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Pool solar heating equipment connects to collectors on the roof.

The sun can heat your family pool

By PAT BORDMAN

For one Farmington Hills family, worrying about cloud cover and the sun's heat is routine. For this family the future has arrived. They relate to the sun, not through rose-colored glasses, but through the plastic panels on their roof.

When the Fields family recently moved into a

newly constructed home in Rolling Oaks, they added an inground swimming pool. A solar energy heating system was installed as a supplement to the regular pool heater.

"We had a pool in our other house, and we had a gas heater, not a solar heater. Really just with the cost of gas, we decided that we would look into it," said Wendy Fields.

But, other considerations began to surface as they explored the still new idea of solar pool heating.

"It wasn't only a matter of the cost, as much as, in this day and age we felt kind of guilty using all the gas to heat a swimming pool," she continued.

Her husband has an even more sobering viewpoint. He suspects that the use of gas to heat pools in this area will be limited.

"Actually, I don't think gas will be available at all in the near future for swimming pools," he said.

In fact, already in California the use of gas for heating pools has been restricted. In this area we have seen the curtailment of natural gas for use in outdoor light fixtures.

THE SOLAR SYSTEM isn't complicated. Solar collectors are positioned on the rear south facing roof. These collectors contain pipes filled with water pumped there from the pool. The water is heated by the intense light from the sun, pumped back down to a filtration tank and then on to the regular pool heater.

If the water temperature is above a predetermined level, it is sent on to the pool. If the temperature is inadequate, the gas heater turns on automatically and boosts the heat already present from the sun's energy.

Although the sun can't satisfy total pool heating requirements, the only time this summer when a

supplement was necessary was for nighttime swimming.

"The pool has stayed at about 88-90 degrees all summer. The only time I turn on the gas heater is at night," said the homeowner.

His wife is equally enthusiastic. "It's wonderful," she said.

George Murray, solar energy expert at Detroit Edison sees inground pool heating as a viable and positive aspect of solar energy use.

"Pool heating is the biggest market for solar energy right now. The pool already needs a pump and the temperature required is only 80 degrees. So this is a good application for solar systems. There are also many good manufacturers," Murray said.

But the same bugaboos that prevent widespread use of solar home heating systems, also prevent total reliance on the sun for pool heating.

Bob Stinchcombe, of Miami Blue Water Pools, said, "The problem with the system is that of effectiveness in this area. We just don't have enough sunshine to rely solely on the solar system."

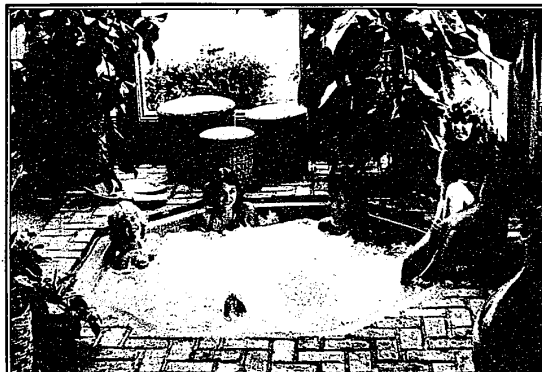
THE OTHER PROBLEM is money.

"The cost is also preventing it. I don't think they're being pushed here. Not until there is a bigger break from the government," said Stinchcombe. "We've had a lot of inquiries, but the price is up so high, people back off." He estimated the cost of including a solar heat system into the pool heating equipment at about \$3,200.

But this is offset by the savings realized by not using the conventional system.

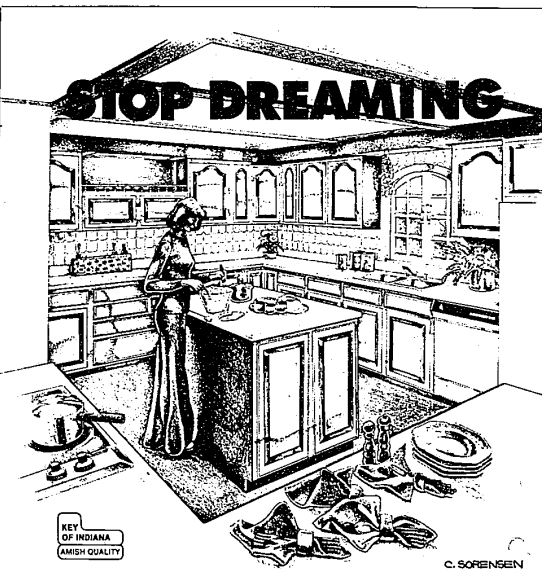
"I save about \$150 a month by having this system," the Farmington Hills owner said.

With fuel costs rising so rapidly, his savings should increase right along with the warmth from the sun.



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Circa 1910 —

Flies will get into the house during the summer in spite of the greatest care. One method of catching and killing them, without disagreeable looking fly paper lying around, is to prepare a mixture of cream, sugar and pepper. Put this on a plate and they will eat greedily of it and die. They will instantly seek the open air and it is easy to brush them from the screen door. This is an old method and a good one.

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