

Builder keeps passive solar active

By **Connie L. Sheehan**
Senior Editor

Active solar construction is "pretty much dead" in Nebraska since applicable tax credits expired in the '70s, according to Jim Christo, owner of Christo Construction Co. in Lincoln.

But Christo still uses a variety of passive solar techniques in his construction to save both energy, and in the long run, money for the owner.

"The only place I can recommend active solar to anybody is

for helping heat domestic hot water," Christo explained. In the '70s, people were heating their homes with solar power.

Christo installed active solar units to heat homes but then found he could incorporate passive solar techniques into the building for the same savings.

Passive solar techniques work best when the length of the house can face south to use the sun for heating, he said, and then the construction can serve as a natural break from the north.

The large overhang in the front,

he explained while pointing to the large front porch on his most recent construction at 1320 Furnas Ave., keeps the sun out of the house in the summer and lets the sun in during the winter when the sun is lower on the horizon.

"This (overhang) is a little bit more than is necessary, but this house was designed after the architect, Frank Lloyd Wright," Christo said. Part of his styling included a lower pitched roof and larger overhangs, Christo said.

Christo then added a deeper wall construction, which allows for thicker fiberglass insulation batting and more energy savings.

"About a year ago, the highest 'R' factor you could get was R19," Christo said, referring to the rating given to items that help in the resistance to energy loss. But now the insulation is available in a factor of R21.

The higher the R value, the more resistance to energy loss, Christo explained.

"By the time we have half-inch Dow sheathing on the outside, and the gypsum on the inside, we almost have a R26 factor on a wall," he said.

Christo said the blown-in ceiling insulation is rated R40. Blown-in insulation is preferable since it settles in all the voids around boxes



Michelle Paulman/Daily Nebraskan

Builder Jim Christo's wife, Vicky and cat Snowball, lounge in the sun of the windows which run along the south face of their passive solar home.

and switches to prevent drafts.

When it comes to windows, Christo suggests double-glazed, Low E argon-injected windows.

Double glazing provides two panes of glass in which argon gas is injected to aid insulation, he said. The Low E is a thin metallic coating on the outside of the window that stops 80 percent of the ultra-violet light in the summer and radiates heat back into the room in the winter.

"Double glazing is pretty much

standard, but Low E and argon gas are upgrades that I suggest," he said. Windows and doors are expensive parts of the house, but usually last extremely long periods of time.

"Just to give you an idea, the windows alone in this home cost \$9,000," Christo said. The design called for more window space than usual, however, he said. And that doesn't include the patio doors,

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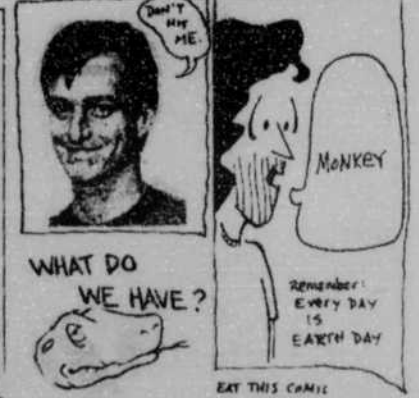
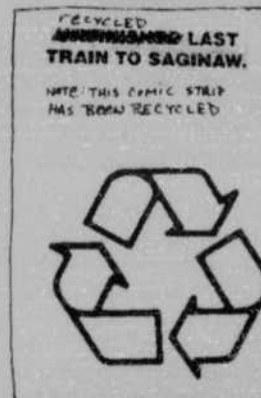
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livery cost, she said.

And Asche said some out-of-state companies have contacted "Recycle With Michael" and offered to help out financially.

She said the recycling company hopes to buy a larger truck. Currently, it uses an "old Ford pickup truck" for the curbside route.

The larger truck will enable the company to pick up recyclables from apartment complexes, she said. And the company recently moved to a bigger warehouse, which has created more storage space.

But, Asche said, in order for the company to expand, it mainly needs one thing — more profits.



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