

Dave Raftery – <http://sonomashanty.blogspot.com/>

Basic Stats:

- What is(are) your name(s)? **Dave Raftery**
- What do you do for a living? **Engineer**
- How many people do you/will be living in your tiny house? **2 to 3 adults for periods of 1 or 2 weeks at a time**
- What part of the country do you live in? – **Just outside of Boston, MA.**
- How many square feet is your house? – **Current backyard shed is 112 sq ft; future tiny house will be 160 sq ft**
- When did you start your build? – **July 2012**
- Is your house complete? – **Will be complete by November 2012**
- Have you been documenting your tiny house build and if so, where can people find that information? – **Yes: <http://sonomashanty.blogspot.com/>**

Background:

- Why did you decide to build?

I have always dreamed of having a little cottage in northern New England. After land, one of the largest expenses is putting in a septic system and building permits will not be issued without an approved septic system. I saw a picture of a tiny house on a trailer in January of 2012. This seemed like the perfect way to achieve my dreams of a little place in the woods. I haven't found land to purchase yet, but hope to purchase some over the next year or two. I also am planning to build a sailboat in my garage, and need a place to store what is currently in the garage. I decided to build a garden storage shed to a tiny house design for this and also to get some practice building a tiny house and find out what works and doesn't work. The shed I am building a 8' x 14' shed. In the future I plan to build a 8 x 20 tiny house on a trailer.
- What was your life like before your tiny house? Were you fairly active, have you always had 'projects' going on? Were you fairly sedentary and looking for a change? Did you tend to work too much? (This question is an effort at trying to figure out WHO gravitates

to the tiny house lifestyle)

I tend to have a lot of projects and interests going on at the same time. In addition to building a boat and tiny house shed, I spend my time with aikido (martial art), ham radio, gardening, canoeing, doing homework with my daughter, etc. I like to try different things instead of becoming specialized in only one thing. I identify with the survivalist crowd and that is one reason why I want a self contained house in the woods.

- How did you come to hear about the movement, figure out it was right for you and and get started?

I believe my introduction was watching a video of Jay Shafer's tiny house. While I thought it was a little small, I liked the fact that it was self contained and moveable. I googled for other examples and discovered the active tiny house community. I decided to join that community in my own way by documenting my shed construction on my blog.

- What is/was your design inspiration?

My design concept is based on functionality and minimizing cost. I want my 'final' house to be well insulated and have plenty of window space. (I plan to build shutters to put over my windows when I am away from my tiny house for a length of time.)

Technical:

- How do/did you find the time to work on your house with a job, kid(s), relationships, AND building a house? Did you do anything special to keep the balance?

I've been working every weekend this summer building my shed. I also spent one week of my vacation building my shed. My usual weekend tasks such as gardening and cutting my lawn had to be moved to weekday nights after I got home from my full time job.

- Have you run into any problems with your local codes? How did you solve them?

My shed falls within the 200 sq ft local ordinance for 'temporary' structures. I plan to build my 'final' tiny house on a trailer, so it will be considered travel trailer. I will also be asking about local codes when I look for my land.

- Where did you get the tools that you use? Were they yours, borrowed, rented etc.?

I was lucky to already have all the tools that I used to build my shed.

- How long did (are you expecting) construction to take?

It has taken me 3 months, working weekends and one full week, to build my shed. This

includes siding, roofing, door and windows, trim and exterior painting. The inside is unfinished, since it is a shed! When I build my 'final' tiny house, I expect to spend 3 or 4 months working full time to build it.

- Have you/were you able to stay on schedule?

Yes, I have pretty much stayed on schedule. I wanted to have it finished before the cold weather arrives and I am going to make it.

- What is/was the most time consuming portion of your build?

Shingling the roof was the most time consuming part of my build. I don't like heights, so that didn't help. I also used ladders, so I was continually climbing up and down the ladders. Next time I plan to rent or build my own staging for shingling the roof. I was also working by myself most of the time, so this added to construction time.

- What is/was the most limiting factor for your build?

Well, I have been trying to build as cheaply as possible because this is a learning experience and is only a storage shed. My biggest mistake in this regard was using a single layer of T1-11 siding, instead of first putting up 1/2 ply sheathing and then following it with a moisture barrier and then the siding.

- Is your house on a trailer? If yes, how do you attach to the trailer? How do you move your tiny house? (Do you have a truck, do you hire it done?)

My shed is on concrete blocks. I plan to build my 'final' tiny house on a trailer. I am open to suggestions on how to secure the house to the trailer. I plan to rent a large pickup truck or U-Haul truck to move my tiny house. My current Jeep can only handle 5,000 lbs.

- Do you have accessory houses/dwellings that you use to supplement storage/working/living?

I will probably build a larger shed on my property in the woods, to store things like my boats, solar panel system and my generator.

- Where did you get your plans?

I purchased a set of Sonoma Shanty plans from Kent Griswold at <http://sonomashanty.com/plans/>

- Have you consulted any 'professionals'? (structural, mechanical, plumbing, design etc.)?

I have not needed to use any professionals for my shed. When I build my 'final' tiny house,

I will probably hire a plumber to hook up the propane gas lines for the stove and space heater.

- Are you insuring your house? With who?

I don't plan on insuring my 'final' tiny house. It will be vacant in the winter, but I don't plan on leaving much of value inside when I am not there, other than the solar panels. As I mentioned previously, I plan to install removable shutters on my tiny house, so I can lock them in place while I am away.

- Have you been using any sponsorships to help fund your house? How do you go about finding that sponsorship?

No I haven't, but this is an idea I will look into.

Specifics:

- What sort of items do you have for cooking?

I plan to install a 2 burner stove on the kitchen counter. I will also have a small barbecue grill outside my house. I plan to build an insulated ice chest and put it under the kitchen counter; the top of the box would form part of the counter space. I will build a drain into the bottom. Then I can put 2 large blocks of ice in the bottom and keep food refrigerated for 3 days at a time.

- Are you tied to the power grid or are you off grid?

My plan is to be totally off the grid and use solar power. This will give me more possibilities when looking for my land. I plan to wire the house for 12 volts only and use LED lighting fixtures. I plan to have one 120 volt AC outlet in the kitchen which will be wired to a male plug in a box on the outside of the house; this could be hooked up to a small generator if needed. I plan to experiment with a small solar system for my current shed and hook up a 12 volt light inside.

- Are you going to have a washer and/or dryer?

I'm not planning on having a washer and dryer. It will be a weekly trip to the laundromat for me.

- Where does your water come from?

I plan to have a small 10 to 20 gallon water storage tank inside my house, with a 12 volt

pump to pressurize it. I hope to collect rain water and purify it as well, but I haven't thought this through yet.

- What kind of toilet are you going to have?

I plan to use a 5 gallon bucket and sawdust. I'll construct a nice box for the bucket to sit inside. I hope to get a couple of those blue 30 gallon drums with removable tops, to compost the material inside. Neighbors will just think they are rain water barrels. I would prefer not to have an open compost pile.

- What do you use for a heat source if anything?

Initially I don't plan on installing a heater. If I use my tiny house a lot in the cold weather, I will probably install a Dickenson boat heater.

- What are some of the space savings tricks you used?

I haven't got here yet. In my 'final' tiny house, I plan to install one floor to ceiling closet for clothing storage, next to the bathroom wall. I want to keep the space between the kitchen and living area open, to increase the sense of space.

- What do you have for insulation?

I plan to use 3" of rigid, closed cell insulation in all walls, floor and ceiling.

- Where are you planning to park your tiny house?

During the build, I will look for space in an industrial area, close to home, where I can build my tiny house. (My neighborhood zoning law prevents having trailers and motor homes on my property.) Once built, I plan to tow my tiny house to the rural land that I purchase.

Personal:

- How much will/did your tiny house cost?

I will be aiming for a number between 10–12K.

- What is/was the most expensive part of your house?

Probably the Dickenson wall heater.

- 'Best' injury story (worst injury)?

Sunburn on my neck and upper back.

- What has been your biggest accomplishment with your tiny house?

We had a big windstorm a few weeks ago; my shed road it out just fine.

- What is/will be the biggest benefit to living in a tiny house?
Having my own house, fully paid for, where I can retreat to whenever I want. Also something to pass down to my children.
- Is there anything you'll miss about living in a standard house? What will you miss the most?
I will probably always keep a standard house for a 'base of operations'.
- What has been the scariest part about building your own house?
Working up on the roof.
- If you could change one thing about your house what would it be?
I would have used a layer of 1/2 sheathing underneath my exterior finish siding.
- Did you have cash in hand to complete your build, pay as you go or take out a loan to construct your house?
I had the money which I needed for my build.
- Have friends and family been skeptical or supportive of your ideas?
My wife has been very supportive. She wants to pretty up the shed when it is finished with flower boxes and a wreath on the door. One of my friends from aikido, came over with his nail gun and helped me put up all the sheathing in 3 hours.
- Is there anything else you would want other people to know about your house and build?
My 'final' tiny house will be 8 x 20 for a total of 160 sq ft. Anything smaller than that will probably not work for 2 or 3 people, to my way of thinking.
I purchased the Sonoma Shanty plans and followed them mainly because of the roof design. This roof does not use rafters or a ridge board. Instead 4 roof panels are assembled on the ground and then lifted into position. This approach worked well.