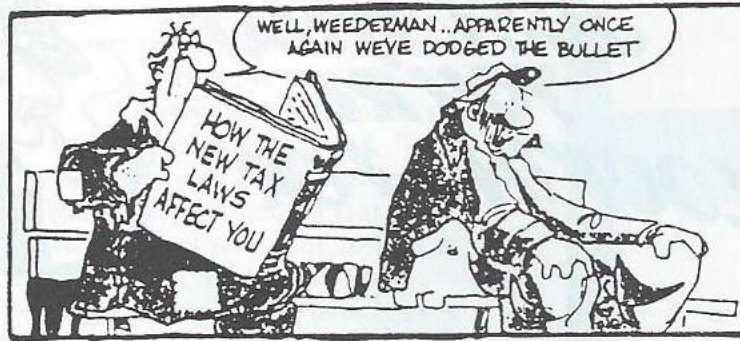
6) Keep yourself cleaned up as best you can. Not only is it good for your morale, but then you can make use of stores, public buildings, malls, libraries, to come in and out of the cold. Find restrooms around your area that are open to the public that you can use. Don't stay too long in one place, spread your business around, don't become a nuisance, then you're less likely to be hassled.

7) City or country? If you don't have a job that keeps you in the city, you could go "camping" in some rural area, maybe on public land. You can build a better shelter than a cardboard box if you can hide it in the woods. But there isn't as much food to scavenge in the country as in the city. You really can't get many calories foraging wild foods. The city has many facilities you can use, public services, soup kitchens, other charities. But rent-free living can be cheap. Back around 1970, Rayo calculated that he & his freemate together were spending less than \$1000/year living in a camper in the woods & buying most of their food, mostly bulk grains, beans, & seeds bought wholesale. Generally, the city will be better for someone looking for a job, or who wants easy access to civilized amenities (at the risk of being set upon by troll-bashers); the country will be better for someone who wants to be more self-reliant.

8) Savings. When you're making good money, put some of it aside. It's so much easier to get over rough spots in life if you have a little cash to fall back on. I heard about a guy who lived for years in a tent on a mountain (public land) in California. He was living on about \$30/month interest from a money market fund. That means about \$5000 principle. Another precaution you might take is to buy a few acres of undeveloped rural land suitable for camping. Then if your finances collapse, you can drive out there & live in your car while you build a little cabin. Gather firewood on your wooded acres for heat. You're less likely to be hassled camping on your own land than squatting on someone else's.



9) A positive attitude is your most important asset. Look at homelessness, or any serious financial set-back as a challenge, as an adventure. See how clever you can be at coming up with wonderfully innovative solutions to daily living problems. We live in a very rich society with all sorts of resources free or cheap. You only have to find them.



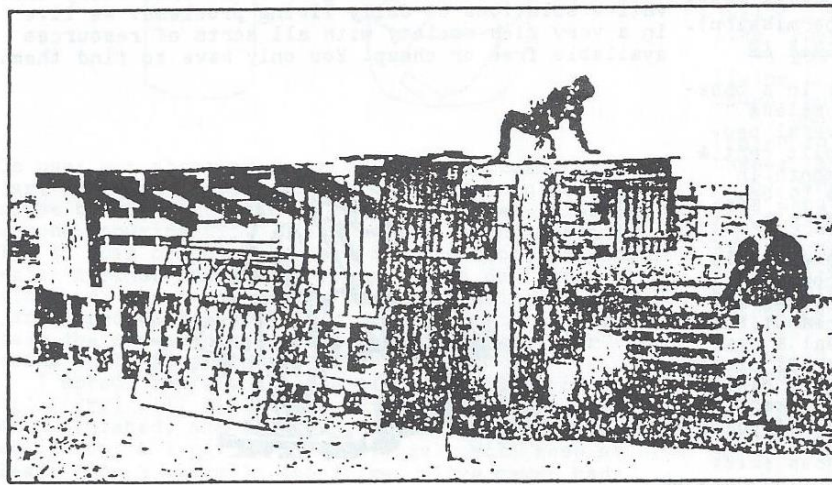
UNUSUAL BUILDING MATERIALS

Hay: Baled hay has been used for building as though it were a giant brick in the prairie country of America. Bales are stacked with poles driven through to hold them together, & the outside & inside plastered with mortar.

Sod: Sod means dirt held together by grass. Many early pioneer houses were built of giant sections of this material, up to 3 feet long. They are laid like bricks with the grass-side down. The walls need no mortar. Soddies were often roofed with the same material, but leaked terribly in heavy rain. A roof of wood, shingles, tarpaper, or plastic sheeting would be better.

Scrap Wood: Trimmings from dimensional lumber can be laid up like bricks. Imagine scrap 2x4s of various short lengths. Instead of mortar, you simply nail them together. Stagger the joints like you would with brick. The walls could be covered with wire mesh & plaster, or any sort of sheathing or paneling could be nailed up.

Pallets: The photo below shows how to build a house with pallets. A lumber yard near here gives away used pallets for free.



MICHAEL LEEBEL/Buffalo News

Mario Rodriguez, a worker in Chrysler's maquiladora in Juarez, nails on the roof of his pallet-board house that he said has cost him about \$300.

Cordwood: Timber cut & split for firewood can be laid up with mortar to make the walls of a house. Magazines like MOTHER EARTH NEWS have published many articles about cord wood houses.

Burlap Bags: Filled with sand or even dirt, burlap bags can be stacked like bricks, then held together with rebar pounded down through. Mortar or maybe tar plastered on the sides will waterproof.

Bundles of Newspapers: An untried idea – Newspapers tied in bundles with twine could be stacked like big bricks, but how could you waterproof them & fasten them together? An idea someone might try: Make a waterproof vat & fill it with liquid roofing tar. Dip each bundle of newspapers then set in place on the wall. Exposed to the air, tar will dry to a surface you can paint in 2 or 3 weeks.



Stone: Natural fieldstones are often free for the taking. Pile & mortar them together. Or use slip-form construction, which is easy & quick & requires no particular masonry knowledge.

Concrete rubble: There are millions of tons of broken concrete all over the place. It often has one or more flat sides making it easier to mortar into walls than irregular fieldstone. Or use slip-form & surround it with new concrete.

Metal: Houses have been built from car tops. The quick way to “harvest” car tops from a junk yard is to cut them out with an ax. Large appliances, dryers & refrigerators & such, known as “white goods,” have large panels of flat steel which could be nailed up to a wooden frame, maybe made of pallets, overlapping like shingles. Comes already primed with baked-on enamel, ready for a finish coat of paint.

Windows: As wood sash is replaced by aluminum nationwide, millions of old storm windows are being thrown away. Entire houses could be built from windows, or maybe just a solar-collecting south side. Other walls could use just the framework of the windows, covered with some kind of opaque paneling in place of glass.

(Adapted from “Homes For The Homeless,” an 80-page booklet distributed by Holy Terra Church (Bill Kaysing). Free to homeless people, donation requested from others, from POB 832, Soquel, CA 95073.)



A house made out of recycled windows by Nick Olzon and Lilah Horwitz.

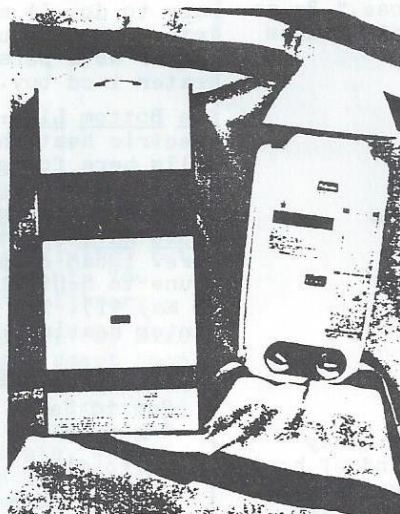
REAL GOODS TRADING CORPORATION

Order tankless water heaters, fluorescent lights (which use 75% less electricity to provide the same amount of light as incandescent lights) and many other energy-saving devices from REAL GOODS, 966 Mazzoni St., Ukiah, CA 95482. Send for "Alternative Energy Sourcebook," 400 pages for \$14, refundable with first \$100 order, or request REAL GOODS free catalog.

An End to Hot Water Insanity - Tankless Heaters

Our favorite analogy that illustrates the stupidity of tank-type water heaters is the one about the car. Keeping 40 gallons of water hot at all times *just in case* you might need it is the same as leaving your car running in your garage 24 hours per day, seven days a week, *just in case* you decide you need to go for a drive! *Doesn't it make more sense to only heat the water when you need it?*

We can't recommend instantaneous water heaters highly enough. Standard tank-type water heaters account for about 20% of all the energy we use in our homes. These energy-saving tankless heaters have been in use almost exclusively for years in Europe and Japan. In fact, America is one of the few civilized countries in the world backward enough to still use the archaic technology of storage tanks. Tankless gas water heaters will save many utility dollars. They provide instant hot water when you need it. They are also ideal for heating hot tubs and spas.



Instant Hot Water By Aquastar

Rated #1 by the leading consumer magazine, the French-made Aquastar 80 (77,500 btu/hr) is designed for use with one tap at a time and will produce 1.8 gallons per minute at a 60° temperature rise. The larger Aquastar 125 (125,000 btu/hr) will produce 3.25 gpm at a 60° temperature rise. The largest Aquastar 170 (165,000 btu/hr) is designed for huge houses, car washes, and fast food restaurants. Aquastar is the only tankless heater that can be used with preheated water systems. The "S" series is designed for solar or woodstove preheated water. All models feature a safety thermocouple at the burner and pilot, an overheat fuse, a manual burner control adjustment for finer temperature control, and built-in gas shut-off valves.

Aquastars have a 10-year warranty on the heat exchanger and a 2-year warranty on all other parts. Most of our customers want the propane models. If you want Natural Gas (NG) you MUST order it that way!

45-102-P	Aquastar 80LP . . .	\$495
45-102-N	Aquastar 80NG . . .	\$495
45-105-P	Aquastar 125LP . .	\$595
45-105-N	Aquastar 125NG . .	\$595
45-106-P	Aquastar 80LPS . .	\$550
45-106-N	Aquastar 80NGS . .	\$550
45-107-P	Aquastar 125LPS . .	\$645
45-107-N	Aquastar 125NGS . .	\$645
■45-104-P	Aquastar 170LP . .	\$895
■45-104-N	Aquastar 170NG . .	\$895

Model 170 only shipped freight collect from Vermont or L.A.

LOW-PRICED BOOKS

Here are 3 firms that sell inexpensive, new books through the mail:

1. Barnes & Noble, 126 5th Ave, New York, NY 10011
2. Edward R. Hamilton, Falls Village, CT 06031
3. Dover Publications, 31 East 2nd St, Mineola, NY 11501

The 1st 2 sell new, hard & soft-cover books at prices that start as low as \$1. These 2 outfits sell mainly remaindered books. These are books that the original publisher has taken off his list because they are no longer selling fast enough. He clears the remaining stocks of such books out of his warehouse by selling them to these remainder houses for pennies on the dollar. They, in turn, try to sell them for whatever they can get, maybe half or one-fourth the original price; “up to 83% off the original prices,” the blurb says. Naturally, you won’t find the latest, hottest best sellers in these catalogs. But you will find many fine books nevertheless.

These catalogs also list more expensive books, but even most of these are considerably reduced from the original price. Barnes also sells off-price CDs, audio & video tapes & some other merchandise, but Hamilton sells only books.

Dover operates differently. Their business plan seems to be to reprint old books on which the copyright has expired, in inexpensive, but durable paperback bindings. They pay no royalties on these old books, which permits them to charge lower prices.

I’ve bought books from all 3 of these firms, & I have had no problems with them. So for good books at bargain prices, write to these firms & ask them to send you their catalogs.

LOWER HEATING BILLS WITH ELECTRIC HEAT

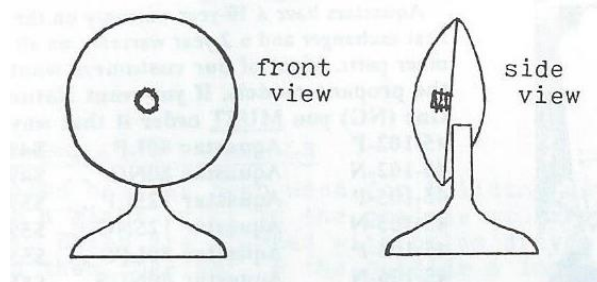
On first reading the title you may think: that can't be right, everyone knows electric heat is generally more expensive than burning gas or some other fuel for heat. But there is a way to use electric heat to save you money. The virtue of electric heat is that you can put a little bit of it right where you want it & avoid a lot of waste.

The money savings comes from keeping your furnace thermostat turned way down as much of the time as possible. I turn mine all the way down (to 55°F) whenever I leave the house & at night. Since I live alone, when I'm away the house needs only enough heat to keep the pipes from freezing. At night, I pile on the blankets until I'm warm as toast no matter how cold the house may get. I've slept outside in a tent at temperatures below freezing (snow on the tent in the morning), & I managed to keep warm, although it required 2 down sleeping bags. That's colder than my house will ever get as long as my furnace is working, even if it is set all the way down.

That leaves the rest of the time, i.e. during the day, when I'm at home. If I wear heavy clothes, I can be comfortable with the thermostat set no higher than 68°, but much lower would feel cold. Here's where electric heat comes in.

I spend a lot of time sitting in one place, reading or writing. At those times I can heat myself directly with radiant heat from a small electric heater, & then I'm toasty even with the furnace turned all the way down. There are two important points to this strategy: use a low wattage heater, & heat your body with it directly, don't heat the room. I use an old-fashioned heater rated at 625 watts. Even that's probably higher than I need; 500 watts, even 400 watts, might be sufficient. The lower the wattage, the less electricity it uses, & the lower your electric bills. What you're trying to do is save a lot more on your fuel bill, by keeping your thermostat turned way down, compared to what you spend on extra electricity for electric heat. In effect, you achieve this savings by not heating air & whole rooms that you don't really need to heat, & instead heating directly what you do want to heat, your own body. To heat your body directly, you should sit close to this small personal heater with it pointed directly at you. I place my heater on a chair 3 feet away from where I'm sitting. The goal is to heat myself directly with radiant heat "shining" from the heater. If sitting that close to your heat source makes you too hot, then your heater is too big (wattage too high). That means a smaller, lower wattage heater will do the job & not add as much to your electricity bill.

This strategy is a modern version of an old saying that expresses the superiority of the Indian way of doing things: "White man build big fire, sit way back; Indian build little fire, sit up close." Be an Indian. It's better for the ecology in that it uses less resources, & it will save you money.

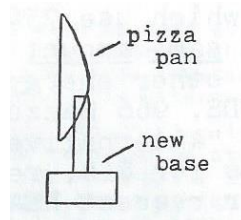


Electric Heaters: But here's the hard part: they don't make them like that any more. The kind of heater I use hasn't been made for many decades (a shame, since I consider it a better design than anything now on the market). Electric heaters I see for sale now are inferior in several ways: The wattage is too high. I've never seen a new one under 1000 watts, 1500 watts is more common. (They brag about this excessive wattage, the way they used to brag about the excessive horsepower of dinosaur cars.) The higher the wattage, the more electricity it will use, & the more it will add to your electric bill, unnecessarily. Ideally, a personal heater should be low wattage, 400 to 600 watts. (Tell me if you know where I can buy such a thing.)

Secondly, new heaters are designed to heat air, so they usually have a blower, & the heating coils are often hidden away somewhere inside. An ideal personal heater lets the radiant heat from the heating coils "shine" on you directly, with no obstruction between you & the coils except the safety grill. Also, the blower motor consumes a little extra electricity, & it's noisy. An ideal radiant heater is totally silent. You'll appreciate that if you use it for several hours at a time. Of course, these high wattage heaters might also need the blower to keep some parts from getting too hot & melting. So you don't dare just disconnect the blower.

You may still save some money with a high wattage modern heater by heating just one room up to a comfortable temperature, while keeping the thermostat down, keeping the rest of the house cooler. But you can save a lot more money, & be just as comfortable using a low wattage personal heater.

I've asked myself what I would do if my heater broke down & I couldn't fix it, since I think the new heaters I could buy are so inferior. Maybe I could find another old heater at a garage sale or flea market. Another possibility is to use some other small appliance with electric heating coils & a lower wattage that I could modify & turn into a personal heater. Looking around the house, I find that I already have something here that's just about ideal. It's an electric pizza baker that consists of a big round base with a heating coil mounted in it. Separate parts are a flat pan & a cover that go on top. It's rated at an ideal 500 watts.



So what I could do is just use the base with the heating coil. I'd build a sturdy, heavy new base for it in order to hold it up on its side. That should be reasonably easy to do. It might look a little rough, but I'm not into "House Beautiful" living anyway. That would work better as a personal heater than any new electric heater I could buy.

The Bottom Line: So how much money do I save using electric heat this way? I don't know. I have the bills here for gas (heat, cooking, hot water) & for electricity (lights, heat, etc.). So I know how much I did spend on gas, but I don't know how much I would have spent if I had heated to a higher temperature. I can compare my gas usage for 4 warmer months (June to Sept. 91) compared to 8 cooler months (Oct. 90 to May 91). The difference is roughly the cost of winter heating. Here are the figures:

<u>natural gas usage</u>		
Jun to Sep 4 months	<u>cubic feet</u>	<u>cost</u>
total	12400	\$94.72
avg/month	3100	23.68
Oct to May 8 months		
total	62400	\$440.90
avg/month	7800	55.11

So the difference, summer to winter, is $\$55.11 - 23.68 = \31.43 , which is roughly my average spending per month on gas for heat. I would spend more if I heated to a higher temperature, but I don't know how much more.

Looking at my electricity usage for the same months will tell me if my use of electric heat is adding a lot to my electric bill:

<u>electricity usage</u>		
Jun to Sep 4 months	<u>KWH</u>	<u>cost</u>
total	349	\$65.80
avg/month	87.25	16.45
Oct to May 8 months		
total	1017	\$145.34
avg/month	127.125	18.17

The difference, summer to winter, is $\$18.17 - 16.45 = \1.72 , less than \$2 per month on average. That's remarkably low, especially considering that I also use lights longer in winter due to extra hours of darkness.

So my conclusion is that my use of electric heat hardly adds to my electric bill at all, & any savings on my gas bill is almost pure gravy. You may notice that my use of electricity goes up 46% while my winter bill goes up only 10%. Or to put it another way, with low summer use, electricity costs me about 19¢/KWH, but with higher winter use, it costs only 14¢/KWH. Economies of scale kick in significantly with the amount of electricity I use. It's noticeably cheaper per unit if I use more. That's why the increase in cost is so slight.

With gas, the corresponding figures are 76¢/1000 cubic feet with high winter use. There's some decrease, but much less than with electricity. (Electricity cost declines 26% per unit; gas cost declines only 7% per unit.)

So these figures confirm that it makes good sense, i.e. it saves money, to use moderately more electricity for heat, if doing so means using less gas heat.

HOW-TO-LIVE-CHEAP BOOKS

Several books were published in the 1960s & 70s promoting the idea of low-cost, simple living, but they all apparently have gone out of print. You might be able to find these titles in a library.

1) "Champagne Living On A Beer Budget," by Mike & Marilyn Ferguson, c1968. Mainly about smart shopping for bargain-hunters. This book is loaded with information on finding good deals in all important categories: food, clothing, shelter, autos, right on down to: travel, insurance, & funerals. Well-written, not preachy. For people with limited incomes who nevertheless want to live well.

2) "How To Live On Nothing," by Joan Ransom Shortney, c1961. Great title, but a little misleading. It doesn't tell you how to live with no income at all. You still would need some money. Unlike "Champagne Living..." which focuses on cheap acquisition of necessary things, the emphasis here is on developing personal skills so you can do for yourself those things you might otherwise hire (at great expense) other people to do for you. Take charge of your life. Get in touch with authentic reality by bypassing mediating "experts."

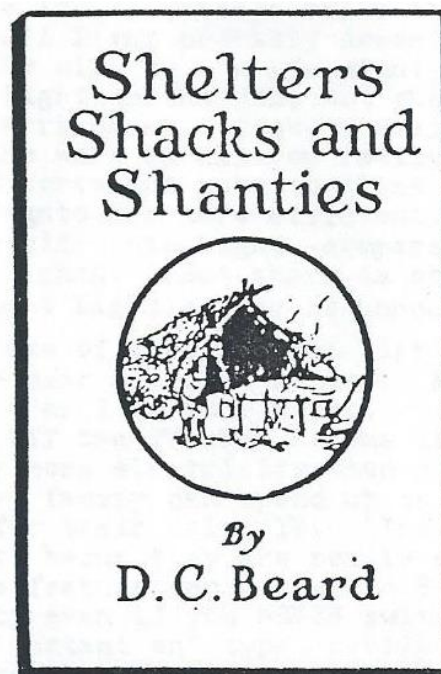
3) "How To Live Cheap But Good," by Martin Poriss, c1971. This one is aimed mainly at college students who have little money, & it deals mostly with rented housing. 5 of the 7 chapters are related to housing. Chapters: 1) home is where you find it (survey of different types of shelters & guide to apartment hunting), 2) a moving experience (how to move to a new home), 3) shoveling out, fixing up, & furnishing, 4) thought for food, 5) getting your money's worth (utilities, health care, guidelines for smart shopping), 6) home repairs for the poet (or any other less-than-handy person), 7) exodus (moving out with minimum problems).

4) "Possum Living," by Dolly Freed, c1978. The subtitle says it all: "living easy off the land without a job and with almost no money." Dolly and her father each spend about \$700 per year. See review on page 7 [page 20].

5) "Living Poor With Style," by Ernest Callenbach, c1972. As a how-to-do-it guidebook, this one is probably the best of the bunch. An encyclopedic 600 pages of well-thought-out detail addressed mainly to city dwellers. Its upbeat attitude demonstrates that living poor need not mean a dismal, depressing existence. It can be done with style, as an adventure. How to live a full, rich life, on the cheap.

6) SHELTERS, SHACKS AND SHANTIES, by D.C. Beard. Written for "boys of all ages," this book tells how to build all kinds of rustic shelters. Log cabins, sod houses, tree houses, "boy scout" camp structures, & Indian huts from many different tribes are all covered here. The emphasis is on do-it-yourself with simple tools like hatchets & axes. Every camper, survivalist, hunter, & outdoorsman will love this. If you're low on funds, this book will show you many kinds of shelter you can build with very little money. There are dozens of pages full of detailed illustrations. What a great idea book!

5x7, 259 pages, more than 300 illustrations, soft cover, only \$10 postpaid to N. American addresses (add \$5 extra overseas), cheaper than in Loompanics catalog.



OTHER MUST-READ REPORTS FROM LIVING FREE

SURVIVAL GARDENING NOTES: Save on your food bills by growing much of your own food. It's easy, and takes less space than you may think. You can plant in containers if you have no other gardening space. This report reveals gardening secrets based on 30 years experience with backyard food growing.

8½x11, 14 pages, \$3 postpaid, \$4 overseas. Ask for: SGN.

GOING MOBILE: Many 1000s have found the solution to the high cost of living lies in making a recreational vehicle their only home. No rent or mortgage payments; no property taxes to pay. See how RecV living can provide all the comfort and convenience of a stationary home.

8½x11, 22 pages, \$5 postpaid, \$8 overseas. Ask for: GM.

VONU LIFE 1973: This is an essential source of timeless, detailed information for those who want to leave the rat-race behind and free themselves to enjoy life with no bosses of any kind. Covers shelter, food, money, and much more.

8x11, 32 pages, 4 columns of small print per page, \$8 postpaid, \$10 overseas. Ask for: VL73.

VONU BOOK 2, LETTERS FROM RAYO: Rayo devised a way to live with no job, spending almost no money, in a camper in the woods. Details of his extraordinary life are revealed in this collection of his letters. Also includes "Liberated Lifestyles," describing 6 strategies for living a freer life.

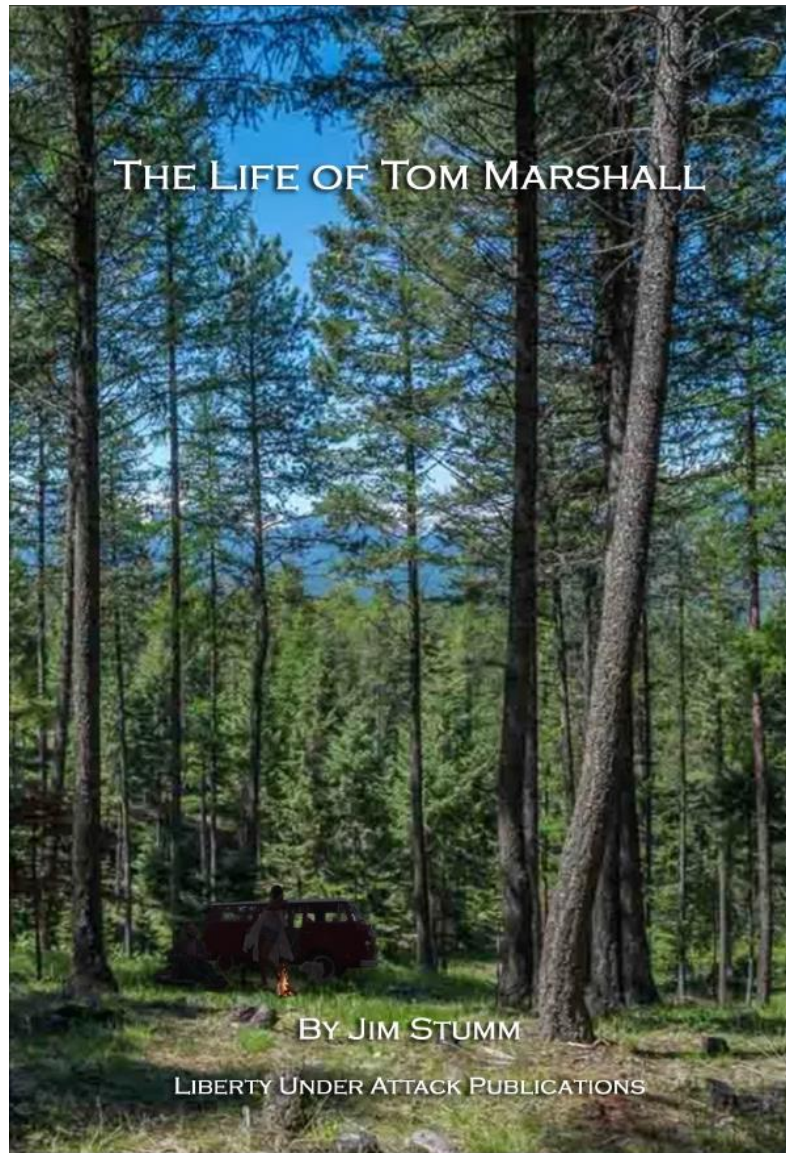
8½x11, 27 pages, corner-stapled report, \$5 postpaid, \$8 overseas. Ask for: VB2.

ADDRESS: For all of the above, send US funds only, cash preferred, to: Jim Stumm, Box 29, Hiler Branch, Buffalo, NY 14223.

Additional Resources

- **The Vonu Podcast:** If you want to learn more about anything covered in this book, I'd highly recommend you check out the podcast Kyle Rearden and I do. In season 1, we covered the philosophy of vonu, season 2 was the practice of vonu, and the current season, 3, is where we develop and update vonu to the modern day.
 - www.vonupodcast.com
- **Vonu: The Search for Personal Freedom, Number 2 – Letters from Rayo**
 - www.vonupodcast.com/vonu2
- **Vonulife, March 1973 (Special Edition)**
 - www.vonupodcast.com/vl
- **Ocean Freedom Notes**
 - www.vonupodcast.com/ofn
- **Self-Liberation Notes**
 - www.vonupodcast.com/sln
- **Going Mobile**
 - www.vonupodcast.com/gm
- **Low-Cost Living**
 - www.vonupodcast.com/lcl
- **Dwelling Portably [sic]**
 - www.vonupodcast.com/dp
- **Articles About Vonu**
 - www.vonupodcast.com/vonuarticles
- **Liberty Under Attack:** A liberty- and solutions-oriented publisher! Books on self-liberation, strategy guides, anarchist/agorist fiction, book bundles, privacy tools, and much more!
- **The Last Bastille Blog:** This is Kyle's blog and it's chockful of incredible, highly valuable information. He has written over 150 book reviews, a couple books pertinent to vonu, and much more.
 - www.thelastbastille.wordpress.com
- **YouTube:** If you're pursuing any of the lifestyle changes or strategies I covered above, then YouTube will be your best friend. Recommended search terms: "van dwelling," "living aboard a boat," "minimalist sailboating," etc.

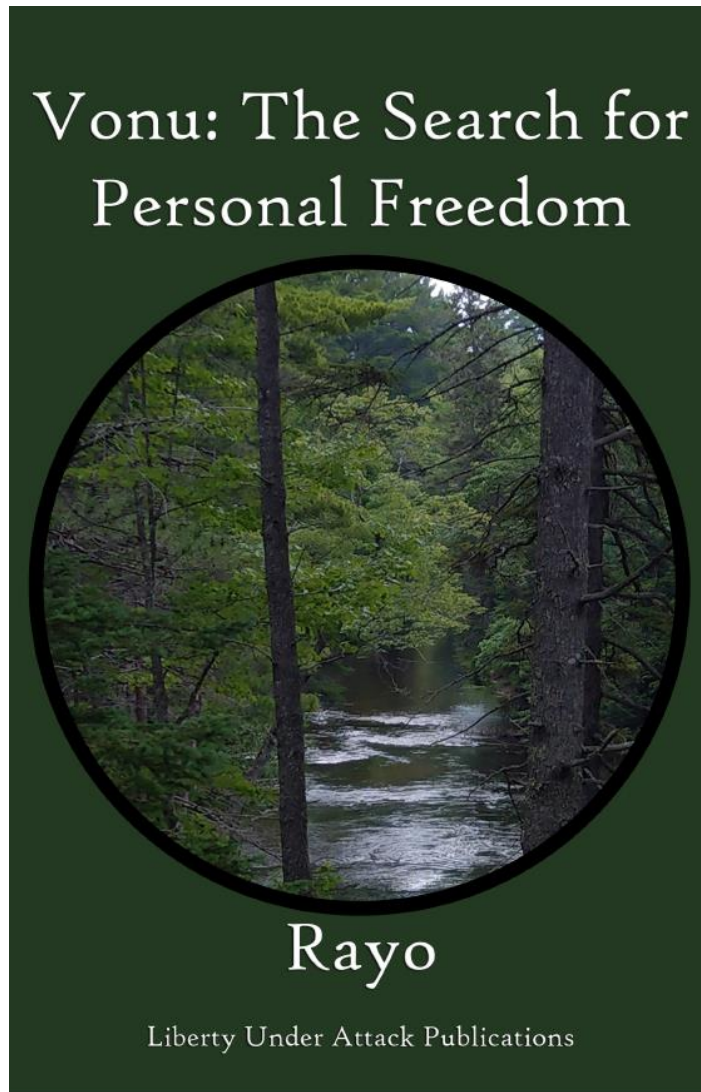
OTHER RECOMMENDED BOOKS ON VONU:



[THE LIFE OF TOM MARSHALL CHRONICLES THE KNOWN LIFE OF TOM MARSHALL (“RAYO”), THE FOUNDER AND MAIN PROPONENT OF THE FREEDOM STRATEGY, VONU.]

[#AGORA IS THE “FICTIONAL” STORY OF DANIEL LARUSSO’S JOURNEY INTO THE CRYPTO-ANARCHIST, CYPHERPUNK UNDERGROUND. BASED OFF OF A REAL SECOND REALM COMMUNITY IN BERLIN, LEARN HOW FREEDOM CAN BE BUILT IN THE HERE AND NOW.]





[VONU... IS THE BOOK THAT STARTED IT ALL. PUT TOGETHER BY JIM STUMM, THIS COLLECTION OF ARTICLES BY RAYO INTRODUCES THE STRATEGY & PHILOSOPHY OF VONU AND GIVES YOU A LOOK INTO RAYO'S RADICAL LIFESTYLES.]

[VONU, BOOK 2: LETTERS FROM RAYO IS ANOTHER COLLECTION PUT TOGETHER BY JIM STUMM. HEREIN, YOU'LL READ MANY LETTERS FROM RAYO, GET UPDATES ON THEIR VONU LIFESTYLES, AND MUCH MORE.]

