

Jon Ahrens – www.livingtiny-thepod.blogspot.com

Basic Stats:

- What is (are) your name(s)?
 - Jon Michael Ahrens
- What do you do for a living?
 - Management consulting for telematics products (automotive products that monitor driving behavior)
- How many people do you/will be living in your tiny house? What part of the country do you live in?
 - Currently myself and maybe a girlfriend and a dog or cat
 - Northern California east of San Francisco about 30 miles
- How many square feet is your house?
 - Interior space of ~200 square feet, with livable space of 168 square feet
- When did you start your build?
 - Dreaming in 2011, trailer acquisition 2012, finished November 26, 2014
- Is your house complete?
 - Yes, however, I'm always tweaking things
- Have you been documenting your tiny house build and if so, where can people find that information?
 - My blog has that information: www.livingtiny-thepod.blogspot.com

Background:

- Why did you decide to build?

- I've been downsizing and simplifying my life for the past four years. I was first introduced to the tiny home living, and, although intrigued, I could not find what I wanted. So, I designed my own space using what I could find from others.
- 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)
 - Being a management consultant, I'm always on the go. And, when I return home, I spend a great deal of time outdoors (hiking, camping, sailing, and boating). Always worked with my hands, so building something to live in appealed to me
- How did you come to hear about the movement, figure out it was right for you and get started?
 - While surfing the internet about three years ago, I stumbled onto Tumbleweed houses, and from there, I found many other sites. The idea of a self-contained living unit, that is portable, that is made out of natural elements and represents me, inspired me.
- What is/was your design inspiration?
 - Anything nautical and made with wood

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?
 - It was very difficult since my consulting took me all over the country. So weekends, holidays, any time I could squeeze was spent on designing, acquiring and piecing the home together.
- Have you run into any problems with your local codes? How did you solve them?

- Nothing significant; had both a certified electrician and plumber review the finished solutions, and made minor adjustments. Both provided letters of certification for insurance purposes. I have had no engagement with city or county housing authorities (maybe I just jinxed myself!)
- Where did you get the tools that you use? Were they yours, borrowed, rented etc.?
 - I had the basics; I borrowed, bought used and rented the heavy stuff
- How long did (are you expecting) construction to take?
 - A little over eighteen months; I planned on twelve however my consulting business plus family life took away time.
- Have you/were you able to stay on schedule?
 - I had a schedule, and as it lengthened, I readjusted knowing it would eventually be finished
- What is/was the most time consuming portion of your build?
 - Taking design and turning it into reality. Such as the kitchen; I spent a month laying out on the floor the design for a four burner stove / oven and refrigerator and cabinetry plus an apron sink. Working to find every ½ inch of space and using it productively.
- What is/was the most limiting factor for your build?
 - Money; I had a budget of \$25,000 for everything (that included food, wine and beer for friends who helped!).
- 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 tiny home is on a twin-axle trailer, 28' by 8'. I used SIP (structural insulated panels) for the walls and ceilings bolted and cross-tied at all four corners and every three feet. I own a Ford F-250 Super Duty diesel truck that is rated to pull up to 22,000. The

truck weighs 7,000 pounds and my tiny home is just over 10,000 pounds.

- Do you have accessory houses/dwellings that you use to supplement storage/working/living?
 - I have a small 5x5x10 storage unit that has boxes of mementos, etc.
- Where did you get your plans?
 - Copied from whatever I could find online
- Have you consulted any 'professionals'? (Structural, mechanical, plumbing, design etc.)?
 - Electrical and plumbing experts and a general contractor reviewed and approved the plans.
- Are you insuring your house? With who?
 - I'm insured through Lloyds of London for both the tiny home and truck. I use Darrell Grenz out of Portland, OR. He was recommended by Macy Miller
- Have you been using any sponsorships to help fund your house? How do you go about finding that sponsorship?
 - I never acquired any, and I never sought any. Might have been useful

Specifics:

- What sort of items do you have for cooking?
 - Four burner propane stove and oven made by Summit, 24" by 30"
- Are you tied to the power grid or are you off grid?
 - Linked via a 30 amp connection. Doing research on building a portable three panel solar array, with three-four gel batteries, and cabling to an inverter connected to my fuse panel
- Are you going to have a washer and/or dryer?

- No, did not want the extra weight
- Where does your water come from?
 - Currently connected via BPA-free hose to water. I have an additional 40 gallon RV plastic container for backup
- What kind of toilet are you going to have?
 - I have a Separatta composting toilet which works wonderfully well.
- What do you use for a heat source if anything?
 - Dickinson 9000 marine heater which is more than adequate (although it never drops below 35 here in Northern California)
- What are some of the space savings tricks you used?
 - Elevated bed with storage underneath and tonsu stairs which incorporate drawers within each step. See the blog to understand how they are used.
- What do you have for insulation?
 - Solid foam insulation in the floor, SIP construction panels and 3 5/8" insulation within the panels
- Where are you planning to park your tiny house?
 - Currently in a modest, pleasant marina and RV park on the Sacramento River. Will move next year to something closer to the Pacific Ocean in Sonoma or Mendocino country. Looking for land in Oregon and Washington state.

Personal:

- How much will/did your tiny house cost?
 - Just over \$25,000, not counting free labor
- What is/was the most expensive part of your house?
 - My natural latex mattress, at \$2,200
- 'Best' injury story (worst injury)?

- No physical injuries, just the indignities of having to redo, several times, the routing of electrical and plumbing within SIP walls.
- What has been your biggest accomplishment with your tiny house?
 - Proving to the naysayers that it can be built and successfully lived in
- What is/will be the biggest benefit to living in a tiny house?
 - Absolutely no debt.
- Is there anything you'll miss about living in a standard house? What will you miss the most?
 - I will not miss anything; I have downsized from 3500 to 2200 to 1400 to 300 and now 168. It's perfect.
- What has been the scariest part about building your own house?
 - There were times I was not sure I would finish, that it would actually come together as I planned. I just persevered and pushed through to the end.
- If you could change one thing about your house what would it be?
 - I would have opted for electric heat. From my blog you can see the amount of room taken by the marine propane heater.
- 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 cash in hand, and used it sparingly
- Have friends and family been skeptical or supportive of your ideas?
 - They covered all the spectrum, and they are all quite surprised at the end result
- Is there anything else you would want other people to know about your house and build?
 - Have belief in yourself, be patient, keep steadily working towards the end state and be positive.