



The woods and forests are a literal storehouse of energy. If gathered properly and managed wisely, they could ease the energy crunch.



Larry Ammon (above) will build you a fireplace though a wood stove will provide more heat.

# A back-to-the-woods heating philosophy

Story and photos: ED BAS

Wanted: A clean, energetic, skinny person without fear of heights to sweep chimneys; topcoat and tails optional. Also wanted: Dry wood, cheap, and lots of it.

It didn't take long for the quaint little pot-bellied stove to go from cutlery Americana to rugged workhorse. The energy crisis is here to stay and Michigan is one state with, for the time being, ample supplies of—well, fuel to burn.

King's Row Fireplace Shop has more than the plain wood stove or fireplace and irons. It sells a bit of back-to-the-woods philosophy. Ben Franklin's unobtrusive iron fireplace has acquired baffles, blowers and other heat-saving devices in the quest for warmth and continued "dialing down."

Larry Ammon, owner of the Avon Township shop, has a mountain of material on heating, with wood and considerable know-how to back it up. One of his bibles is the "Norwich Laboratory Report on Fireplaces."

The text explains the "fire triangle"—temperature, fuel, oxygen—as well as the energy content of wood, fireplace efficiency, and heat exchangers and the difference

between a cord and a face cord of wood.

A FACE CORD of wood is eight feet long by four feet high by two feet wide, and the most common unit of firewood sold in Michigan. An actual cord is as long and high, but four feet wide. If you see two cords of wood advertised for drastically different prices, call to see if one is a face cord.

Large logs will have to be cut or split. They also take up more air space than small logs. If larger logs only are available, smaller ones are sometimes used in between to fill the air spaces.

Wood should always be stored off the ground, covered to keep out rain and snow. Wood should be kept 12 to 18 months before burning, Ammons said, or up to 30 per cent of what you're burning will be water.

If you can store the wood in a heated garage or other building, water content can fall as low as eight per cent, as opposed to 12 to 15 per cent for wood stored outside. Kiln-dried wood has an even higher BTU content.

Not only does dry wood burn easier and provide a hotter flame and less smoke, but dangerous creosote is less likely to build in the chimney. Creosote is a clear or yellowish oily liquid made of combustible products



that the stove doesn't burn. It tends to instead burn at inopportune times and can cause chimney fires, even sending the fire back into the house.

ACCORDING TO Ammons, a cord of wood is equivalent to 154 gallons of fuel oil. Wood sells for \$30-\$40 per cord, unless a particular wood is specified. A cord of all cherry wood can cost \$70-\$80.

Most fireplaces are inefficient burners. "A lot of people now stick a stove right in the middle and don't even burn wood in the fireplace anymore," Ammons said.

But there are heat-saving devices for fireplaces, such as metal baffles to radiate the heat, and glass enclosures to keep warm air from escaping up the chimney.

"Our December started this year around August or September," Ammons said.

Despite nearby competition, Ammons said he is selling all the stoves he can get since he opened six months ago. He operates his own warehouse, installs stoves and even builds fireplaces out of hand-painted, man-made stone.

The stone weighs much less than regular stone and doesn't require a foundation. Both fireplaces and natural gas logs are as popular as ever, Ammons said, though the popularity of wood stoves is climbing rapidly.

AMMONS SAID operating his own warehouse helps cut costs. He claims his prices are competitive with the largest retailers.

Much of the cost of stoves is in shipping, but that cost can be cut by shipping many units at once, Ammons said. Few stoves are made in this country, despite freight charges for shipping a 300- to 400-pound stove from Taiwan or Korea.

"Up until now, people have been buying these stoves and putting them

in any way they wanted," Ammons said. "But there is a right way and a wrong way to do it. A lot of insurance companies are refusing to pay for fires caused by improper installation of wood stoves."

The better stoves are solid cast iron. With the prolonged high temperatures involved, even good steel will eventually burn through.

A Wisconsin firm manufactures something called an "Energy Miser" with features like:

- Outside air intakes to heat cold air, not warm air from the house.
- Circulating fans to move the heat.
- Glass intake screens.
- Controls to keep out external air when not in use.

Ammons said he was unloading one of the Energy-Misers recently when a customer walked up and bought it.

ANOTHER POPULAR brand is the Leyden Hearth, which offers "the charm of an open fire with the efficiency of a stove."

Two naturalists both give tentative approval to the new wood-burning phenomenon, with some reservations.

"There are always dead trees around," said Oakland Township Forester Carolyn Dulin. "But sometimes people take the live ones. There is plenty of good wood around, particularly after an ice storm."

Mrs. Dulin is an amateur potter and said she has noticed more and more wood-burning potters' kilns on the market. She said she also knows people who heat their entire homes with wood.

Several companies, including Burlington Electric in Vermont and Weyerhaeuser in Washington, have begun burning wood on a large scale, though in some cases it has to be mixed with natural gas to obtain high-temperature temperatures. Some businesses also are making use of wood chips, scraps and sawdust. Michigan's state power authority has agreed to buy power from an experimental wood-burning electrical plant.

Paul Thompson, a Cranbrook Institute of Science naturalist, said

rotten wood contributes to a forest by decaying and returning nutrients to the soil.

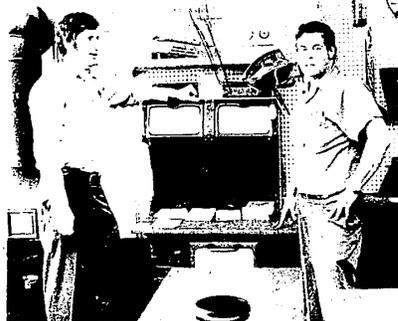
"You can also get a lot of people who can't tell a dead tree from a live one. Sometimes it's not easy in winter. And there is some growth even in winter—root growth and new buds developing. You have to be careful just as you do in the summer."

WOOD YIELDS less energy per pound than either oil or coal, but wood is a renewable resource. Wood can also be used for cooking, and wood fires are esthetically pleasing to many people. You seldom see people sitting around gazing into a gas furnace on a wintry afternoon.

A competitor of Ammons' said: "A good stove will last practically forever. And they'll pay for themselves in three to four years. I enjoy selling them."

Ron Poli, of J&J Home Center in Shelby Township, sells small steel bins for \$30 and huge Franklins and Jotuls for up to \$90.

Ashes must be periodically cleaned to prevent a fire hazard, and a stove should either be kept three feet from combustible materials or surrounded with non-flammable brick or stone.



Norm (left) and Ron Poli sell practically all the stoves they can get.



Coal and wood once were used to generate electricity, as in this 100-kilowatt generator at Dearborn's Greenfield Village.

# 'You Are Not Alone': Boost for bereaved

Story: SUSAN TAUBER KLEIN  
Photos: DOUG BAUMAN

The funeral is over. The mourning time spent with family and close friends has ended. The bereaved spouse is left on his or her own to cope with managing the house and helping

children cope with their sense of loss. This is the time when the surviving spouse needs someone to talk to and may not feel able to turn to friends and family for more support, said Don Pixley, owner and funeral director of Pixley Funeral Home.

For this reason, Pixley has

introduced a new program that will give widows and widowers, and immediate family members of the deceased wasn't married, support and help.

The program, "You Are Not Alone," operates from Pixley's Rochester funeral home at 322 W. University.

Heading it is Doris Kashtan, a widow for 7 1/2 years and mother of three sons. "Two weeks after a funeral, Mrs. Kashtan will contact spouses or immediate family members to see how they're doing."

"We'll take it from there," said Mrs. Kashtan, who has her master's degree in guidance and counseling from Oakland University. "If the person wants to talk, I'll be an empathic listener."

"People often feel bewildered at this time. They have to deal with things they've never dealt with before. Through this program, we want to help give direction, basically by giving support, and let people know there's someone they can turn to."

SHE WILL make the first contact because, Mrs. Kashtan said, "someone won't seek a program at this time but if approached will make use of it."

After the first telephone call, Mrs. Kashtan will set up an appointment to visit the spouse in his or her home, where they can discuss privately a number of subjects, from how the spouse and the children are handling the grieving period to household management to counseling services and social activities available in the area.

"If after two contacts I think counseling is needed, I'll refer them to counseling services. I won't be the counselor as such when I visit, but I'll know they need counseling."

Mrs. Kashtan explained that "You Are Not Alone" is for widowers as well as for widows. She said a man needs the same kind of empathic support as a woman. From her experience as a volunteer-group leader in beginning personal growth, career

development programs and assertive training classes through OU's Continuum Center, Mrs. Kashtan said she can have good rapport with both men and women.

WHEN A PERSON comes to the funeral home to plan the funeral of his or her spouse, funeral director John Mitchell will introduce "You Are Not Alone" by explaining the brochure on the program. If Mrs. Kashtan is at the funeral home, the bereaved spouse will meet her then. The program is for people of all religious faiths and does not cost extra.

Mrs. Kashtan will be at Pixley Tuesdays from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and will make house calls at other times. Anyone who wants to contact her before she makes the initial call may do so.

The first funeral home to offer a supportive program for widows and widowers in Michigan is Sinson Funeral Home in Detroit. There, the program consists of group counseling, instead of individual help.

Mitchell, who has been at Pixley for two years, had experience with a similar program at a Lansing funeral home where he worked.

"The people in Lansing were grateful to have someone to talk to. The program was very well received."

The purpose of the Rochester program, Mitchell said, is not to minister, doctor or give legal advice but rather to provide a good listener.

PHYLLIS SILVERMAN from the Harvard Medical School, Mental Health Clinic in Boston learned from a study she conducted that an "immediate, logical source of support would be from the funeral home."

There are professionals in the area who agree.

The Rev. Brian Bjorklund from St. John Fisher Chapel said "You Are Not Alone" is a "delightful addition to the community."

"It's delightful to have this kind of professional organization address itself to the grief of widows and widowers. The size of our congregations often make it impossible to follow up on people in the community."

"This program is an asset to my ministry."

"It appears to me that this is an excellent service," said the Rev. Duane McNeil of First Baptist Church of Rochester. He will recommend people outside of his church and inside who didn't need help from his church use the services of the program.

Psychologist Robert Trezn and social worker and counselor Gasper Novara also support the new program.

"I'm pleasantly amazed that someone in the funeral system is doing this," said Trezn. "The program sounds like a very wise way of dealing with the death process."

"It responds to the fact that this is a time of need, when a person's balance is tipped by the loss of an important person, and that person's life requires a change."

Novara, counselor at Rochester Area Youth Guidance, said the new program is an excellent way to tie into existing services.

"It sounds like an excellent way to reach people who they get really depressed and to get them in touch with the youth and family counseling services in the area," Novara said.



Reviewing details of the innovative program for those in mourning are John Mitchell (left) and Don Pixley, both of Pixley Memorial Chapel, and Doris Kashtan. (Staff photo by Doug Bauman)