

Solar sales continue to rise

By KATHY HUBER
Staff Writer

MOUNT OLIVE — The development of a solar hot water system for his own home several years ago led industrial engineer Richard Bonte into the business of providing similar systems for others.

His company, Solar Living Inc. on Budd Lake Heights Road, Budd Lake, manufactures solar collectors and domestic hot water systems. Solar Living provides full installation and also sells the components, including the col-

lectors in kit form, for people to put together and install themselves.

With 120 systems sold to date, Bonte said sales have increased by 50 percent each year since the firm opened in 1977. Half of the systems have been installed by the homeowners themselves.

"We have more interest each year and expect it to continue as more people become aware of the benefits," Bonte said.

The average family of four uses 1½ to 2 gallons of

fuel oil daily to heat their water, and the same family using electricity could spend \$75 per month for hot water alone, Bonte said. A solar hot water system can save approximately 70 percent of that, which, Bonte said, can amount to between \$350 and \$500 yearly.

Most systems utilize two 4-by 8-foot collector panels and a 82-gallon storage tank, which requires only a 2-foot square space in the house, usually in the basement. The collectors are mounted on the roof in different positions, depending

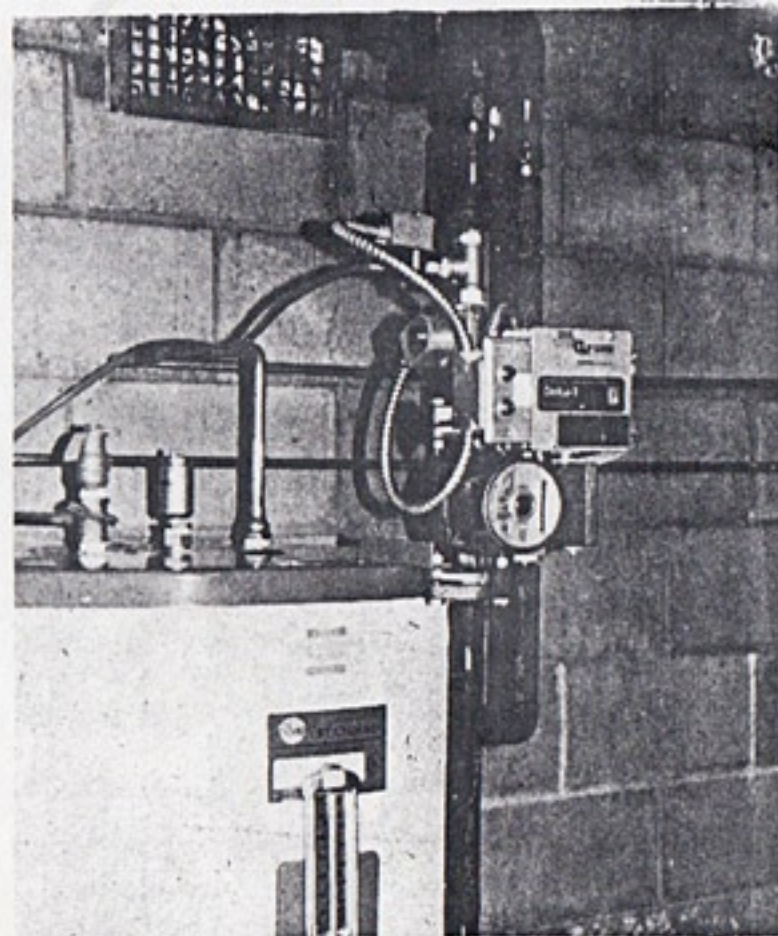
on which direction the roof faces.

In this area in an average year, one can expect one-third of the days per year to be clear, one-third to be overcast and one-third to be partly cloudy, Bonte explained. The home's original hot water system remains, with no alteration, and will automatically raise the water temperature if needed.

The cost of a system installed by Solar Living is \$2,700; the cost if installed by the homeowner is \$1,700 to \$1,800 — and 40 hours of construction time for the inexperienced person.

Tools needed by the do-it-yourselfer are similar to those used for household plumbing needs — a pipe cutter, propane torch, wrenches and screwdrivers.

Bonte estimates that the system's cost can be paid back within four years, even if his company does the installation. The system's cost is eligible for a 40 percent federal tax

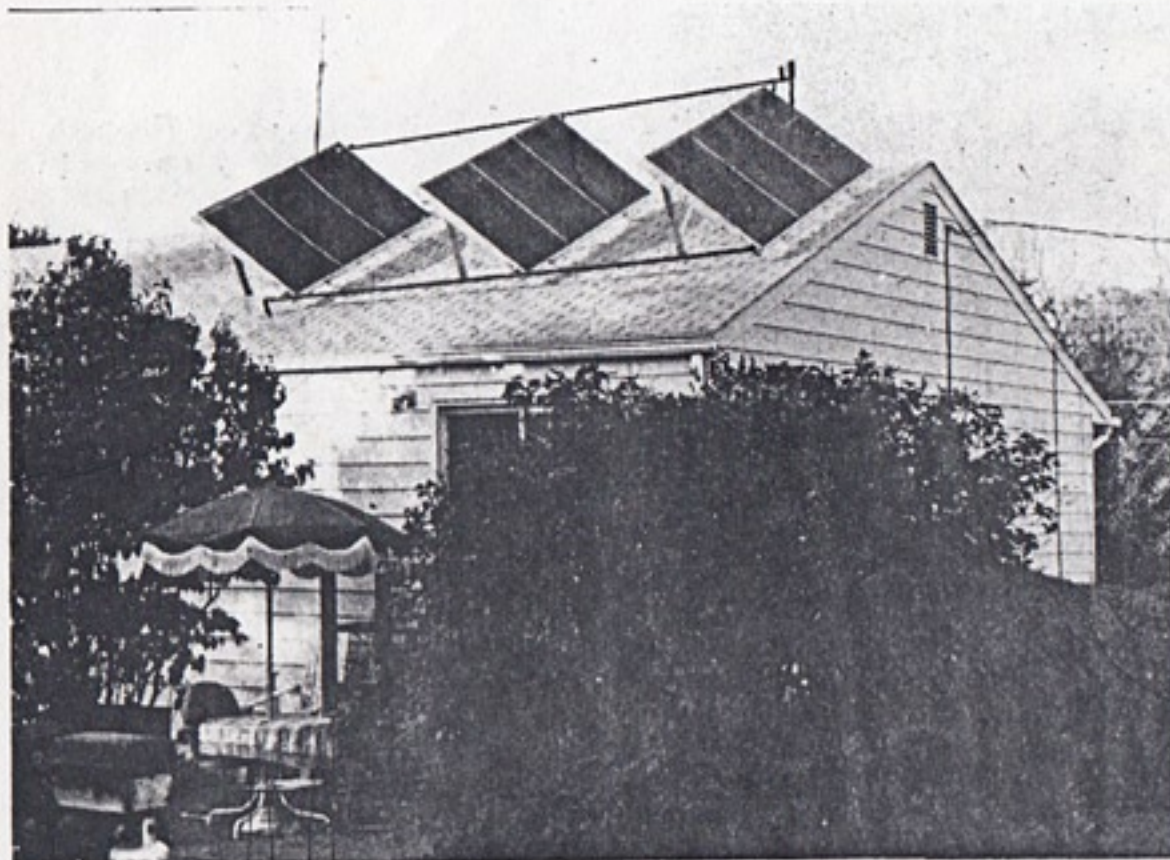


TYPICAL SYSTEM — A typical control system and storage tank such as this is usually located in the basement of homes with solar systems.

credit. The systems are exempt from both state sales tax as well as from property tax — in other words, Bonte explained, the assessment on a home cannot be raised after the solar system is installed, even though it makes the

house worth more.

Those interested in further information can talk with Bonte at the Sussex County Vocational-Technical School Energy Show, March 12-14, or by contacting Solar Living at 691-8483.



PANELS ANGLED — Solar collectors on a roof that does not face south have been angled by Solar Living Inc. to maximize effectiveness.

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