

"Do you feel lucky? Do yah!"

Clint Eastwood

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One Thin Dime

The **HEAT** of the **EARTH**

It doesn't matter how many times you've seen the movie. It doesn't matter how upset Al Gore is about how much carbon you use or exude.

You can still do anything you want. You can build a 20,000 square-foot house without a windmill or sheets of blue plastic on the roof and drive to Alley's in your personal chrome-plated Hummer. These are your God-given rights and no agent of the environmental bureaucracy can knock at your door and ticket you for a life-style offense.

If that makes you feel guilty, buy a few fluorescent light bulbs and order a six instead of a V8.

In a guilty moment, you may also have gone to the classified and looked for someone to help you Go Green. Instead, you found oil-burner dealers. And no-one was offering household wind turbines.

Well, there are two guys, WT's Eric Lowe and Brian Nelson of VH. But they are selling "geothermal" heating and cooling. What the heck is that?

Brian Nelson is new enough to this game to have replaced his own furnace with a geothermal setup. As part of his home tests he says he had the nerve not to tell his wife or kids and, even though it was winter, they didn't notice that he had shut down the boiler and the house was relying on heat from the earth.

This works by conveying the constant underground heat of 50 degrees to an air compressor about the size of the one in your fridge. The compressor raises the temperature and this heat can then be transferred to

water or air.

It takes electricity to run the pump to bring the heat up and to run the compressor, but you're not burning any fuel at all and if you put a wind turbine on the roof...but wait we're going too fast.

Let's go back and meet Brian K. Nelson, MS and ME and Master Plumber.

He says: "I'm so excited!"—about the possibilities of using the sun, the earth and wind to provide energy.

He thinks the West Tisbury Town Hall could be energy self sufficient right now, no waiting, with geothermal heating and solar and wind power production.

But he also sees a "tremendous vacuum" in the market for the gear you need to make an energy independent building happen.

The other guy is Eric Lowe of Lowe Energy Design, LLC, who has done geothermal too, as well as solar hot water. He says the attraction of solar hot water is seasonal because it doesn't work as well in the colder, darker seasons.

Does he do traditional oil and gas? Yes, indeed, because, as he says, most people need a backup. He finds that he's installing a lot of "demand" water heaters. The traditional heater keeps a reservoir of water hot 24/7, whether you're in the house or not. The "demand" heater goes on when you open the faucet. When you end your shower, the heater shuts down. Hot water "on demand" requires only a very small tank, can go under a shelf in the mud room, and a gas hook up.

Massachusetts and the Federal government dangle some tax credits for solar power generation and solar hot water systems. But neither the State nor the Feds have written requirements for

energy efficiency. Just the other day, Governor Patrick ordered all State buildings to conform to a high efficiency standard, but you can still make your 20,000-square-foot paradise any way you want.

What about Local bylaws or State code laws? Kate Warner, who runs the Vineyard Energy Project, will tell you we need a building code that is much tougher on energy standards.

Ms. Warner is known for her tough leadership in getting us all to pay attention to the planet in crisis, but her Vineyard Energy website avoids the bitter battle of the Wind Farm in the Sound. Not a word about it. Her organization seems aimed at dealing with the possible, not forcing dreams on anyone.

She adds the Haynes organization, Bill and Bruce, to our list of alternative contractors. They install solar hot water systems.

Is the business changing?

Could be.

The absolute last story on page 36 of the MV Times for May 17th is headed, "Geothermal heat systems planned here." And below is an account of the construction of the offices and residence of Sullivan O'Connor Architects on Narragansett Avenue in Oak Bluffs, where Brian Nelson invites people to come and see "history in the making," as he and New England Drilling go about geothermalizing two buildings.

WE SHOULD NOT HAVE TO DO THIS

But our perfect democracy demands it. In other States, the State would impose and prevail. Here, we must vote on the non-choice they offer us.