I was born and then we built the domes

So, what did you do after that, Ron?

Wait, back up a step. In 1966 I was teaching engineering at San José State to dodge the draft, when Bucky Fuller came for two months as a visiting scholar, lecturing in the very course I was co-teaching, “Cybernation and Man.” He said, “We need to save our oil for a rainy day,” and learn to do a lot more with a lot less – so that everybody would have enough. That settled it. Since then, my mission has been to do my part to reduce humanity’s use of fossil fuels. And now, it’s getting serious. Humanity is at a tipping point. But I digress…

Then one day in 1971 I got a letter from Herb Koplowitz at the Housing Office.

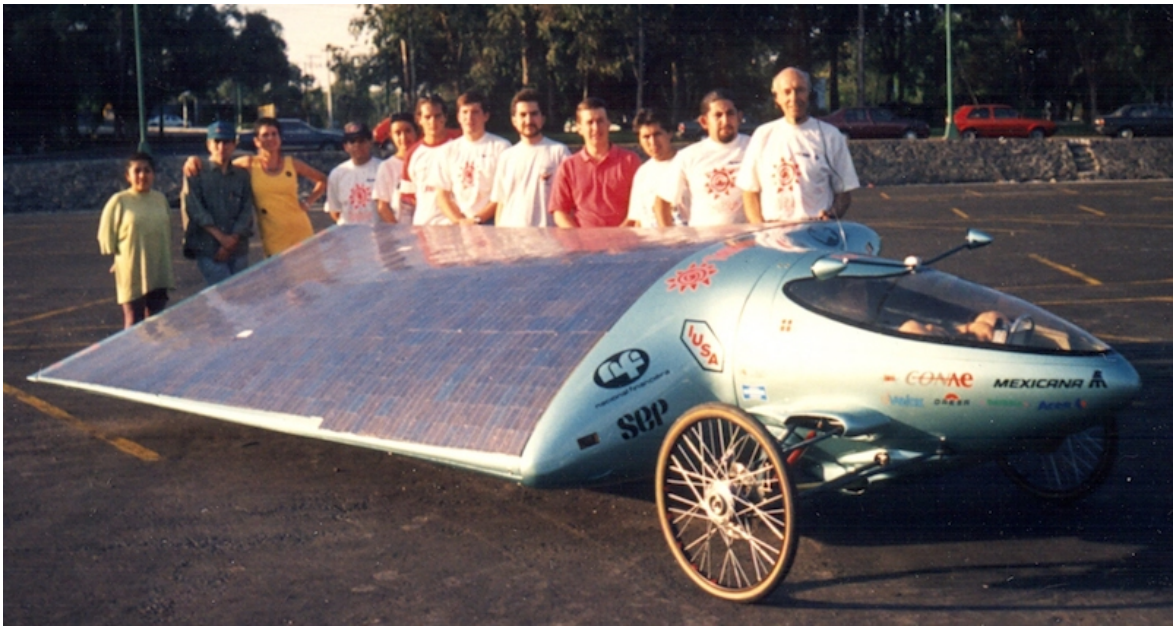
After John Hernikl and I came up with a design and some drawings to show the University what the domes might look like (under the minuscule contract I got from the housing office), I showed those very drawings to Jerry Nelson, who was inspired to hire us to build a small vacation home for his family up in the Santa Cruz mountains. John Hernikl did the drawings, Moe Marker and I (affectionately, the "Moe-Ron Construction Company") built the foundations, floors and interior walls, while John Nolan with Rich Ellingboe, Jay Bondesen, and Larry Brungess did the foam and fiberglass work. Seeing the results, the housing office folks gained confidence that we could pull it off. And of course, Rich and Jay joined us when we got rolling on the domes.

Fast forward from there, after Luis and I left the rest of the gang to carry on in the rain and mud, Moe and I went to work again on more experiments with building techniques for a few months. Within a year or so, Dave, Lew, I got together and started Banyon Homes. We developed a modular design for housing, built some small prototypes, and then did a house which to this day looks south over the Saratoga Country Club. We had lined up some spooky investors which got to be a bit strange, so in due course we tip-toed out the door from all that.

A couple years later, while looking into doing a real estate development in Santa Cruz, I met my once and future wife, who joined us at our 5th reunion. I worked in those days with John Nolan doing practical things like roofing on buildings. And so, I came with my son Brendan and John came with his daughter Laurel and son Luke to our 10th reunion.

Around that time, I converted an electric adult trike into a solar tricycle, mostly to prove that it was possible to use solar energy for transportation. That simple test was a seed for things to come.
During the Reagan years, no one gave the time of day to solar, so I went into the computer business.
(Coincidentally, I'm still working with my buddy Kal who started that business with me years ago. Now, we're developing solar homes in Montana and Santa Cruz.)

After a few years of matrimonial bliss, I was out on my own again. Then one day in January, 1992 (domes + 20), I got a call from Beatriz in Mexico. Within a few weeks I found myself in Mexico City for the first time, and wound up again working with university students, this time building a solar race car, Tonatiuh!



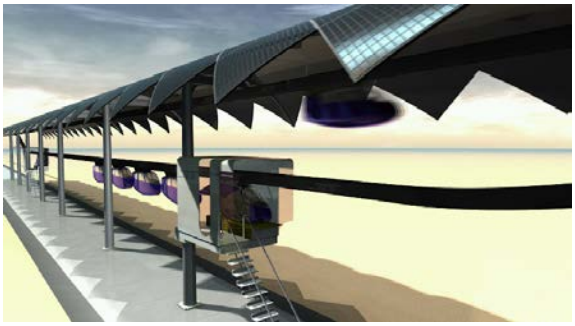
I did a training workshop down in Mexico in 2018, connected again with the gang, and as fate would have it, Jorge, the guy in the white T-shirt next to Beatriz in the bright yellow dress, has been working with me again for the last 3 years.

In 2000 an associate of mine and I traipsed off to Bolivia and I did it again. We recruited 3 high school students in the big city, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, and headed off to a remote village in the

Amazon to install a solar system and a small "internet cafe" for a school about 50 miles from the border with Brazil.

That project led us to the Galapagos Islands, where we built solar systems and ran an energy conservation project in the secondary schools. Back home I did a few commercial solar projects.

One day in 2006 I finally figured out how to build a practical solar transportation system, which I had a chance to prototype — after a fashion — in 2011 for Plantronics here in Santa Cruz…



…. and then, in 2012 — surprise — I started working with students again, this time with Buff Furman, a very dedicated professor of Mechanical Engineering at San José State.

After 10 years at this daunting task, we're getting traction mostly in countries where people are paying attention to climate change, where transportation infrastructure is sorely lacking, and energy resources are often hard to come by. Stay tuned and …

Go solar!!