

## [Ben Hurst - Smallhomebiglife.blogspot.com](http://Smallhomebiglife.blogspot.com)

### **Basic Stats:**

- What is(are) your name(s)? **Ben Hurst**
- What do you do for a living? **Music teacher**
- How many people do you/will be living in your tiny house? **1 for now ;)**
- What part of the country do you live in? **Southeast Louisiana**
- How many square feet is your house? **160 plus 40 sq ft sleeping loft**
- When did you start your build? **December 2011**
- Is your house complete? **no**
- Have you been documenting your tiny house build and if so, where can people find that information? **Yes, [Smallhomebiglife.blogspot.com](http://Smallhomebiglife.blogspot.com)**

### **Background:**

- Why did you decide to build? **Tired of paying rent and I wanted to live off the grid.**
- What was your life like before your tiny house? **Have lived in small apartment, houses, FEMA trailer.** Were you fairly active, have you always had 'projects' going on? **Have been vegetable gardening, raising chickens, ducks, and rabbits. Aquaponics hobby.** Were you fairly sedentary and looking for a change? **I am usually fairly active.** Did you tend to work too much? **Worked the average work week. Can't complain really. Who gets to go to work and play guitar, piano, and drums all day!** (This question is an effort at trying to figure out WHO gravitates to the tiny house lifestyle)
- How did you come to hear about the movement, figure out it was right for you and and get started? **I saw Jay's Tumbleweed and I planned for two years trying to get started.**
- What is/was your design inspiration? **Efficiency, climate, necessity, simplicity, and beauty.**

### **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 don't start teaching until the afternoon so most mornings are spent working on the house and also every**

**Sunday I busted my butt! I would try to commit to a goal for each day and try to complete it. That was motivating enough for me. And I guess positive feedback from readers on my blog helped too.**

- **Have you run into any problems with your local codes? How did you solve them? Where we're going we don't need codes! (Back to the future reference). Seriously, I just got my trailer registered as a homemade utility trailer before I built anything on it and that's it. I live far enough out in the middle of nowhere to not worry too much.**
- **Where did you get the tools that you use? Were they yours, borrowed, rented etc.? I had some standard tools like a skill saw, drill, and hammer. My dad has the big stuff like welding gear, ladders, reciprocal saw. I also borrowed a miter saw, jigsaw, and table saw from a friend.**
- **How long did (are you expecting) construction to take? I thought I would be done by now but pushing back to hopefully finish by the end of the year.**
- **Have you/were you able to stay on schedule? I did hit my goal of having the house basically livable by the beginning of September. But thought by October I would be done but that didn't happen.**
- **What is/was the most time consuming portion of your build? The exterior metal sheathing was hard to do by myself. It took one solid month. Mostly due to extreme amounts of rain.**
- **What is/was the most limiting factor for your build? Not enough money to do everything quickly and needing a helping hand would have been nice. I did get help on occasion but most of the time I was on my own. But it is very satisfying to complete a project that you did completely solo. Especially, when you thought it was going to be impossible! Where there's a will there's a way!**
- **Is your house on a trailer? Yes. If yes, how do you attach to the trailer? The floor joists are inside the frame of the trailer and I bolted and screwed the floor sheathing to the floor joists. And the bottom plate for the walls are bolted to the frame. How do you move your tiny house? (Do you have a truck, do you hire it done?) I have a truck F250.**
- **Do you have accessory houses/dwellings that you use to supplement storage/working/living? I have a 10x20 storage unit that I rent for now until I finish getting rid of or selling the rest of my things from my old house. I also inherited a small storage shed that I keep tools**

**and wood in.**

- Where did you get your plans? **I designed it myself. With a general idea of what I wanted with a design as you go mentality.**
- Have you consulted any 'professionals'? (structural, mechanical, plumbing, design etc.)? **My dad helped me with designing and building the trailer. He also helped with the electric wiring. Other friends that have general building experience have given ideas and guidance. Not to mention people who I buy material from for the house. I can't tell how many times employees at Lowes and Home Depot or other lumber or hardware stores have helped me when I wasn't exactly sure how to do something. When I would tell them my story about what I was doing they would become extremely interested and brainstorm with me about how to get what I wanted. This house is truly an adventure!**
- Are you insuring your house? With who? **No. not yet anyway. Don't even know if I can.**
- Have you been using any sponsorships to help fund your house? How do you go about finding that sponsorship? **no**

***Specifics:***

- What sort of items do you have for cooking? **Propane Camp Chef oven/stove/grill. I cook on my front porch(outdoor kitchen). And that thing is awesome and very efficient!**
- Are you tied to the power grid or are you off grid? **I am tied for now by a 15 amp extension cord to a friend's house. Eventually it will be all powered by solar.**
- Are you going to have a washer and/or dryer? **I have been hand washing in a wash tub and hang drying on a clothesline. But now that it is a little colder outside I have gone to the Laundromat. I do want to build a bike powered washer eventually and solar powered if possible.**
- Where does your water come from? **There is a well on the property**
- What kind of toilet are you going to have? **Sawdust toilet. And If I don't like that I will have to break down and buy one of the sunmar composting toilets. Right now sawdust toilet is outside. Not brave enough to bring it in yet 😊**
- What do you use for a heat source if anything? **I have one heat source for now. It is an infrared ceramic propane heater. Heats 200 sq. ft. Eventually I will have a small wood burning stove and a solar air heater for the daytime.**

- What are some of the space savings tricks you used? **Drawers in the stairs to the loft. Cabinets in the back of the shower stall. Couch will be storage/bed/couch.**
- What do you have for insulation? **Flash and batt in the ceiling (1" rigid foam between rafters with can spray foam to seal the edges of the rigid foam boards then I put r13 fiberglass batts on top of that and taped it in). I used can spray foam to seal every seam I could find in the walls and then put r13 fiberglass in the walls. I wanted to spray foam the whole thing but it was going to break the bank. Debating on putting insulation under the house but in south Louisiana it could create moisture problems.**
- Where are you planning to park your tiny house? **On the same land I built it on just 100' away from where it is now.**

***Personal:***

- How much will/did your tiny house cost? **Hopefully not over 10k.**
- What is/was the most expensive part of your house? **Exterior siding. I got lots of stuff for free.**
- 'Best' injury story (worst injury)? **I have developed carpal tunnel, elbow pains, shoulder pains. And my dad had to get stitched when one of the walls fell on him (refer to blog for that story).**
- What has been your biggest accomplishment with your tiny house? **That I built the trailer from scratch!**
- What is/will be the biggest benefit to living in a tiny house? **Freedom from bills.**
- Is there anything you'll miss about living in a standard house? What will you miss the most? **I really miss having a bathtub to soak in after a long hard day of work. Maybe the toilet...we'll see! ☺**
- What has been the scariest part about building your own house? **Up high on a ladder trying not to kill myself.**
- If you could change one thing about your house what would it be? **I have figured a better way to do the walls with 4x4's, wire cables, and foam boards. That will have to wait for house number two!**
- Did you have cash in hand to complete your build, pay as you go or take out a loan to construct

your house? **Pay as I go with the occasional help from credit cards. Plus lots of free materials!**

- Have friends and family been skeptical or supportive of your ideas? **The usual response I get is whoah that's small or I could never live like that. But family and close friends are extremely supportive and very proud of me!**
- Is there anything else you would want other people to know about your house and build? **It is not for everyone, it can be dangerous, it is very hard work to do by yourself, get a truck, it is easier to work from pre-made plans, download a list of materials for an already designed and built tiny house and collect the items on the list before you start the build. Once you have all of the materials build the house as quickly as possible with as many friends that will help you. It will make the whole process so much easier and faster. If you don't I hope you are a very patient person who is willing to sacrifice standard comforts of living to get what you want.**

**Make sure you have planned for a place to put it or you could be told to move it, tear it down, fined. Or far enough out in the middle of nowhere where nobody cares or will not find out about.**

**You will want a shower. I don't know how some people have built tiny houses without a shower and go to the gym to just shower.**

**Depending on your location and situation you might have to sacrifice the flush toilet. I don't know how many discussions I have had with people about the toilet situation. I would say that is the biggest turnoff for most people. Most people just don't understand the concept of a sawdust or composting toilet.**

**Don't make shortcuts. Follow standard building codes. It's just easier. Everything you buy at a big box store is designed to be used with standard building codes. Trust me. Or you will rack your brain to try and figure out a problem when you get to it and say, 'Oh. I shouldn't have done it that way.' Whatever 'it' is. I like a challenge but it can be very frustrating!**

**Have fun and try and influence people to be aware of how they live. Don't make them feel guilty, just lead by example. Starting a blog has really helped me get the word out to friends. They are able to get an idea of what I am doing plus it starts something stirring in their minds about what they can do to change something in their life. Whether that is**

**building their own tiny house or starting a garden, to collecting rainwater. Just try to get them thinking so we can make a change in this crazy world! Well, at least that is what I am trying to do!**