

TRENDS AND OBSERVATIONS

Birth of a snowbird?

BY RAUNO PERTTU

At the time of this publication, I'm struggling to stay on track in order to start spending winters in La Paz, Mexico with my fiancée, Ana, who is already a La Paz resident. When the cooler autumn weather arrives, she plans to be in La Paz. Hopefully, my Applegate house will be in a condition that allows me to accompany her. This act will lump me into that diverse group of people referred to as "snowbirds." I would like to be able to continue writing for the Gater as a foreign correspondent, perhaps to inform other potential snowbirds of my travails and rewards.

Getting ready for the move has been much more work than I anticipated. I had no clue as to how much I had accumulated over the years and how hard it is to get rid of all those items. First, I offered most of them to my son and daughter. They selectively took several large loads each, which helped. Ana diligently worked eBay and Craig's List, with some success. With high hopes, we then scheduled a moving sale. We were repeatedly told that many items were priced too low, but we wanted to downsize. When the morning of the sale

arrived, tools and similar items disappeared quickly, but almost no big items sold, even at very discounted prices.

After recovering from our disappointment, we then started placing items outside the fence below a "free" sign. That was apparently the right price. We quickly learned, at least in the Applegate, not to expect eBay prices or anything even remotely similar. We're in a tough local market with its own rules. We learned this is how it works: 1.

Discover that the item in question sells on eBay for \$100, 2. List it for \$10 locally, 3. When it doesn't sell, place it under the "free" sign on the fence. Presto! The item is gone.

At this point, the house and outbuildings are significantly depleted except for the furniture and items we need until we leave for La Paz. With two notable exceptions:

1. Over the years, I have accumulated a large collection of geological publications and business documents, some of which I still need to save. I don't look forward to sifting through mountains of paperwork to sort the keepers from the throwaways.

2. The other exception is my paintings. I have dabbled in oil painting since I was young, and by now have a collection to dispose of or store. I think I see a storage unit in my future.

As my first bit of advice to new snowbirds or anyone not wanting to punish their children when they become incapacitated: start shedding possessions early. I had no idea of the sheer volume of "stuff" I had accumulated. Ana, to her credit, is a minimalist. She acquired that mind-set during the years she and her late husband sailed the South Pacific on a 40-foot sailboat.

A serious moment of horror was in

getting the house ready for sale. I had neglected the property during the years my wife Jan was declining, and my money and attention went to more important things. As a result, we are just finishing two months of contractors repairing and painting—ouch! Even with all that expense and effort, I look at the things still undone; the obvious lesson is that repairs deferred become much bigger problems later.

Although it's a work in progress, in order to catch the tail end of the summer sales period, I listed the house at a relatively modest price with a good local realtor who specializes in Applegate River properties. Now, I just cross my fingers that the sale comes earlier rather than later. I don't relish the thought of distant absentee ownership, and I don't want to let Ana return to La Paz while I sit in an unsold house. However, I would catch more Ducks football games. I don't know if I can follow them in La Paz.

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Green and Solar home tour returns to the Applegate this fall

BY JULIET GRABLE

October is National Energy Awareness Month and with it comes a great opportunity to participate locally. Join the seventh annual Rogue Valley Green and Solar Tour (RVGST) on Saturday, October 5, to learn more about green building practices and solar energy through inspiring examples right in our own Applegate Valley.

Many "regulars" join the tour year after year, says RVGST organizer Fred Gant, so why not make this year's event your first? The tour attracts a diverse crowd from homeowners considering a remodel to citizens concerned about carbon emissions to building professionals looking to network.

Presentations at each site will shed

light on the homes' construction and energy performance. Builders, architects, solar installers and homeowners will be on-hand to share their triumphs and trials on a wide range of topics and features, including photovoltaic (PV) and solar thermal systems, passive solar design, building with natural materials, rainwater catchment systems, masonry stoves, and creating super-insulated building envelopes.

Each year the tour focuses on a different part of the region; the 2013 event includes four unique residences in the Sterling Creek Road area and will launch at Wild Wines, an organic winery 20 miles south of Jacksonville. Here's a sneak preview of the four sites:

A geodesic dome residence on the

Wild Wines property was upgraded to improve energy efficiency by adding insulation and replacing windows. An ultra-efficient Tulikivi stove keeps the home cozy during winter.

A super-insulated Earth Advantage Platinum residence on Griffin Lane may look conventional, but its energy performance is anything but. To ensure the home produces as much energy as it consumes, the homeowners have installed solar PV and solar thermal systems, a ductless mini-split for heating and cooling, and LED lights throughout.

An unusual earth-bermed, ferro-cement dome takes advantage of passive solar orientation and utilizes a Trombe wall to control solar gain. This off-the-grid home harvests solar and wind energy on-site and integrates gardens, an orchard and livestock quarters. As beautiful as it is green, this one-of-a-kind residence features unique artistic touches everywhere.

A recently completed straw bale home finished with earth and

lime plasters blends gracefully into a forested hilltop with spectacular views. The homeowners have integrated landscaping—including native plants, orchard and organic gardens—and a rainwater catchment system into their site plan.

The tour will culminate in a Green Vendors Fair back at Wild Wines where tour-goers will have the chance to talk one-on-one with professionals at the leading edge of the local sustainable building movement and learn about systems and products that can improve a home's energy efficiency. Representatives from state and local nonprofits, green rating services and banks will also be on-hand to provide information about rebates, tax credits and loans on systems that save energy. To keep the mood festive, Wild Wines will open up its straw bale tasting room during the fair. Thirsty tour-goers can sample and purchase organic wines made from berries, fruits and flowers, while snacking on cheese and fruit provided by RVGST.

"It's more than a tour," says Gant. "It's more like a celebration. That's why people keep coming."

An all-day affair, the RVGST will begin at 9 am at Wild Wines, about 40 minutes from Jacksonville at 4550 Little Applegate Road. Tickets cost \$17 and include transportation to all sites, a catered lunch and cheese and fruit at the end of the day.

Space is limited, so register soon! For more information or to register visit www.GreenSolarTours.com or contact Fred Gant at 541-840-8302 or fredgant1@gmail.com.

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The 2012 tour focused on homes in the Talent/Phoenix areas and included this home built by Talent-based Suncrest Homes. Photos: Denise Ross.



This custom straw bale home nestled in the hills above Talent was part of last year's tour.

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