

HOMESTEADING FOR \$3,000

Following Unconventional Wisdom To Achieve Your Freedom In The Country Now.

By James M Dakin

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WHY?

When most people think about homesteading they think about a house on twenty acres with a barn and outbuildings and tractors and cows and woods and a stream and gardens and everything that makes living (mostly) self sufficient possible. They need the house to live, the land to grow hay for livestock, the stream for a water supply, enough wooded land to be sustaining in fire and cook wood. All of the things one needs to insulate ones self from the big bad world out there. Commercial agricultural land being depleted of top soil, poisons being fed to cows and chickens to get them to grow quicker. Snow and ice storms keeping food from getting to market, heating oil being unavailable or overpriced. There is no denying that self sufficiency in as many areas as possible is a good thing.

But there is one problem with that plan. It takes an amazing amount of money. And just like when potential survivalists fail to prepare for disaster because the costs are too high (see my book “Frugal Survivalist, preparing for under \$500”) so to will potential homesteaders fail to leave the city because they never have a hope of affording it financially. You need to buy land that is productive and has water. That alone is beyond most peoples budgets. Then you need homes and roads and fences, livestock and tractors and barns. Cows and four wheel drive trucks and vet medicine. The list is endless and I fail to see how anyone could even start to follow the conventional wisdom of homesteading for under a hundred thousand dollars. Even if the land has seen soil erosion and needs to be worked to get it to be productive. Even if you only have five acres. Even if you live in a used mobile home. The vehicles and farm equipment and animals, all bought cheaply would still set you back close to \$100,000. Perhaps you got it all done for less.

A sixty thousand dollar complete homestead would still have to be paid back to the bank. That means you would have to work a full time job to pay the mortgage. Then on your off time you would need to work on the place. You would have no life. Granted, most homesteaders would be thrilled with such an arrangement. Their hobby would be farm work. Most remember it from childhood. With fond memories. But their parents were the ones worrying about the bills. They just got to have fun feeding the chickens and going fishing and weeding the garden as they ate produce which couldn't possible be any fresher. Even if they started to homestead and still found the life acceptable, bill worries and all, they are still not working towards a secure future. And that is what the whole thing is supposed to be about. Security and piece of mind and a higher quality of life. But they are in debt. To the bank. The folks that are friendly come loan time and mean and ugly come repo time during a Depression. You homestead to avoid starving during a Depression, but you had to get into debt to do it and so now that debt will come back to haunt you when you lose the land. Its kind of like getting fat to live during a famine but then a heart attack kills you at a full dinner table. Cutting off your nose to spite your face.

\$60,000 mortgage. A thirty year loan. An affordable \$500 a month. Now add taxes at \$150 a month and \$50 for insurance. \$700 a month still sounds reasonable, right? How about without a job? How do you grow your zucchini? Even if your land is paid off you still have a minimum of a few hundred dollars a month in property taxes. \$200 a month

for taxes. And what if you lose your job? Granted, the taxes are due at the end of the year if you have no mortgage. But if you are still unemployed at the end of the year, then what? You ate just fine all year long, were warm during the winter. Had plenty of time to fix up the old homestead since you didn't have to work. But how do you pay your taxes? If the bank doesn't screw you over in the first thirty years, the next thirty you might get screwed over by the government. Either through too-high taxes or even eminent domain which is now much easier to pull off by the local politicians since the recent Supreme Court ruling that economic development was an adequate reason to seize your property. You used to be able to pay your property taxes through farm products. Now only cash will do. One to two hundred bucks a month, minimum for any size property practicing conventional homesteading. Count on it.

So, essentially, by homesteading you invite others to exploit you. You have a huge target on your back. Look, screw me over financially, pretty please!! I won't buy food at the market or electricity from the grid, I'm a rebel! I dare you to mess with me. Go on. First off, you are uneducated. You still trust others. Public schooling turned you into a politically correct unthinking zombie. Wake up. The bank will gladly screw you, as will the government. You are a statistic to them, not a human. Or, your sad tale of woe moves them deeply, but their hands are tied, just doing their job. Or they could just be out to get you since it means money for them. Second, even if you know others will target you, you still are too conspicuous. You need to learn how to camouflage. Stop being a target of others greed. They want you to pay on a piece of property for twenty years then lose it after your job gets exported to India. Then they can resell it for commercial development and keep all the money you paid plus whatever they get for reselling it. And the new owners gladly pay three times the property tax so the government helps them out. Then your next door neighbors land is reappraised at double the value since the new business next door increased property values and he loses his home to since he can't afford \$500 a month property tax by selling rhubarb at the farmers market.

And that's in contemporary times. In the future when we see another Great Depression everyone outside of government will see a fifty percent unemployment rate. They will all lose their farms. The local government will delay ratcheting down property values and/or taxes long enough to screw over a lot of folks. You might be one of them. Because you owned something of value. A self sufficient farmer is not a likely candidate for economic servitude. This will not stand by the powers that be. Why do you think survivalists were so despised by the liberal media? Why do you think the new animal registration rules are so expensive for small flock holders? You are a threat to big agribusiness. A threat to Tyson and Big Beef. And a threat to bankers that need everyone to be in debt from age eighteen to death. And to the government that needs everyone to be in the money economy, taxed at every step of the way. It is no accident that we can't go back to the land cheaply, that we are forced to spend big money to do so. Not a giant conspiracy. Just institutionalized greed. If you work for money they can take most of it. If you work to feed yourself they get very little. Obstacles in your way cost them almost nothing. It costs you your life's energy, your soul. Don't play their game.

When I think homesteading I see a Desert Rat. He hides out in the desert, comes in to town a few times a year to trade gold flakes for beans and bacon. No one wants to steal his land unless they can see a large vein of ore on it. He is nearly invisible. Today's equivalent would be a small holding of land with a source of income to buy your beans and bacon someone else works to produce. The conventional worker from the homestead brings to mind an author or an independent computer programmer. But any source of income will do. You have no mortgage. No car payment. No credit card bills. You eat cheaply, own a solar panel, ride a bicycle. You could easily live off \$1,000 a year.

Or, live normal with electricity, running water, sewer. But you bought your land for cash. You have no rent. Even owning a car and eating a regular diet you could live on half of what a minimum wage job brought home in wages. I think it far better to avoid an automobile. It ends a major source of stress in your life. Believe me, a car is not necessary to life. You can live near work. Or, with today's Internet business opportunities live away from everyone and still have work. You might just have to lower your standard of living if your business or consulting bring in less than what you are used to. That can easily happen. But, isn't it worth it? To escape the rat race. Do you really need a car, or a big house, or a house full of electronic toys? Don't you want peace and quite?

My point here is that if you are willing to think of alternate ways to live independently and also lower your living standards, you can be free now. Not five years from now. Today, or, at worst, a few months. You don't have to wait around, slowly accumulating enough cash for a down deposit on a mortgage. You could wait for the first of the year for your tax return, or sell some of your possessions to raise the needed cash. But your goal is in sight, now! You can quit your stressful job. Repo the car. Declare bankruptcy on your credit cards if need be. Just get out of Dodge. You can wait half a lifetime to follow the normal practice of becoming a farmer, or drop it all now and become a self employed shack dweller with a fair size stockpile of grains and beans for food security. You may think a garden is a better food source, and it is. But you can have both, a small garden and a food stash. Then you don't need a lot of land to raise livestock. Which gets rid of your mortgage. But remember, everything has a price. The price for your independence now is that you must downgrade your lifestyle requirements. If you are unwilling to do that just stop reading now and return this for a refund.

If you want to pay the necessary price to achieve freedom now, keep reading.

OTHER APPROUCHES

There are many different ways to get your freedom. You can travel in an RV and work out of it. You can live on cheap land but commute to a regular job, thus allowing you to keep a lower paying, lower stress job. You can go after the regular homestead but live in a cheap used trailer on a cheap lot of land and downsize your garden and livestock. You can live on less than an acre if you had a small garden and chickens. In the rest of the book I will cover the cheapest way to homestead, but for now I will spend a few pages covering the more conventional but cheaper approaches.

Not many folks want to live out in the desert, cooking beans in a solar cooker and writing porn at ten cents a word or selling their blood every two weeks to earn a living. They might prefer an acre and a used mobile home, a car and a regular good paying job. Along with a garden and livestock and independent energy to take them through the coming hard times ahead. I opt for the desert myself, although at this time I am forced to live in town to work full time to pay an unjustly high child support payment to the ex-wife (she earns four times what I do by working at a career I sent her through college for and I send her half my take home pay). As soon as I can I am five miles from the nearest power pole up in Northern Nevada. Living in a trailer and stuffing as much wheat buckets into a Conex container as I can before Global Warming wipes out our wheat crop nationally. But that is just me. You may prefer the South, warm winters and plenty of water. My approach will work even for you, but here we explore what's available for those with more than three thousand bucks.

You could easily find a cheap potential homestead. A used mobile home under ten grand on a ten thousand dollar parcel of land. A few solar panels, a shallow well operated by a manual pump. A wood burning stove. A used tiller for a garden, a flock of chickens and a few goats. Mom home schools the kids and the brood tends to the place while dad goes to work at a regular job. It could easily work. Not all the way self sufficient but only a five year note and an affordable down payment. The only problem is that property that cheap is in areas with high unemployment. You need to bring a job with you.

You could undertake to own a vehicle and that expense would be your only worry if you paid cash for the land. A lot of folks can easily do their own repairs and so can buy \$500 used cars and avoid the \$75 an hour mechanics now charge for labor. I am not one of those, and thus my existence is usually car free. Or at least car payment free. My van I now own and live out of sees only a few hundred miles a year. Mechanic expenses are not a factor. But I also would not get in a position where I needed the car to commute. That is an expense I can't shoulder. But mechanically adapt folks can cheaply own a car and commute to work. Thus, they can live cheaply on a homestead out in the country and have a regular job in town and not need to have their own business. That applies to a lot of people who want out now and don't want to wait for an independent source of income.

\$5K TRAVEL TRAILER LIVING

There is an excellent book out on how to set up a travel trailer on a lot of land for about

five grand. “Travel Trailer Homesteading Under \$5,000” by Brian Kelling. The author gives great advice on a homemade septic system, the ins and outs of solar panels, installing a wood stove, rescuing an old “non-working” propane refrigerator, etc. If you plan on cheaply living off the grid this is the best ten dollars you could spend. My only problem with the advice was that the needed vehicle was not factored into the price. It should have read \$7-\$9K Trailer Living. To me this seems too high. Number one, it is hard to do with cash. Payments most likely would be needed on the land and the motor vehicle. Don’t get me wrong, this is a wonderful concept. Anyone can buy land for under two grand, the same on a trailer and a thousand for solar panels, wood stove, etc. And then use a vehicle to get to work, haul water, do laundry in town, etc. It maintains mostly a Drop-Out-Of-The-Rat-Race plan. It is not a security from calamity plan. Your planning must include some features of self sufficiency, at least as far as I’m concerned (of course, I am paranoid).

Having lived in many small places, I would love to have as a minimum a mobile home. But they are not nearly as available as travel trailers. A thirty five footer, if you have the financial means to purchase, is by no means a mobile home but it puts other travel trailers to shame. At a minimum I wouldn’t purchase under a twenty five foot trailer, especially if there are two of you living in it. Of course, in cold climates a smaller trailer doesn’t take as much to warm. In hot climates you will need to construct some shade as there is no such thing as air conditioning off the grid. But just beware buyers size perception. When you go to buy a trailer it looks roomy enough. But as soon as you start filling it with all your junk it shrinks to half the size. If you are not comfortable in small places beware buying a small trailer. And they are measured from bumper to hitch. An eighteen foot is only about sixteen feet interior length.

You can of course forego land altogether, staying in a trailer park to be close to a job (and then be able to forego a car). This cuts your costs down to half of what apartment living would be. Not ideal from a self sufficiency standpoint, but not bad if it keeps you out of debt and allows you to save the cash with which to buy the land later. Of course, you could always make payments on the land rather than to the trailer park. But there is something to be said for staying out of debt regardless. If you do decide to stay in a park, beware. As of late more and more places seem to be rather picky about who they allow to stay with them. They only want newer trailers. The “senior affluent” parks request a trailer no older than early nineties. Some allow mid to late eighties. But almost no one with trailer age restrictions allows anything in the seventies or earlier. It pays to research this ahead of time, before you buy the trailer. This has bitten me on the butt a time or two. I call it poor discrimination, they call it keeping out the drug users (I assume, anyway). This makes finding a cheap trailer to park on your land easier, on the other hand. Just get something over twenty five years old.

MOBILE HOME ON LAND

Sometimes this is the lowest you are allowed to “sink to” in accordance to the spouses

express orders. Usually the wife, as guys by and large want shelter and women want a home. Not always of course and if you have a mate that is willing to ruff it to attain security, hold on to them for dear life. You can always try to go the “temporary” life in a trailer route and slip in a cheap shelter that way. “Temporarily” live in a trailer while you build a house and then never seem to have the money to start building. It’s a shame to have to resort to this kind of deception, but some spouses see no danger ahead and will shop at Nordstroms until the day before Armageddon, blissfully unaware how many things can disrupt our existence in the suburbs.

A mobile home on any size lot is usually expensive enough that you need to go into debt. This would have a limited negative factor if you kept the note at only five years. Sure, tomorrow Ahab could drive an Astro van up from Mexico with a suitcase nuclear bomb in the back and blow it in a city upwind from you, or a tsunami caused by an undersea quake could wipe out the Eastern seaboard and crash our economy instantly, but all things being equal five years of debt is a very low risk associated with it. Much better than thirty. Remember, in 1971 we had not lost a war or delinked our dollar from gold or suffered an oil embargo or surpassed the point in which our domestic oil supply started to shrink or our factories started to locate overseas or seen double digit inflation. In 1981 all of this had drastically changed our country. Thirty years is too long to expect our economy (which includes your job) to remain stable.

In some areas almost anyone can pay cash for it. In East Texas I bought a double mobile home lot for \$500. Utilities are on the street (although it is dirt). A small town is across the street, a town of five thousand with a Super Wal-Mart is five miles away. A lake is down the road. I imagine used mobiles are going cheap. The economy is poor. Unemployment is double the national average. If you could import a job you could pay cash and have all the needed luxuries. Then you could raise chickens and a garden and go fishing down at the lake. A rain catchment system would give you plenty of water and the winters are mild. A perfect setup for self sufficiency. My reason for not inhabiting it is that I hate crowds and love the desert. But it is always an option.

You could always consider an area like Florida. Due to its high retirement population, mobile homes are always on the market cheap (after the owner dies). Buy one for cash, pay the park rent and save enough to move it inland (the expensive land is on the coast) on your own land. You might lose it one year to a hurricane but if you bought it cheap enough it is a small risk to take. I moved to Florida to avoid a cold Y2K. It wasn’t as bad as is reported, and I hate humidity. As in all places there are the good and bad points.

No matter where you end up moving to, all things should almost be about equal. A low price area will pay bad wages, a high price area will pay good wages. I like the low wage areas myself. You may think differently. Do research before moving.

A MORTGAGE IS NOT SELF SUFFICIENCY

I don’t care how much self sufficiency you bought with a mortgage, being in debt will not make you secure. You can have an earth bermed house off the grid with solar panels,

a windmill powered well, hay fields and cows and goats, grain growing next to a grove of trees perfect for annual crops of firewood, a year round stream and a root cellar, fallout shelter and barn, and all that will not protect you when your job is sent over to India. Or inflation takes off when the Feds can't pay off the huge waves of retiring Baby Boomers in 2012. Or oil goes to \$200 a barrel after Iran fires a nuke at Israel. If anything gets worse and the economy dips and you can't bring in the same amount of money, you lose everything to the bank.

Bankers are not pleasant people when they think you are going to stop paying real hard earned money to pay off their instant credit created ledger book entry loan. They get even more testy when they don't see another sucker to buy your foreclosed property. And the local county government will not hesitate to send in Ninja squads to clear you out at the banks insistence, especially if you are late on your property tax payment also. These people are not your friends. Despite how nice the County Records clerk was with your property boundry maps or how pleasant the local beat cop is too a youngster in school being indoctrinated with the DARE program, in spite of a bank loan officer sucking up to you competing for your loan, all of these people belong to organizations that do not play games when their own survival is on the line.

Right now, in today's orderly economy, before a mass of homeowners stuck with adjustable rate mortgages start to bail ship, there are laws on the books holding you responsible for any unpaid percentage on a foreclosed home. You bought it for \$200K. You lost your job and declared bankruptcy. The bank resold your house for \$150K- you owe the bank fifty grand. In some states they can't come after you for this difference (such as California, one reason for the housing bubble). But the IRS has ruled that money is taxable income. That fifty grand turns into at least \$5K of tax. While you are unemployed. In tomorrows climate where things are a lot worse economically, where no homes get resold, you are totally screwed financially if you can't keep making your mortgage payment. Don't get a mortgage. The economic future looks too grim. If you want to gamble, go to Vegas or buy a scratch ticket. You'll lose less.

Of course, everything could turn out just fine. You could then be rewarded for your foresight. But remember, even if everything does keep going smoothly, if nothing bad happens, you are still gambling with the survival of your family. I would rather be wrong and too cautious and live in less than luxurious shelter, free of debt than risk losing it all to the bankers. We are all so hooked on credit cards and debt payments we now love our bankers. You know, those guys that bribed Congress to create the Federal Reserve Bank which has devalued our dollar 97% in ninety years. Not bad, one percent a year. Until you live a long time, then it adds up. Bankers are evil. Please keep it in mind if you want to live.

MOTOR VEHICLES ARE NOT SELF SUFFICIENCY

Being able to repair a motor vehicle is a great skill to have. You can keep your vehicle

running for the cost of spare parts and a few scraped knuckles. You can even buy vehicles of like models and cannabilize them cheaper than the cost of spare parts. However, they do constitute a dependance, just as if you were buying all your groceries from the supermarket rather than growing them from a garden. If you don't want to be dependant on foreign fuel supplies you will have to grow your own crops for bio-diesel or grain alcohol. To do that you will require a mortgage on a good amount of land. So many acres for the car to get to town, so many to run the tractor, a few more to run a generator, etc. So instead of being dependant on Saudi Arabia you are under the control of your banker.

Only by being able to free yourself from the yolk of the internal combustion engine will you be free. The Amish do well enough with animal power. But they also have a community to provide needed services such as wagon makers, harness makers, etc. You would be better off by not needing a team to work your land. By using intensive gardening techniques you should be able to plant all your produce and grains by hand. No mechanical help should be needed after the initial tilling (or even a once a year green manure till- rent one while times are good, do it by hand when they are not). Think small scale, not large. You need buy less land, don't need a tractor, can pay cash rather than get into debt, etc. For animals get rabbits, chickens and fish. Goats can provide dairy. Think small. Think less dependant. Think about needing to care for twenty acres when you are 70 years old. Buy an acre, not twenty.

As far as getting into town, you may not need a car. You might think you do. But will it be necessary? Don't confuse necessity with desire. Food, water, shelter and protection are lifes necessity. While Detroit might want you to think that a car is included in those necessities, it is not. You want transportation, not a car. If you are within twenty miles of shopping I would suggest a bicycle. Get or build a bike trailer and go into town once a week. Once a month or even quarterly, rent a car or U-Haul and do bulk shopping. Shop right before winter and right after to avoid needing to get into town during snow storms. If you still work in town every day I wouldn't consider anything but a car if you lived out of town past about seven miles or so. The time needed to pedel, even if you don't get snow to stop the trip, takes up too much of the day. For once a week trips, who cares? Everyday commuting, you need a car. But I would work on getting employment in or near the home to get rid of the car. Besides a mortgage payment, the next worse thing to chain you to the rat race is owning a vehicle. Remember, you are working towards independence, not towards chains of another color. Debt chains you down, a vehicle owns you, not being in charge of your own food supply, your own heat for the winter, needing to work to pay property taxes, all evil. Dependance.

LIVING NEXT TO A SMALL TOWN

The ideal for independence is living near a small town. Not out in the middle of no where. I like it myself, really not being fond of most people, but it has its drawbacks.

Until I am able to bring in as much income from writing as I am working a full time job at \$7 an hour (remember, the child support payments) I can't live out on my property. If I chose to live in Texas rather than Nevada I could be rent free on my own lot as town is only five miles away and winters are mild. But I have chosen the desert. That is the trade off. By putting up with some people rather than getting total peace and tranquility you can live on your land now rather than waiting until your business can bring in enough to meet your own bills. Unless you can bring a job with you, such as a doctor or mechanic or computer programmer, etc.

A retreat, or homestead, out in the middle of nowhere can be dangerous after the stock market crashes and mutant zombie bikers are terrorizing the countryside, shooting up your livestock for a barbeque and trying to hit grandma in the porch rocker for target practice. Close to town you have neighbors that can band together to help you. Of course they can also victimize you if they have no food storage or production and you do. It can go either way, so what risk do you want to take? Alone and helpless but possible invisible. Or banding with others that may or may not harm you. If you justly fear big cities right now, it doesn't matter. Any other choice to escape is the correct one. So ask yourself what will allow you to escape faster. Buying land in the boonies because it is cheap and you can import a job (thus not needing a car). Or buying next to town so you can easily commute to a job without needing a car. I would not risk my survival on needing a car.

If you live in a large city, get out now. L.A., NYC, Chicago, Houston, Denver, Seattle, etc. Even in the suburbs of those metro areas, you are living in a potential deathtrap. Get out while you can. Even if it means buying an RV and moving to a smaller city and renting a trailer space and taking a pay cut, get out now. Cities are full of people who can't feed themselves. Come a major disaster, they will eat you. First they will rob you, then violate your person, then later on when they realize paper cash and credit cards can't buy food if none is being shipped in, that's when they eat you. Even in normal times you can be robbed and violated. You might in small towns but the odds are against it. You are playing the odds here, not looking for total security. You can't achieve that. What population you are comfortable with is up to you. I can't stand living in a city of fifty thousand right now. I think it is too much. My land is fifteen miles from a town of twenty thousand. Still too much but at least there is that fifteen mile barrier. I would be happy in a town under one thousand. But try getting a job there.

But even living in a town of one hundred thousand is still better than a huge metro area. If you have little choice but to move to a city rather than a town, so be it. Better than nothing. If cheap land is near a city, that is better than back in an apartment in a suburb of Chicago where fuel disruptions will freeze you or in LA where water disruptions will see you dying in the dust. How hard do you think it would be for a terrorist to stop the water supply to LA? Get to a small town, or at least a smaller city.

FINDING YOUR LAND

Up until a few years ago, last century, if you wanted some rural land you either bought locally, subscribed to Rural Property Bullitein or bought from a few web sites such as the

one with Ozark Properties. The back to land magazines also had listings, although they were few in number. And they were all expensive, partially due to the advertising costs but also since a few provided financing. Today you still have these kind of listings but there is a much better way to search for land now. E-Bay. There are plenty of sellers with good histories on E-Bay selling land. And a lot of it is cheap. There is plenty that are selling you a dog, hidden behind pretty pictures. Oh, you get the land sure enough, but you need to realise that unless they advertise certain features you might end up getting screwed.

Such things as zoning or flood plains are not revealed. Is there a road nearby? Sometimes the pictures are “reprehensive of the area”. You have no idea what you are getting. Distances from town are given “as the crow flies”. You must do your own research. Know the states taxes, its gun laws, its general zoning views. Missouri in general hates mobile homes in most areas selling on E-Bay. In general, Texas has no zoning outside of cities. It is almost impossible to find land in Arizona that accepts travel trailers full time. West Utah has a lot of land zoned recreational only, no permanent structures allowed (travel trailers should work as long as you use “temporary” skirting to mask your length of stay). Oregon may not allow trailers but their idea of a “house” is only a few hundred square feet (allowing shacks to qualify).

Before I bought my land on E-Bay I looked through their listings about an hour a day, three times a week, for months. Then I repeated the same thing when I wanted to buy another. At first I just wanted a cheap lot of land to hang my hat in case I was ever homeless. I could legally reside someplace without cost. So I bought an eighth of an acre for \$400 in Eastern Arizona. It is thirty miles to St. Johns or Show Low. Fifteen miles to water. I have no idea if the roads still exist. An old subdivision from the seventies. I wasn't really satisfied with it, as the water situation did not seem feasible. So I went looking again and found an eighth of an acre in Arkansas for \$400. At least there were water and trees there. But no towns nearby with jobs. Plus I found out later (according to rumor) if someone squats on your property for so long and you don't boot them off they get to stay there. And it is Arkansas, after all. About a year and a half after my first purchase I had another \$500 burning a hole in my pocket and I found a double mobile home lot in East Texas. It was on a road, utilities were available and there was a good size town down the road. But the unemployment rate was over 10%. I haven't wanted to try that one out.

Clearly, you can live in any climate you wish for under \$1,000 as long as you don't need to find a job locally. Pull up your travel trailer and set up the patio barbeque. As long as you have an outside source of income. But think about it. A one time cost equal to about one months wages of a minimum wage job for your land. No more rent, ever. And taxes are under \$10 a year. You can get that picking up aluminum cans. My last trailer park I was paying \$350 a month lot rent. Cable was extra, no swimming pool, no lawn or shade trees. Trailers squeezed in very close. It was a blatant rip off but I had to pay because no one else in town would take my old trailer. Your money is no good to them unless your appearance meets with their middle class standards.

I currently am planning on staying in Nevada. So I spent a bit extra buying land here, as cheap as I could. But even if it was more than I liked, it was paid for in cash. I will never have to pay rent again as soon as I move up there. As long as I keep my residence off of a foundation on an axle my taxes are almost nothing. Under the price of an ounce of silver. Or a box of rifle ammunition. Right now it is in the process of being cleared of its brush by wildfires. Almost a million acres in N.E. Nevada in a few months. But then as long as I keep it cleared I shouldn't have to worry about fires again. A good size river is only four miles away from my land so I can haul water. The nearest neighbor is three miles away. My kind of place even if it will be frozen in the winter. The frosts will kill any Plague carrying fleas.

And all this was thanks to shopping on E-Bay. I realize you are taking a small risk when you buy from there. But nothing is fool proof. By keeping the cost under a grand or two you are gambling on something you can afford to lose. Getting into your car every morning to commute is also a risk but you do it without thinking about it. This risk could spell your freedom. You might find prices a bit more than I am describing. Just don't be in a rush to buy. Land prices should be lowering soon as everyone realizes what a cruel joke the Housing Bubble was. And, who can say when something is the right price? That is up to the individual. You might not care if something sells for \$1200 instead of \$700 if you want it now.

Go to the E-Bay web site and then to the real estate section. You can search under land only. Go to the state you want, or put in the maximum price you are willing to pay. Search around there are usually almost two thousand listings just under land. You can search under "Buy Now" if you don't want to bid on it. Don't give up, you'll eventually find what you want. And don't be too quick to buy if its not perfect. The buyer not in a hurry always finds the bargains. That's how I got all my initial land for under \$500. I looked a lot and waited. You can do the same. Perhaps not that low, but close enough.

The next section delves more deeply into the problems you will encounter with cheap land. But just keep in mind that whatever the downside is, the upside remains the same. You now own a piece of property free and clear. Out of the bankers control. Out of the landlords control. You now have a place to legally hang your hat. For the rest of your life. As do your children. Other than food and water, most of your lives problems have now been solved. Rejoice. Do not dispare. It is all downhill from now under current conditions (obviously the end of the world will change the equation). You can now live on the bottom of the economic ladder. Amen.

LAND UNDER \$1,000

When you find yourself a piece of land under a grand, don't expect a whole lot. It will require sacrifices on your part. Money buys convenience. Lack of it buys problems you must solve yourself. Not that this should discourage you. Let others stay up at night, tossing and turning, nightmarish visions of corporations moving overseas or the housing bubble popping or China refusing to purchase a good portion of our daily national debt of two billion dollars each and every day like they have been doing. Well, if they are smart they should be worried. Too many don't have nor do they want an idea of what could go wrong economically and force them to give up their homes. Despite the fact that you are living in a trailer and using a sawdust composting toilet and haul water from the river on your bicycle over a rutted road and have no electricity, at least you can point to your very humble abode and proclaim it safe and secure.

Most cheap land has one or more problems. A bad road leading to it is one. Without a motor vehicle this shouldn't be a problem for you. Any vehicle can slowly navigate bad roads once to deposit your home and supplies. It is the constant daily ride that breaks down the vehicle. If you don't have to commute daily it is less of a problem having a poor road. At times it can also act as a deterrent to undesirable elements by keeping them and their pretty cars away. If you bike into town your bicycle will suffer nowhere near the problems that a car eventually would. Use a bad road to your advantage, both in lower price land and increased security. And one final note. For bi-monthly or quarterly supply runs, rent a car or U-Haul. Cheaper than repairing your own vehicle (I'm not saying wreck their vehicle, just that a rented car running a bad road that little won't be damaged but your vehicle run constantly will).

I will get to shelter shortly, suffice it to say here that despite choosing to live primitive by choosing to do so you live cheap. Everyone wants their precious creature comforts, too fat and spoiled and lazy to do without their pimpin ride or their cell phone or their name brand jeans that hang past their butt crack. By choosing a cheap home you pay for it with cash. To can't lose it other than through natural disaster or theft. You are buying, with both cash and inconvenience, true unemployment insurance. A paid for chunk of land and trailer and food storage equals no need for cash during unemployment. Plus, a trailer is pretty cheap to repair, unlike a stick built home. A trailer (or other similar structure) home is a cheap, debt free home. Let others bend under the burden of their mortgage.

Hauling water is something most folks really frown on. Yuck, we are living like impoverished Third World nation peasants. We can't run the water as we wash our Cadillac. We can't have a lawn in the desert. We can't flush a toilet or take fifteen minute showers. Oh, woe unto us, poor American creatures! If you want to pay a high water bill, live in the city. If you want to spend ten grand just drilling a well, this book is not for you. But if you can conserve water to just a few gallons a day per person you can

easily do away with the extreme expense of a water well. The drilling, the generator to pump it. The tank to store it. The replacement cost for another pump. The cost of extending your well after the city fifty miles down the road sinks the water table through irresponsible overuse. Hauling water is needed pretty much anywhere other than the South or the Eastern seaboard. Buy a few fifty five gallon drums for emergency storage and haul the rest. I plan on hauling eight gallons a day on a bicycle trailer (child trailer from Wal-Mart rated at 100 pounds capacity, \$75). I can take a one gallon shower, drink one, cook with one and wash with another, one for the wife each drinking and bathing and have two gallons to save. Now I don't need a well. Simple.

No electricity is not a huge problem. So much more now runs on disposable batteries than used to. Solar panels are cheaper than ever, as are generators. You just need to reduce your need for electricity. Can your own meats, store cheese in vinegar laced cheese cloth in a root cellar and store butter in an old fashion butter crock and you don't need a refrigerator. Or, buy a trashed travel trailer and use the propane fridge out of that one if your trailer doesn't have its own. Lighting can be LED lights, very cheap in Wal-Mart now. You can buy solar battery chargers for \$20 and rechargeable batteries as low as \$1 each (we're talking D, AA, C etc. size here). You can buy a D battery powered TV from Best Buy for \$30 if you must have a TV. You can buy a portable DVD player or CD player. No need to power a stereo. One 50 watt solar panel can run a portable laptop computer. Charge for six hours to run for two. \$100 for the panel, \$60 for the marine battery. The lack of power makes your property cheap. It's to your advantage.

A sawdust toilet sounds gross, but what would you rather have, a turd in sawdust or a pond of floating turds underground that can leak? Again, lack of running water and a sewer ensure you buy really cheap land.

The biggest consideration is of course no locally available employment. Cheap land is rarely around any jobs. In my case after buying and seeing my land I was so motivated to get out there for good I started (and kept at it) tripling and quadrupling my writing pace as well as spending the needed money to try to get this struggling publishing business going. Time will tell if it works but the point is that with your dream so close you might be pushed harder to do what it takes to have that dream homestead come true. Always before there were excuses why you couldn't start your own business to allow you to get to your homestead. Tired after work, something good on TV, etc. Sometimes the only thing needed is more effort and more dedication. Sometimes you will fail anyway and stay in the city, but if you succeed...

YOUR HOME

A universal desire for a homestead house is to duplicate a city home but more energy efficient and perhaps using renewable energy. All well and good if you have a lot of money. A two thousand square foot house, super insulated with half a roof full of solar panels will run you big bucks. Mortgage time. Even books giving alternate construction techniques such as straw bale or rammed earth in old tires don't end up being very cheap.

Unless you cut your own logs and earth berm (all primitive, no modern material) you will never construct your home with petty cash.

Cheap and energy efficient usually don't mix. You can pick your climate to save on heating costs or burn lots of wood to heat anything. You can build a small shack to cut down on building and heating. Or live in a small metal shipping container you buried by hand to get cheap and earth sheltered. The usual cheap solution is to live in a used travel trailer. You can install a wood stove as long as you install heat shields and play it very safe as trailers will go up in no time if you catch one on fire. One used cast iron stove, or even a sheet metal camping stove or home made barrel stove shouldn't use an obscene amount of wood and will heat the place up in no time unless it is really big and drafty.

You can spend as much as you want, even enclosing a trailer with well insulated walls and putting a cement slab down to absorb south solar output and radiate the heat back at night. Then just use the stove on cloudy days. But if are really poor, just south face the trailer on the side with the most windows and then at night use a small propane heater. You are better off not living in a trailer in severe winter areas unless you have an access to a cheap source of firewood. Not that temperate climates don't have there own problems. Humidity, bugs, disease, lots of people. But if you are poor you don't have a lot of choice. Trailer, buried metal container, tent, primitive dwelling, even living in your vehicle.

But remember what you are gaining. Lack of financial servitude. Economic freedom. In my younger years I lived in travel trailers as part of a care free existence. Currently I have no choice due to most of my income going to Uncle Sugar and the ex-wife. In the future I'll still live in trailers not only to escape working for others but also since Social Security will not be around when I retire. I like trailer living. It frees up a lot of your capital and doesn't involve much stress. I wouldn't mind a tent or a shipping container. Even a hole in the ground lined with used wood pallets. As long as I can pay cash for it while working an easy stress free (meaning entry level pay) job. I think the trade offs are worth it. If you want your freedom you should think so also.

TRAVEL TRAILER

You should be able to buy a small travel trailer a few decades old for under a grand. It will most likely be rough inside and out and have mechanical problems. Even if the roof leaks it is cheaply repaired. The appliances can be cheaply substituted. Even if the tires are messed up the replacement costs are cheap enough. You want a cheap shelter. A thousand bucks doesn't buy perfection. It buys an old plywood and sheet metal box that has been around the block a few times. And beat up is good. Most weekend campers want a trailer that is self contained so they can rough it in luxury. If you are willing to do

without that you can buy some really cheap campers.

There are many different kinds of recreation vehicle. Motor homes are self propelled. Class A is the long box on wheels, class C the bed over the drivers seat. A travel trailer is a box on wheels you tow with another vehicle. A fifth wheel is a trailer where the bedroom sticks out in the front. A pick up with a special hitch backs under it to tow it. They can be quite long, up to about forty feet. I had a thirty five foot fifth wheel that was spacious enough for the two of us plus the cats. You could separate into other rooms if needed. That was nice, except for spending more every three months in lot rent than I bought the trailer for.

Many people turn their nose up at trailer living. Why, they could never live in a tin can! What they mean is that they are too good to live in anything other than a McMansion that is less than 2000 square feet. They are special people, they deserve the best. Especially women. They seem to think that most alternative housing is an affront to their sensibilities. And wouldn't be caught dead in anything other than a suburb home. The males spend all their time in front of a TV or in a garage, but need the other several thousand square feet to be "normal". Keeping up with the Jones'. Most folks are just playing the mating game. The males must have money to get a healthy mate. The females must prove their mate is the most successful as it enhances their own worthiness. Some folks can get past all this. Chances are you can if you are reading this. Don't carry over suburbia into the country. You are trying to start over and do things the right way this time. The only thing wrong with a trailer is that it is small and poorly insulated.

Poor insulation in a trailer can be compensated by enclosing it with a stick-built structure that is insulated. Or covering with spray insulation and then ferro-cement. Or surrounding it with hay bales. You could even wrap it in fiberglass insulation and cover with a tarp for a short term solution. Or just skirt it and then heat it with a wood stove or cover with another roof for shade to cool it. Or for those financially challenged now, you just use propane to heat it. Use the trailers cooking stove for heat plus park it in the sun. Or buy a cheap propane heater designed to operate indoors. The less money you have now the more you will have to pay forever more in fuel bills. But you can always pick your climate to reduce winters bite. It would be hard to stay warm in Alaska in a trailer. In Georgia you wouldn't need any heat in winter except for the occasional freak storm. But in the summer you would need a source of shade. You could construct a roof over it. Or if really poor a few old tires under a tarp would do.

Small space in a trailer can be handled by getting rid of crap and buying or building some storage sheds. If you enclosed the trailer you could build past the end and use the extra space. for storage. You might be discouraged because of the lack of storage space in the beginning. You should be able to set up something from discards after a time. You could get creative and build sheds out of wood pallets, or use discarded lumber. Or even discarded refrigerators. You should be able to figure out something other than spending \$75 a month for commercial storage. Just ones months rent of that and you should be able to almost buy new lumber and build your own shed. A small shed can store a lot of junk. Another thought on storage space would be junked vehicles. Even paying to have

it towed is cheaper than buying new lumber to build the same storage space.

If you buy a trailer with a leaking roof you can buy roofing sealant and do it yourself. Two trailers ago I had one that leaked from every seam there was. I bought a \$5 can of asphalt sealer and applied dozens of coats, one after another as they dried. It sealed all but one sunken area that needed more expensive stuff (the white rubber type coating is \$50 a five gallon bucket). At the time I just lived with it, letting an old blanket soak it up. Here in Nevada it either spits six drops of rain and then stops or comes down in buckets, but it can also go months without any rain. In a wetter climate you had better have the roof sealed right.

Life without a refrigerator is difficult. If your trailers fridge is inoperative you can try to restore it (details available in the before mentioned \$5K Trailer book). You can try to find a used one (good luck with that- new ones are a grand for the small propane models). You can can your meats and water crock your butter and wrap your cheese in vinegar soaked cheese cloth (and then both put in a cool shaded area- an old fridge on its back buried to the door in shade works as a good improvised root cellar). Then you could do without a fridge. If you can in the winter you waste no heat to can so the only cost to you is a pressure canner and Mason jars. After that the only cost is replacement lids. Buy a ten to fifteen pound beef brisket at WalMart, right now about a dollar fifty a pound. Or turkey marked down when not in holiday season. Only buy a weeks worth of butter at a time (two is pushing it). I don't know off hand the life span of the cheese. You could also construct an old fashion ice box out of a regular used fridge. Just make sure the cold air from the top section can seep down below and have a water drain. Then make yourself a block of ice as needed cheaply. In only a few hours. Details are in Sunshine To Dollars, look up their web site.

If the trailer doesn't have a water pump, just use gravity. Open up the vent above the shower and put a metal hook on the edge. Close the vent. Hang a camp shower from it after filling. Those are the \$10 plastic bag you buy in the camping section that you can use to heat your shower water by solar. I just ran a pot of water through the coffee maker and a container in the microwave in the winter when the sun wasn't cooperating (without electric use propane or your wood stove). Wet down, turn off the water. Soap. Rinse off. Two gallons worked just fine. You can use one gallon if you buy a new weed sprayer (don't buy a used one for goodness sake). They have one that is held in one hand and doesn't have a hose. That's the one you want. About \$8. Great for if you need to haul water.

If your stove doesn't work just buy a camping stove as a replacement. They are as low as \$20. As for an oven you can buy a unit that attaches to the top of your camp stove but they are rather pricey. Figure something else out. A Dutch oven would seem to work wonders cheaply and be something that lasted a lifetime if seasoned properly as you must do with cast iron. One ex wife had a set of cast iron cookware that was so perfectly seasoned that no food could possibly stick to it. Any other cookware won't work as well except brand new Tupperware and once that wears off it's worthless. Cast iron lasts multiple lifetimes.

If your 12 volt system doesn't work anymore, do without it. You don't need 12v lights. Yes, they are bright. Yes, they do drain your battery rather quickly. The one you expensively filled up from a generator or a solar panel. I will cover both those later, as well as the illumination replacement you want, LED's. For now just go with the fact that 12v is a luxury, not a need. Do without it if you must. If you must have a glass teat to waste the evenings with, Best Buy carries a \$30 black and white small TV that uses eight D size batteries. I have no idea how long they last. As the cheapest D batteries are \$1 a four pack at the Dollar Tree, you will soon discover how valuable \$2 worth of TV watching is. If they only last for an episode of the Simpsons you might only watch on Sunday night. If they last seven hours you might pick your favorite show each night and only watch one hour, etc. Home grown electricity is very expensive.

METAL SHIPPING CONTAINER

The bright side to China wiping out one industry after another here in the US by offering incredibly cheap labor (their pennies to our dollars) is that we are awash in metal shipping containers here. China ships over boatloads of cheap plastic toys for Wal-Mart and Dollar Tree to sell and we have nothing to ship back except agricultural products. It is cheaper to leave the unfilled containers here than to ship them back. So you can buy a used cargo container cheap. About one grand for a twenty foot or two thousand for a forty foot. The price might fluctuate up or down, that is an estimate.

Metal containers are built to be moved across the ocean. If you get one that hasn't been

too corroded, it should hold up well to the elements. I would love to bury one and be earth insulated. For only a grand if I dig the hole myself. Just beware that the containers are made to stack on each other. The corners are the strong points. You can't pile too much dirt on top of one without reinforcing it with rebar and cement or old railroad ties. About one to two feet of dirt maximum without. You could dig a hole four feet down and then pile the dirt up the sides and a little on top. It won't be as insulated as if it was five feet under, but it will go a long way.

Or surround with hay bales for insulation. Stucco the outside for weather proofing. Much cheaper than building a wood roof on top of hay bales. Yes, the interior is small. But the box provides its own support for the hay bales. The one thing you don't want to do is leave the thing out in the sun, without shade. The metal will heat up quick and ruin your storage items or drive you out if you are living in it. There will be additional costs over that of a trailer, since a container doesn't come furnished. But so much better as a home if you wish to cheaply insulate it. And, almost bullet proof. Come the collapse of Western civilization you will be better protected from hostile elements in a cargo container than you would be in a travel trailer.

A cheap way to live in one would be to place discarded tires on the roof and then tarps over those and hanging down over the side at a slight angle, tied down. Other than the price of a few tarps, ropes and stakes summer shade is free. Of course in the winter the metal retains the cold. If you were looking for a cheap disposable way to do it, and you live in a location by hay growers, buying hay bales for a buck or two each and replacing them yearly would save a lot of labor and maintenance, but I don't see why you would want to do that more than once or twice in the beginning before you made the bales a permanent structure with vapor barriers and stucco. But if you are really stretching your cash reserve at first...

PRIMITIVE DWELLINGS

By going to the library and researching Indian dwellings indigenous to your area you might find a cheap way to build a shelter. Adobe is a good example of a structure suited perfectly to its climate and using local material from the earth that would cost you only labor. Stick built lumber homes are suited to almost no climate and good only as it allows the novice builder to build himself. As far as energy efficiency it will only work if you have south facing windows and thermal mass to capture the solar gain (with the other sides well insulated of course).

Primitive dwellings are primarily an attraction due to the almost zero cost involved, but a

factor that shouldn't be overlooked is that come any future energy emergency you need to be able to survive without inputs of oil, natural gas or electricity. And the only way to cheaply insulate a dwelling is to build primitive. You may scoff at the notion of an approaching Peak Oil, but all it will take is unemployment to possibly freeze your carcass in the midst of a bitter winter. Starvation is possible in a land of plenty if you are without a job, as is the prospect of energy starvation. Yes, there is welfare, even for help with utilities. If you have an account with a local utility. I doubt they would hand over cash as you claim you need to buy a cord of wood or a canister of propane. I am of course using an extreme case. I plan on future long term disruptions. Here my point is that we are all not too far away from potential disaster. Anyone can relate to masses of jobs being moved overseas to China or India.

The economic correction from the dot com bubble were immediately covered up by government stimulus (as has been the case since almost the entire 20th century). We convince ourselves we have a good economy, but the mad rush to the exits by companies large and small to protect themselves against Unions, taxes, health insurance and pensions tells another story. Even if you foolishly think you are immune in your industry you might one day still find a pink slip in your pay envelope one day. Everyone, corporations and local governments are surviving on razor thin margins. If anything unplanned happens there is an immediate alarm to trim payroll. Granted, a lot of the hubbub is to force favorable terms from someone else. But there is also a lot of truth about no ones budget having a safety cushion. Almost anyone can easily lose their jobs anymore. The safety net has disappeared as government has been bought off through rigged elections to allow worker protections to be whittled away. Plan accordingly.

TENT LIVING

If initial cost is more of an over riding concern to you than long term energy efficiency (or safety from wildlife for that matter), there is always tent living. Personally I don't like the idea of flimsy walls between me and human blood lustig bears or cougars. But they are a darn cheap investment for shelter against the elements. You can get an old fashion canvas tent (think of the tent in the second and third Austin Powers movies) something like 8 foot by 12 foot with frame and chimney vent for about five hundred bucks. You can live in that in style. I suppose if you had a ready source of wood for the stove and a pet dog to guard against wild critters (along with a shotgun) than there would be little disadvantage against cheap living in a tent.

You can even buy a huge Army tent for under a grand. The “Polar” type is great for cold weather and is something like a twelve foot circle. The platoon type is pretty long, bigger than the above cowboy type tent. Just make sure they come with all the poles and rope, etc. I have seen some for sale without the poles. A real pain to figure out that one. Do a Google search under “military tents for sale” or something similar. You should get a good selection offered. Another place to look would be online military surplus companies. I have seen Russian military surplus tents for sale.

And of course there is always the cheap nylon tents from Wal-Mart. I can’t see wanting to live in one long term. Although you can live on a \$500 piece of land and then buy a large nylon tent and put it under a large shade tarp for summer shade, and very cheaply heat it in winter (perhaps with only a small coffee can heater or even a catalytic propane heater for a safer alternative). That might cost a whole \$150 with tent, tarp and heater and several propane canisters. So, you buy land for \$500. The shelter is \$150. The bike and bike trailer about \$175. A surplus Russian bolt gun for protection is under \$100 retail. A years supply of wheat is another \$100. For about a grand you are independant with your own land and shelter and “hard times” supply stash. Then go one food stamps to avoid work. You can be a bun the rest of your life. Just by living in a tent. Don’t dismiss it off hand. It does have its attractions.

But, back to reality. If you do want a tent and you buy the cheap ones, you must ensure it will survive more than a few seasons. My solution would be duct tape, but only because I’m such a classy guy. There should be repair kits just for nylon tents. But even with repairs and a gentle touch cheap tents are sure to wear out after a season or three. Plan on replacement costs. Just like a cheap bicycle. Eventually even with proper maintenance you are going to have to replace it. You should budget a monthly amount for these kinds of replacement. Another strange possibility might be a homemade tent. Even without sewing skills you could make a cheap and well insulated tent. A wood pallet floor, a PVC frame, thrift store blankets and some clamps and a tarp over it all (plus underneath). I assume it might be feasible. It shouldn’t cost much more than a cheap tent and be larger and better insulated. Buy a mess of blankets at the local thrift stores after the winter is over for cheap price and better availability. PVC pipe is cheap, and pallets are usually free. Tarps are usually less than a dollar a square foot.

LIVING IN A VEHICLE

Living in a vehicle is an easy and effortless way to have shelter, but not any vehicle will do. I would love to find an old junked school bus locally and spend a few hundred to buy it and a few hundred to get it towed for a huge cheap shelter. But you will most likely be forced to settle for something a bit smaller. You will have a difficult time living in a compact car. I wouldn’t go for anything smaller than an old VW van. You need a bed and a place to sit up and some storage. You can cook outdoors three seasons of the year but come winter you need interior space to accomplish all domestic chores. You should be able to find an old Chevy/Ford van for under \$500 if it doesn’t run. Tow it to your land and face the windshield south. In the summer you can cover it with shade. In the

winter it will be partially heated by solar.

In a small vehicle I would advise only using a catalytic stove, available at Wal-Mart for about thirty dollars. These provide heat without flame and save you from killing yourself from carbon monoxide poisoning. You can use small stoves during the day with a cracked window using other fuels. A small wood stove can be constructed free with a coffee can and some discarded hot water heater pipe. Or, the Zip stove is once again for sale. The stove is about \$60 and replacement motors are \$8 each. A small burner is fed any combustible fuel and the motor drives a fan to burn at a very high temperature. Very handy where fuel supplies are scarce. A propane camp stove is only \$20 for a two burner from Wal-Mart and is very nice. Uses disposable fuel cans but you can always get a converter for the five gallon size. A dual fuel stove using Coleman fuel or unleaded gasoline is under \$40. If you run out of gas you can siphon from your gas tank. A five gallon gas can should provide a lot of cooking on this kind of stove. Although I would feel safer just using propane. Pick your stove with future fuel use in mind. If you think Peak Oil is right around the corner, pick a wood stove. If you have a generator use the dual fuel. If you use other propane appliances, stay with that fuel.

I live in a Yuppie community. They are very ruthless about maintaining their property values. Mobile homes and travel trailers are actively discouraged. I was living in a trailer and paying high rent. Now I live out of a step van (the kind UPS and Frito Lay use, just older and worse looking). This is camouflage that allows me to live unmolested, or at least relatively compared to an RV. If you choose to live out of your vehicle, try to hide the fact that you sleep in it. Nothing gets old rich bastards on the phone faster than poor people nearby. Protect yourself. We are back in the 60's where the squares tried to use their attack cops to harass hippies out of town. But this time the poor bastards are forced into poverty rather than choosing an alternate lifestyle. I mean, who REALLY likes living in their car? Give me a break. If you are living on your land there is nothing they can do to you, but if you are forced to stay in town to work and live in a vehicle due to poverty they will try to force you out in most communities.

Why live in a car on your own land? Better protection than a tent. Bears and lions and tigers can't rip through the side as in a tent. Cheaper in some cases, most likely you already own it. If you like outdoors anyway, why not. Like a long camping trip with better food and toilet facilities.

BECOMING SELF-SUFFICIENT

There are cheap alternatives to most aspects of homesteading. Of course they are not the best way of doing things. They are the frugal way. Sacrifices in comfort and efficiency must be made. For instance, a sawdust toilet is under twenty dollars and will safely and efficiently compost human waste. A well, a well pump, a energy source for pumping, a water tank, a flush toilet and a septic system are about one thousand times as expensive. But then you only need to push a handle down to flush your waste. With a compost system you need to be more "hands on". I see nothing wrong with not having a well and so hauling water and crapping in a bucket. At \$30 a foot to drill, they can keep their well. I can create a grey water system with some PVC pipe and a metal drum full of rocks. I

can haul water on a bicycle. I can shower with one gallon of water. The alternative is being in debt for twenty thousand bucks. I only make \$12,000 a year gross. And I plan on living on three grand a year one day. Frugal is a must.

You can be a solar home even if living out of a van. You can grow (most of) your own food even if you only have a small lot. You can catch rain from a shed roof. You can live off a very small business if you have almost no expenses. You just need the mindset to live simply. Then everything comes easy. There will of course have to be some substitutions. You can't trade like activities straight across the board. For instance, on poor quality cheap land without water you will have a heck of a time gardening. You will have to make up with storing food rather than producing it. You will have a home, but much smaller and not as pleasing to the eye. You can't bring Uncle from the city and show off a trailer on a patch of scrub brush like you could if you had twenty acres with hay pastures surrounding your solar yurt. Too bad. You are poor, there are no bragging rights.

And, it might be pointed out, there is no such thing as true self sufficiency unless you live primitive in the wilderness, making furs and moccasins and bows and arrows and creating fire from friction and cutting your hair with sharpened stone. Almost any activity since we crawled from the caves you duplicate, you will need the skills of other people. Even a bar of steel you turn into a knife needs to be purchased with cash from miners and smelters and folks driving the product near you. Your shoes come from China, the gasoline you use from Saudi Arabia or Siberia. Your computer from Tawain. Etcetera. Self sufficiency is just shorthand for relying less on others to reduce your exposure to danger in times of catastrophe. Do not fool yourself into thinking you can buy your way into self-sufficiency. No matter how much land you have, or animals you raise. Even producing your own bio-deisel means you are dependant on replacement parts for the equipment that made it. As is the vehicle running it. Save money by not trying to be 100% self-sufficient because it is a lost cause anyway.

Cheaply attempt to minimize your need for other peoples skills and goods. Don't try to be your own island. You would need to spent a lot to stockpile enough to live in isolation the rest of your life.

GARDENING

Gardening is a great way to grow your own food to be less reliant of mega-agricultural corporations. Economics of scale has worked so far, but only because super abundant extremely cheap oil was available as inputs to out produce any small scale enterprises. That age will end soon if it already hasn't. Not that we will run out of oil but that we will run out of a world awash in cheap oil. Then food prices explode, especially every time there is a natural disaster. If global warming or another ice age don't send us into mass starvation first. And, no, global warming is not man made. We may not be helping matters, but nature delivers more energy release from a good volcanic eruption than we could from many nuclear explosions. It is silly to assume we can top Mother Nature in

distructive potential. The earth used to be a big swamp with the dinosaurs roaming around, but now only factories can cause global warming? Right.

The smallest garden can produce life sustaining foods. Corn and potatoes and legumes. But if you are forced by circumstances (or even choice) to buy poor land with “dead” soil and/or no water, you might not be able to garden. In that case you need a large food storage. But if you have suitable land, plan on gardening immediately. You need to build up and condition your soil before you depend on it to feed you independently of the grocery store. And it is a skill you need to work at. It takes a few seasons to get good at it.

Since you are poor and can’t afford much land, you will need to use composting and intensive gardening. You can easily find plenty of books in the library on this type of planting. Essentially you loosen the soil down several feet and then don’t walk on it. You turn compost into those plots yearly. You cover the soil to cut down on weeds and needed water. You companion plant to allow insects natural enemies to protect other crops. And you plant as much as possible. Turn your lawn into a garden. Plant green manure crops on land you don’t need now. Grow grains and legumes you can store. Plant in staggered times to eliminate a huge crop all at once. Give crop surpluses to charity if you must. Plant the maximum you can now to be ready to feed yourself later if need be.

Plant only non-hybrid seeds. You might not be able to send away for seeds one day. Plant different varieties to avoid all your crop getting the same disease. Organize community gardens using the same techniques to get more land under cultivation. Plan as if Peak Oil is going to happen, even if you feel it won’t. We have pretty much forgotten in our land of plenty that food is fundamental. There is nothing as important in life than being able to feed yourself. But we all act like having money is all that is needed. No, you need the skills to feed yourself. Or at least a good size food storage system to get you through the transaction back to an agricultural economy. Start being more paranoid, it just might keep you fed.

RAIN CATCHMENT

An alternative to a well in most areas would be a roof rain catchment system. If you already have a roof you simply add gutters and a down spout with a storage unit. Or, the prospect of a catchment system would make it profitable to build more shelter than you otherwise would. For instance, a small cabin can have a large wrap around porch that doubles the available roof area with less cost. You can do this very cheap, from scavenged wood and tin with a pond to hold the water. Or you can do it expensively (as with most things, of course).

The expensive method provides a lot of roof and an underground cement tank. Here we

are not too concerned with expensive methods. Lets take a cheap shelter example, a trailer. You can cover the roof with recycled lumber and use a tarp if tin is not available cheaply (but figure in yearly replacement costs for the tarp). Put the roof at a slant. This can be three stacked old tires on one side and one at the other with a frame work of lumber or laid plywood. Even new wood would cost at most a few hundred bucks with a long trailer. Place a water proof material over that. Attach rain gutters, a drain pipe and a container on the ground. You could use garbage cans if you wanted to. Use for non-root crops, showers, toilet flushing (I wouldn't drink it).

A rain catchment system could be a pond. If your area gets enough rainfall forget about the roof and just let the pond stay full. Introduce mosquito and algae eaters to the pond. It takes a pick and shovel and some plastic sheeting. In the desert you need a big roof and a shaded storage area. And you will need to conserve your water. You get seven to ten inches a year and that is usually all at once. In theory you would need a lot of roof and storage even if you used almost no water. Laundry in town, weed sprayer showers, sawdust toilet, etc. I would use rain catchment as a suppliment only, and then only if it was no more than a few hundred bucks in total cost. First, live in an area with a natural water source. Do not rely on man pumped water. For instance, Elko Nevada has a nice river running through it. This makes it a less hostile desert location. But most parts of Arizona only have seasonal springs. The rest of the year requires pumping. Granted, the north east has a great underground resevoir but in a prolonged power outage you are still screwed. I like my desert with a water source, thank you.

Next, after you locate to an area with a year round above ground water source, haul your water. If you use five gallons a day you need only haul under fifty pounds on your trip home. You can do that on a bicycle with a trailer. If you use a motor vehicle to go to work you can haul water and waste all you want. Just put a plastic water tank in the back of your pick up truck. You can use pumped water. It is cheap. The above ground natural source is for emergencies. Hauling is so much cheaper than pumping or catchment, just make sure you have an emergency back up for "post-Y2K, post-EMP attack, post asteroid collision" type events. Catchment is a lot cheaper than pumping and might be in your budget. A 55 gallon food grade plastic drum and some rain gutter is all you really need (even a hand pump can be substituted with a weighted, bottom capped, top open PVC pipe on a rope or chain for dipping in the barrels bung).

FOOD STORAGE

Not having five acres to grow corn and potatoes and raise chickens is a real drag on being self-sufficient. Yet even the absence of water for a small garden need not stop your plans to protect yourself against social collapse. With a small garden, I would grow corn and potatoes. And then have a wheat storage as a suppliment for emergencies (failed crop, multi-year lack of outside food, etc). If you have no garden (mostly in the desert) you need a more extensive food storage than a year of grain. The year will cost you \$150 if you use all new five gallon poly buckets for storage plus treat the grain with diatomaceous earth (grain \$70, buckets and lids \$60, DE \$20). For much more extensive treatment of storing grain see my book The Frugal Survivalist, a screaming bargain at \$4 at www.BisonPress.com.

If you are serious about feeding yourself independently of societies follies and can't grow a garden, you need massive grain and legume storage. I would feel comfortable with no less than five years per person. The wheat itself would only cost \$300. That is a pound a day plus extra left over for sprouting (best most nutritious vegetable, and cheapest). It provides a daily calorie intake of 1500. Not the best, but not starvation diet either. If you buy soybeans at the feed store like you did the wheat you will pay a bit more, keeping the calorie content the same by substituting some of the pound of wheat for the beans. The expensive part is storage. It used to be a poly bucket and lid was \$3 new. A years supply of wheat fit in \$36 worth of container. Now they are \$5 for the set. Add \$300 for the five year supply of food. And as each bucket of storage needs one cup of diatomaceous earth, you need about 20 pounds for the lot. Ordered in small batches it costs \$4 a pound (it must be food grade). Under \$700 to feed yourself for five years.

This might seem excessive, but please stop and consider. The cost is barely above one years worth of automobile insurance. And it provides five years worth of starvation insurance. And it is only a one time purchase. At least for the wheat. Wheat if temperature stable and protected against pests will remain nutritious for literally centuries. Wheat from Egyptian tombs still sprouted. No other grain or bean has that kind of proven record. You can just leave other food storage alone, chances are good it will still be edible ten or thirty years hence if stored in a cool location. But wheat is the only thing you can bet your life on. Also, this amount of storage might not even be enough.

Five years seems uber-paranoid. But if you have friends or family stay with you the amount that can feed you goes down drastically. Even if you are a hermit and plan on killing and eating your wife, mother in law and neighbors you can still see multiple year crop failures that can endanger you. People starve, even today. If our economy got into trouble and the ghettos exploded and lawlessness reigned we could see a widespread spread of chaos and tribal warfare. And, yes, tribal warfare is possible here, just as it is in Afganistan or Somalia. The government has been turning different groups against each other for decades to deflect anger from itself. A house divided, etc. Just stop, think, be honest with yourself. If you were hungry and unemployed and had nothing to lose, would you lash out at those you always secretly hated? Blacks hate whites because of past slavery and segregation. Whites hate blacks because of forced job offerings to blacks (or free scholarships without merit) and see them as a parasitic class (never mind the whites indirect economic dominance provides blacks little incentive to be productive). Mexicans hate whites for stealing half of old Mexico (but love our economic opportunities). Whites hate Mexicans for lowering wages and/or stealing jobs. Old People hate the young for their indifference to our cultural degradation. The young hate the old for being on welfare (people pay taxes but don't call welfare an entitlement, why call Social Security or Medicare that?). Women hate men since there is not total equality (unless inconvenient to women such as a military draft or being self sufficient financially if they can suck off child support or alimony instead). Men hate women for wanting the right of equality without the responsibility. Homosexuals hate straights for alienation. Straights hates homos for undermining family structures, deviant sexual practices, etc. I

could go on and on. We all really do, deep down, hate each other. If it were not that we each had a stake in it financially there would be less hatred. Our economic existence is in danger from others, orchestrated by big government, big business (Halliburton profits from the lower classes being forced by circumstances into joining the military and going over to be nuked by our own depleted uranium rounds which is also profiting a corporation), big media and big litigation (the inhuman mass of lawyers eating the very seed corn of our economy), as well as big finance. They turn all the interest groups against each other for profit. Come social or economic upheaval we will turn on each other. Bet on it.

It behooves you to assume the worse. I know Peak Oil or EMP attack or global warming and/or cooling are dangers that most likely will not happen. But it doesn't take a huge disaster like that to stop the grocery trucks from rolling. We could do it to ourselves by the aforementioned tribal warfare. Little conflicts here and there could stop commerce in wide stretches of territory. I could stop traffic with a bolt action rifle and stop an Interstate from letting traffic through. I could stop mail with Anthrax mailings. I could take out electricity by bombing control buildings to the grid. If a terrorist got any kind of low grade radioactive material, perhaps even that from a hospital, and put it in a low tech bomb, how many would flee immediately and cripple an area? If several areas saw fighting there would not be enough police and military to adequately respond, especially with most occupying other areas of the globe. The locals would not see supplies come in. For that matter, how hard would it be to shut off an areas water supplies? In an area like LA, it would mean mass panic, death and mayhem. Nothing happens now as the economy still works. As long as welfare keeps going. Unemployment, food stamps, social security, make work political jobs, farm subsidies, etc. We have a huge segment of the population living off government checks. If that dries up, either from hyperinflation, lack of foreign countries buying our debt, an oil embargo, whatever, the fires start burning and every little punk 9mm starts firing and racial fighting commences.

It is not hard to see the country falling apart. We are already an Empire that has totally degraded its currency and only keeps going by being at war with whatever region has the resources we need. The worlds excess manufacturing capacity seeks the only customer of any consequence, the US, and the venders loan the customer the money to buy their wares. A tidy arrangement for us, as long as it lasts. But with Social Security and Medicare future obligations at about \$70 TRILLION, our economy with a GNP of only about \$6 trillion (the other \$6 trillion is mainly government invention, not part of a producing economy), it can't last forever. And the government will let you starve quicker than a Katrina victim drowns in sewage laced levee water. Count on it. Our economy is not sustainable, the government will only try to save itself when things start falling apart, and you need to realize only you can protect yourself by providing your own food, water, energy and protection. Start now before anything bad happens and others try to acquire the same limited supplies. There are not that many pounds of wheat out there, nor surplus firearms. Shortages will begin immediately at the start of hostilities. Buy now while others are in a coma and think you are silly to prepare. But don't tell them, they will kill you for your supplies (a good time to point out my mailing address is a private postal box rental).

Food storage is a paranoid practice. We have been well fed since the Great Depression. But history tells us famine or supply disruptions can always happen. It is not as important to be right about what disaster will befall us as it is to insure yourself against it in case it ever happens. Without a garden long term food storage is a must. Even with productive land it never hurts to have a back-up.

And don't forget a few grain grinders if you want flour/baked goods instead of just boiled wheat kernels. \$25 delivered for a generic corn grinder. To use with wheat grind on course, then grind again on medium, then again on fine. It is worth the cheap price.

Order from

www.SurplusNsurvival.com

SEPTIC SYSTEM

Even in areas with lots of water, it may be too expensive to have a flush toilet and a septic tank. There is a lot of government meddling and bribes to be paid to undertake construction. You might be better off by using a grey water leech system (as simple as a metal drum filled with rock under a drain) and for the black just do away with the water requirement. Instead of flushing your wastes use a sawdust composting system. Commercial compost toilets cost at least \$1200, a bucket of sawdust is under \$20. Of course there is the labor involved and the yuck factor. But the money saved!! No water to pump or dispose of. And odor absorbing sawdust to contain your waste.

Crapping in a bucket is not a conventional way to eliminate your body waste. The

American way is to simply use three gallons of water to flush the nasty offending material to a municipal facility to treat it or if in the country you install an expensive septic system and flush the problem away to under the lawn. So you can continue the conventional disposal practice you spend tens of thousands of dollars (you must factor in the cost of water you pump yourself). Absurd. Of course you can construct your own home built septic system with some plastic drums and PVC pipe, but I fail to see why you would want to. Composting makes too much sense.

The Internet contains plenty of detailed information. Google search sawdust toilet, or home made composting toilet. In essence you take a bucket. Place some sawdust on the bottom. Do your business in it. Cover with more sawdust. I would use my grey water system for urine to stretch out the use of the sawdust. You may choose to use the sawdust toilet for pee also. If the grey water is going to the garden, for example. When the bucket is full place the contents in a compost pile just for that purpose. If yours is a cold climate you may wish an enclosed area with a glass cover for year round use. You might even consider a rotating drum to keep from having to dig into the pile to keep it working. It is simple and cheap. You can of course complicate it if you wish.

A home made grey water system is also very simple and cheap. While you are in town buying a trash burning barrel, buy one for a leech field. Poke holes in the bottom before being buried to the top. Fill with rocks. Put the cover back on. Use the bung hole as an intake. Now you can have a sink and shower drain to the outside pipe leading to the drum or just tote waste water out to a funnel placed there (screen covered of course) and use manual labor to dispose of waste water. Not hard to do if you use a gallon only for washing. This might be the way to do it if you are without permits from the county (same with the compost toilet). You are being safe and sanitary but the government will use it as an excuse to harass you since you failed to pay them bribes. They take it very seriously. That is their career.

SOLAR COOKING/HEATING

A good way to gain more self sufficiency on a homestead is to lower your heating and cooling cost. Unfortunately, other than a brief span in the 1970's, energy has been so cheap that most people couldn't be bothered with such nonsense. They took cheap energy for granted. So did the inhabitants of Easter Island. There are plenty of trees, lets use some to erect giant statues. And don't laugh. We constructed a huge amount of distant suburbs counting on cheap oil. If and/or when the price of oil gets much worse as a percentage of incomes, suburbs will no longer be a viable source for easy living. Don't get me wrong. Nothing wrong with wanting to escape the city. You just need to do it while staying energy independent. Or what about the humongous waste of resources devoted to the Cold War. Future historians will marvel that it destroyed the two huge economic powers of the day. And for as silly a reason as erecting giant statues.

Not that you shouldn't enjoy the good things in life, but you shouldn't risk your life on them. It's fine and dandy to enjoy the ease of mobility with a car. But plan on being able to live without one. It's great to have a steady flow of cheap electricity, but don't plan on it always working. It's not really feasible to think that propane, and wood, and electricity won't be available for cooking. But if you spent the normal amount of money on cooking fuels, but then supplemented with solar cooking you could set aside the unused fuel as a stockpile. Then if there ever were shortages you would have fuel, and the solar option would be available to you. Solar cooking is little more than wood, insulation, black paint, glass and reflective metal sheets. You can easily find plans on the Internet for solar cookers, solar water heaters, solar air heaters, solar food dryers, etc. Construct them now before the building materials get too expensive due to new buyers competing for the only true renewable fuel, the sun.

You can make a long trough, insulate it, paint it black, cover with a sheet of glass and place it on the south side of your home at a window. Crack open the window to place the top end of the trough in the opening. The trough should be the same width as the window. The bottom with a closed end is resting on the ground. The air in the trough warms up and rises into the house. Of course you need to close the opening at night. Another, cheaper and easier way is to take a south facing window and place a U curtain rod at the top of the window. Place a sheet of black plastic from the rod. The sun heats the air at the plastic and the warm air rises into the room at the top of the window. Angled reflectors on either type increase the rays hitting the solar device.

To heat water you can simply place a full hose outside. Or take a five gallon poly bucket and paint the inside flat black. Fill with water and cover with a sheet of glass. Add a reflector to help heat the water. A solar cooker can be as simple as a tinfoil covered box and a piece of glass covering it (with reflectors). Of course in all these devices it is advised to build with permanent rather than disposable materials. And safety glass is much better than regular to avoid cutting yourself. Nothing like an arterial gash after the Apocalypse to ruin your day. And have extra glass in reserve for breakage. It might be irreplaceable some day.

TRANSPORTATION

We live in a huge country. Consider that Germany is around the size of Oregon. Now their mass transit system doesn't seem like such a miracle, does it? We can't cover the place with the same thing. The closest it's going to get is the roadways we already have. The public cost of the roads is attainable as long as each person covers the individual vehicle cost. If you think about our size it is not too ludicrous that we have relied on the private automobile. In a coming age of oil running out it may not make sense but 75 years ago it did. The one stupid thing we did was to eliminate the rail already in place. Since we dismantled a lot of it we can't fall back on the rail as an energy saver to transport goods and people. The expensive part, the right of ways, may not be able to be recovered. A shame since we have plenty of coal in this country that could run a transportation network.

So your coming challenge is going to be how to survive without a car and without the

option of public transportation. Good luck. Your choices are to stay in small cities, move close to work, work from home which is close to shopping, or pedal your little heart out on a bicycle. None are great choices. Staying in a city usually means you can't afford to buy but must rent. No option of buying a \$500 piece of property and then walking to Super Wal-Mart. You can move close to work but still not living cheaply. Working from home is great but you still need to go shopping for supplies. And then a bicycle. Your goal here to live cheaply but to do so without a car you need to work from home but not to be too far from a supply base. Ten or fifteen miles is too far to bike to work every day but not too far to go into town once a week. Then biking and the long distance from town make sense. The distance allows you to buy a cheaper place and keep you away from the mass of the population that only wishes you harm come social break down.

With a bike trailer you almost have no need for a motor vehicle. You can haul up to a 100 pounds in one. And Wal-Mart carries them for about the same price as a cheap bike, about \$75 each. Even if you replaced them once a year it is still far cheaper than auto insurance alone. Right now it will save you a ton of money. In the future it might allow you mobility while the rest of the population is suffering heart attacks on the side of the road after they were forced to walk after their cars ran out of gas and no one had any more to sell. Even if we never run out of oil an economic depression could make a gallon of 25 cent gas unaffordable to most of the population. Plan on us either running out or being unable to pay for petroleum on the scale we now use it. If it happens you are all set by not relying on the car and if it doesn't you save a bunch of money (or, more importantly, don't have to earn the extra) and have a stronger heart from some exercise. Who can argue with that upside?

And remember, do all this now. You have to ease yourself into a strenuous mode of transport especially if you are out of shape. And you need to stockpile spare parts and learn some repair skills now, before you need it. It is a choice now, take advantage of it. If you wait too long you endanger your health and wallet.

BICYCLE

A bicycle is the product of an Industrial Society. Today's cheap bikes are a product of the global glut in manufacturing. It makes perfect sense to rely on a bike today when prices are so cheap it makes more sense to replace a bike instead of paying to get it repaired (same with watches, DVD players, etc.). Before the last upward blip in metal prices you could buy a generic mountain bike from Wal-Mart for \$49. They are up about ten or twenty bucks now. But consider that a replacement rim is \$30 for the cheapest one. It was cheaper to replace the whole bike instead of paying someone to replace a wheel. The difference was more apparent on pedal brake bikes, such as a beach cruiser (fat tires, no gears). They cost \$60 new but to replace the rear wheel (where the brake mechanism was located inside the wheel) cost \$50. It was better to scrap the whole thing and start over. This is just to demonstrate the glut that used to rule the market. Now it is cheaper to pay to repair bikes, but just barely.

Of course come an economic slowdown it will become expensive to rely on bicycles for transportation. But no where near as expensive as it will be to keep a car on the road. If you didn't pay insurance and gas stayed at \$2 a gallon and you did your own repairs and you drove so little you never bought new tires, it would still cost you \$400 a year to drive into town 15 miles away once a week (figuring 7 mpg for an old beater truck). A bike costs you \$75 as does a bike trailer. If you got a new set every year you still beat the cost of the truck three to one. If you pay auto insurance it goes to six to one. If nothing ever breaks on it. If you were able to keep the bike for two years the ratio would be twelve to one. Again, without the car breaking at all. I think a more realistic number is a bike costs you one twentieth the cost of a paid for vehicle. Much less if car payments are made. One twentieth.

But you can't just enjoy your cost savings now. You must learn to repair your own bike. That is why I recommend the coaster brake type, much simpler. Eventually if the economy crashes you will be on your own as far as keeping your bike in working order and running. You may not be able to get spare parts after that. With a coaster brake you need tires and tubes, chain, lube, bearings and the mechanism for the brake (and perhaps cheaper to buy the whole rear wheel assembly). It wouldn't be much to stockpile all that, unless of course you are living frugal and poor, then just keep your old bikes plus any trashed ones you can find (start your own bike junk yard). But once the global free trade arrangement we now operate under is disrupted you can kiss cheap Chinese parts goodbye. And we have little in the way of cheap industry here domestically. It is all high dollar specialty goods for the most part.

A bike needs certain conditions to operate of course. Excessively hilly locations such as San Francisco prove challenging. And roads that see snow and ice too long are difficult on bikes (although they should offer snow tires by now, even if they are custom made still). But in general most locales are bike friendly. Just drive defensively. Most car drivers will see you, become instantly engulfed in rage that you are much smarter than they are and try to run you off the road. As long as you stay safe bike riding is an excellent mode of transportation.

BIKE TRAILERS

We all take it for granted that our personal chariots await us at a moments notice, ready to smoothly glide us over any terrain in climate controlled comfort, unaffected by weather or nefarious highwaymen. It is unthinkable that we would have to worry about the logistics of a journey. We are mobility free. No other society comes close. Ah, but there is never a free lunch. A price always must be paid. In this case we devote a huge portion of our earnings to keeping a personal motor vehicle ready and willing to assist us. A new car starts at \$12,000. For the best drivers in the safest age group you still pay a minimum of \$35 a month for basic insurance and that is only if the car is already paid off. Gas at a minimum is \$2,000 a year for the average driver with cheap gas and good gas mileage. It is a rare individual who doesn't spend three grand a year if a car owns them. Would you like to save three grand a year? I realize Mr. Richie Rich Yuppie Scum sees that as a

bargain for transportation, but what if you only earn minimum wage? Almost a quarter of your gross earnings, and that's for a used, paid for car.

If you can do without a box of sheet metal covering you while being exposed to the elements and actually get some exercise, just ride a bike. It is practically free compared to a car, even a used one you can work on yourself. And a bike trailer makes it possible to transport all but the bulkiest and heaviest loads. A bike trailer, even the cheap kind sold in Wal-Mart will haul 100 pounds. That is twelve gallons of water. Four cases of canned food. Do you really need a car to haul 95% of what you buy? If you buy a flatbed type trailer or build your own you can haul even more (if you could) or at least have it last longer before it wore out. With a bike trailer you can say goodbye to motor vehicle ownership for good. Every once in a while rent a car or a truck to haul the really difficult items. If you do it only a couple of times a year it will be cheap enough.

By doing away with your car you free up your wallet and your blood pressure. It is a huge thing you no longer have to deal with. Even in the summer in a heat wave or in winter during a freezing wind, I never wish I had a car. I know the amount of paid labor I DON'T have to do to have transportation and I have a lot less stress in my life. What's the downside? I can't go into town on a whim and waste money. Darn. You can just as easily wean yourself from a car as you became dependant on it. Do the math, you will be surprised at the money you spend to own a car. Without one you are merely inconvenienced. And those unsure how to give up their addiction are the same as hacking wheezing smokers unsure how to give up cigarettes. It is actually impossible unless you want to. How bad do you want out of the Rat Race?

ENERGY

Energy is dirt cheap from the grid, even at 15 cents a kilowatt hour. If you take a 150 watt desktop computer with screen and run it an hour a day all month it costs you 60 cents a month. If you need to run that computer off solar panels you need to buy three hundred bucks (on sale) worth of panels. And storage batteries. Assume about \$500 for a smooth operating system. If you bought a generator for two hundred bucks and it lasted about three years it would cost you five bucks a month to operate the generator just on replacement cost. The gas would be about another five dollars. Ten bucks a month verses 60 cents. It behooves you to cut down to the basic bare bones electrical needs. Substitute propane as much as possible or do without using a renewable source of power. Do without a refrigerator, cook with wood, etc. Living primitive means you can live cheap. Comfort is expensive.

One example for a overly priced comfort is a camp shower. A propane appliance heats the water and a battery pack lifts up the water over your head. It is very expensive, about

\$100. If you get a single burner propane stove for \$15 and a used pot at the thrift store for a buck and a camp shower (the bag with nozzle, can be solar heated) for \$8 you can have the same effect for one quarter of the price. A traditional 12v trailer light takes a solar panel and a battery and replacement bulbs. About \$200. An LED lantern is \$30 and uses D batteries instead of a \$65 marine battery. Granted, the light is not as bright. But it is one sixth the price (one quarter the price if you buy a solar D battery charger and some rechargeable batteries for about another \$25).

The whole experience in acquiring a cheap affordable homestead is to live as primitively and as cheaply as possible. It is not going to be an exact duplicate of city living. That means you must radically downsize your energy usage (among other sacrifices). Minimal lighting, almost no electronic devices that can't be run off batteries (the disposable kind, not the 12v kind). I give the example of a computer since odds are that if you have a home business you will need a computer. In most cases it is cheaper to buy a brand new notebook computer that uses 50 watts of power than it is to power up a 150-200 watt desktop model. If you only ran on solar output rather than stored juice in a battery you would need three 15 watt panels for a notebook but at least nine for the desktop. The six hundred dollar difference would pay for a new notebook.

One "free" method is to just run your car (if you have one) and have an inverter (\$30 for 200 watt model at Wal-Mart). Thus, no generator to buy and the engine life is much greater. Or if you commute to work hook up a second battery for your "free" juice. But regardless of what powers your batteries you need to adjust to needing almost no electricity in order to do it cheaply.

PV PANELS

Solar panels are pretty neat. After a one time expense you get free electricity from the sun. Unfortunately the up front cost is \$7 to \$10 a watt. If you only need a few panels than the cost is easily handled. Otherwise you will need to take out a second mortgage to fill your roof with panels. One source claims that you can get free panels from companies that supply the Highway Department with panels that power up the stand alone flashing warning signs (the power output would be lower due to cracked glass, etc) but I would think they are not that plentiful once more and more people start wanting them.

If you bought one fifteen watt panel for one hundred dollars you could get twenty minutes of notebook computer time per hour of maximum sunshine. Seven hours of strong sunshine would let you use the computer for two hours and have enough juice left to make blender drinks with. If you bought three panels you could work almost a full shift at the computer every day. This just isn't much electricity but it might be enough for your needs. At the current high price of panels you will quickly learn the value of certain electronic devices.

One way to cut down on your costs is to do away with specialty 12v appliances. They are overpriced and not very efficient, for the most part. Better to buy regular 110v standard appliances and run them off an inverter. Inverter prices have dropped a lot quicker than panel prices. They are no longer the major investment they once were. A good example is a coffee maker (not that you are advised to use one on a limited energy generating capacity). A cheap model from Wal-Mart is ten bucks. A 12v one at an RV store might run you \$60. Of course the way to make coffee off the grid is to take an insulated mug and boil enough water to fill it. Boil on a propane or wood stove. Take a discarded coffee maker basket and place your filter in there with the desired amount of coffee. Place on top of mug and pour water into basket. One dripped cup of coffee. A percolator is too expensive and uses more fuel. It would only make sense on a wood stove already running constantly.

You could buy a trickle charger for about \$35. It produces about three watts of power. At the end of the day you have almost no juice. At the end of the week you have enough to run your computer about three hours. Not great to be sure. But perhaps if you are poor and can add similar panels slowly but surely it will eventually give you the output you want. And if you use no juice other than from disposable battery powered devices than it would be more than enough, perhaps just what you need to power up your cell phone. A \$35 charger and a \$20 cell phone (at ten cents a minute usage) would be a cheap way for work to stay in touch with you.

GENERATOR

In general the life span of a generator at the low end of the price scale is going to be two to three thousand hours of use. If you spent \$200 for a 1000 watt model and ran it two hours a day you would burn through six gallons of gas a month and the generator would last at least a year in a worse case scenario. So it would cost you about a dollar a day to use. Of course battery costs would be extra. One would last perhaps five years so figure about a buck a month per battery (marine rather than auto). So total cost a day would be about a buck. Not bad to have that much wattage. The only negative is the noise factor. Even the quietest Honda generator (that costs more than \$200) would go from a whisper to a roar as soon as you started pulling a load from it.

If you want a “free” generator, just run your car with an inverter hooked to the engine battery. It will be quieter if you don’t pull a lot of juice (thus needing to rev it up) than a generator. It would be easy to replace. Go to a Pick And Pull and get a fuel efficient car that has a good motor but a trashed body. Run it for awhile to charge a bank of batteries once a week. Or just run it while using an appliance.

For another almost free energy source hook up a second battery in your car (assuming you commute). After about ten minutes after your first battery is recharged from starting the car the second one starts to charge. Assuming constant driving not just idling at stop lights. The only cost to you is the battery and the mechanical help hooking up the system. Say you have a 40 amp battery. You don't want to draw it down past half so as to prolong its life. So you have twenty amps to use. A laptop computer uses a bit over four amps an hour so you could use it five hours before the battery needs to be recharged. If you must commute this will somewhat lower your expenses. Not by much but if you can go without a generator or a solar panel at least you have a small nest egg to help with automotive repairs or sticker shock when gas goes to \$5 a gallon.

On a fall day a small office in the form of a junked car would stay nicely warm. Run the engine to power your computer. Almost whisper quiet and gas is your only expense. Cost, a few hundred bucks. Cost of a roof full of PV panels, only about \$20,000. Downsize. Do without. Compromise. It is the only way to afford a micro-energy budget.

L.E.D. LIGHTS

Alternate lighting is always worse than conventional lighting in a home on-grid. That is just the nature of the beast. So the question is, what disadvantage do you want? Do you want a bright light that is expensive? A propane lantern. Do you want a light that uses cheap fuel (at least if bought in bulk)? Kerosene lanterns. Or do you want a light that is cheap to run and uses no fossil fuels but is not as bright? This is where LED lights come in. Light emitting diodes are lights without a bulb (incandescent or fluorescent types, anyway) controlled by a computer chip. If you left a flashlight on with an LED bulb and assuming the juice never ran out it would take over ten years of solid use before the bulbs ran out. And a set of batteries last up to 100 times as long as in a conventional flashlight. One lantern using three AA batteries lasts about 125 hours and costs \$10 at Wal-Mart (the camping section, not the flashlight section).

Less bright is a larger lantern usually found at Rite-Aid or Walgreens. It uses four D batteries and runs 100 hours bright or 200 hours mid intensity or 400 hours on low. You buy a set of D batteries at Dollar Tree for \$1 and you get 100 hours of light (set on high). Try getting that amount of illumination from propane for the same price. The problem is that LED's are dim compared to other light sources. I can read a book while reclining with the mini-lantern laying on my chest and see just fine. But if playing a card game

that has multiple colors some are hard to see. The light is great for illuminating an area but less than perfect for doing close in work unless your light is right next to where you need to see.

You can buy a mini flashlight for \$6, a mini lantern for ten. A “maglite” type flashlight for ten. A red light for a bicycle that is great for maintaining night vision for about \$4. Try to stick with just AA and D batteries. Less rechargeable batteries to buy. Now buy a solar battery charger.

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A great company and they have one for \$13 (also a grain grinder for \$17). Now do a Google search for rechargeable batteries. Buy enough for one set to be used while another is charging if possible. If not, the AA types charge with only three hours of sunlight, while the D type can take up to two days charging. This fact alone means you should try to stick with AA battery devices. Your batteries will say they don’t develop a “memory” and last 1000 recharges. Don’t buy it, kind of like EPA mileage estimates. Only attainable in a laboratory. Use all the juice in your battery before you charge it again. They are “memory” resistant, not memory proof. If you don’t over time they hold less and less of a charge. And, only count on about 500 recharges just to be safe.

Now you are set for years of illumination. Cheaply. One note: if you think we might experience an EMP attack, protect a few of these lights just in case. I took an old cookie tin and kept some lights still in their plastic wrapper and wrapped those in a rag then sealed them in the tin. It is doubtful that they would be effected but better safe than sorry.

A CASUAL INCOME

You might think being stranded in the middle of the desert with no water or garden is the pits. But consider the benefits. You no longer have to work 40 hours a week. You can actually enjoy life. Does it require money to enjoy life? No. It requires time. If you work too much you just subtract money for time. I would rather live frugally and enjoy my time. Reading as much as I like. Writing for a casual income. Walking out in the boonies away from people. Playing cards or board games with the spouse. Watching a sunrise with a pot of coffee. Enjoying the cats company. Cooking leisurly rather than hurridly. You get the idea. Sure, we still need to work and be productive. A life of leisure soon lacks enough perspective to enjoy.

But what if you could work far less than you do now? And be nearly stress free. Would it be worth living in a tent or trailer and hauling water? If you think so you can do it. The sacrifices will be worth it. So how do you still bring in income? That is up to you. You know your skills and limitations. And don’t think writing is any real answer. I’ve been doing this off and on fifteen years. Now I can write reasonably well. I couldn’t when I started. It was an expensive education and I still haven’t succeeded. But you can try other things. An Internet business. Or a telecommuting job. Seasonal work. Or just

commuting to a job. You can work half time at minimum wage and if you have no bills it won't matter.

The important thing is not income but lack of bills. If you lived in East Texas, for example, on a lot in a shaded trailer and had a garden and fished in a nearby lake your food bills a month would be about \$50. You would have no heating bills. If you brewed your own wine and only smoked a few cigarettes a day (assuming you had both vices) you would need another \$25. A bike for transportation would be about \$5 a month as would your cloths and shoe allowance. Could you find \$80 a month? Picking up aluminum cans and giving blood once a week would cover that. If you lived on land without fertile soil and had to buy all your food it would still only double your food bill. And winter heat would be cheap if you had a small shelter. Assume about \$150 a month averaged out over the year. Ten hours a week minimum wage would pay for that. Can you get any more relaxed than that working for someone else?

One of these days I'll write a booklet on living on \$3,000 a year. With a bit of common sense it is possible to live on almost nothing. If you can forego the fancy lifestyle that have big houses and three cars and a cell phone for everyone and cable TV and credit cards. And for that matter, without huge farms to homestead on. Remember those bankers.

Good luck on getting free of the rat race and being secure at the same time.
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