

Building on a Belief

Blue Ridge Energy Systems' Robin Woodward

On a warm summer afternoon, you might find Blue Ridge Energy Systems founder Robin Woodward meeting potential clients at his house in Fletcher. His home is lovely and full of light, its excellent craftsmanship evident, and serves as an ideal example of his work and philosophy. It is also an accomplice of Robin's generous personality; business associate Karen Tessier recalls that the first time she arranged to talk with him "he invited me over to his house and cooked us breakfast!" He regularly prepares meals and celebrations for all of his staff and clients.

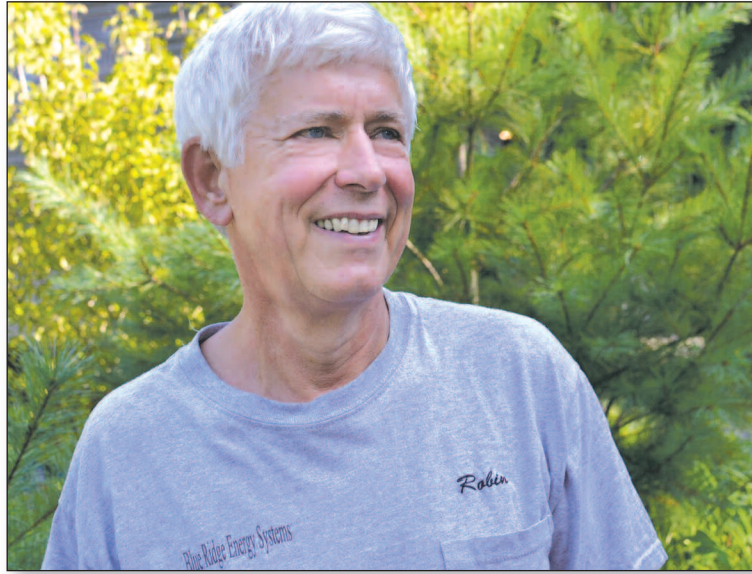
A native of Belmont, Massachusetts, Robin is the child of two academics. His father, a Harvard PhD physicist, developed the navigational tool LORAN. His mother was Dean of Women at Middlebury College. Scientific curiosity was a constant in his youth and led him to pursue his own degree in physics.

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Progress Energy engineer John Mullis. By 1970, Robin was concerned about the nation's dwindling energy resources and the country's increased reliance on international petroleum providers. "At the time," he said, "we were unaware of global warming, but it was clear that fossil fuels had serious limitations."

It was in 1977, while installing solar-thermal water heaters at Shoney's restaurants, that Robin turned his attention to building energy-efficient homes. He had built his own residence two years before, based on solar-thermal principles, but it had been an expensive, time-consuming process that resulted in what his business partner Jamie Shelton describes as looking "a little like a spaceship." It was clear to Robin that if green



Green before his time, Architect/Builder Robin Woodward

homes were ever to become mainstream, the process would have to be simplified, the costs decreased, and the features adapted to more traditional home design.

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Robin's home in Fairview is far from a spaceship in looks, but the brick and stucco Tudor combines traditional style with innovative elements such as triple-pane windows, increased insulation and a unique polyethylene "tent" within the drywall; the "tent" provides the vapor barrier he had researched, dramatically reducing leakage of heated or cooled air in or out of the interior and thereby saving significant amounts of energy and fuel.

Still, Robin believes that some of the oldest methods such as southern-facing windows are the best. Conservation of materials remains an important consideration as well; the wood harvested from the property was used as much as possible in the

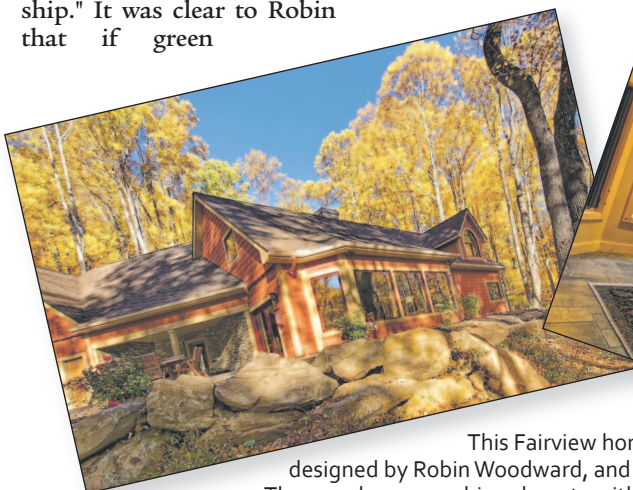
A typical 3,500 sf Blue Ridge Energy Systems house can be comfortably heated and cooled for under \$200 per year!

construction of his house.

And though one of his goals is to build "houses that will last 200 years," he also emphasizes the importance of comfort as well as function. When you sit and read a book beside the window, he says, you should feel warm and snug even in the depths of winter.

Karen, Robin's partners, his staff and his clients can all attest to the success of his efforts. In his house and in his designs, green is the color of comfort and hospitality.❖

For more information on Robin Woodward's design and construction methods visit blueridgeenergysystems.com.



This Fairview home was designed by Robin Woodward, and covers 2,500 square feet. The 2007 home combines beauty with sustainability, and features interior posts harvested on site, boulders supplied on site, and hickory cabinets.

This beautiful green, sustainable Asheville home, designed by Robin, was completed in 2010. It's 4,200 square feet in size and features a metal roof, 5,000 gallons of rainwater storage, and a geothermal heat pump.