

**Sound Retirement Radio**.COM  
**KKOL 1300am, Saturdays 8AM**  
**HOSTED BY JASON PARKER**



**029 Starting a Business in Retirement featuring NK Metal Recycling,  
Monica's Waterfront Bakery & Sunergy Systems**

- Speaker 1: Welcome back America to Sound Retirement Radio where we bring you concepts, ideas and strategies designed to help you achieve clarity, confidence and freedom as you prepare for and transition through retirement. And know here is your host Jason Parker.
- Jason: Seattle, Tacoma, Olympia, Gig Harbor, all the good people right here in Kitsap County welcome back to another round of Sound Retirement Radio. I sure appreciate you tuning in. For those of you listening via Podcast or listening online around the country, thank you so much for making this little program one of the top resources on iTunes under the topic of retirement. That's been a real honor and a real treat. I'm excited about today's interview so I want to get started right away. In fact we have three interviews lined up for you. Let me tell you a little bit about why we're doing this as we kind of get started. Retirement means different things to different people. Some people they can't wait to retire because they want to spend their time fishing. They want to spend their time golfing. They want to spend their time traveling. For other people though they're really looking forward to this idea of having more control over their time and really doing what they are passionate about. For some people that means starting a business. One of the things we need to recognize that makes America incredible is small business owners. I was reading on the Small Business Administration's website that 54% or let's see the 23 million small business in America account for 54% of all U.S. sales and the small business sector in America occupies 30-50% of all commercial real estate. The 600,000 plus franchise small businesses account for 40% of all retail sales and provide jobs for some 8 million people. For some people in retirement it's about starting a business. Business people in communities are leaders and I've had the opportunity to meet some amazing people here. What I want to do is just highlight their story, kind of tell you where they started, how they got to where they are and what they're doing now. This morning's program I want to highlight first North Kitsap Metal Recycling, it's a business that Dennis and Beth Kommer started up in Kingston, Washington and today I have Beth Kommer on the program. Beth, welcome to Sound Retirement Radio.
- Beth: Thank you.
- Jason: I've really enjoyed getting to know you guys over the years. I don't know if you know this Beth but I met your husband before you guys actually started your business officially and started occupying space. He came by, we were doing a garage sale and he came by. I had an old lawnmower and he

was doing his metal recycling and he just said hey can I take this off your hands and I said absolutely. That's when I first met him but I know since then things have really been going great for you guys. Would take a quick minute and tell your story, how you guys got started and where you're at now?

Beth: We started the metal recycling out of necessity. It was back around 2009 when Dennis and I were both losing hours. Dennis went on partial unemployment and that just gradually led to us not having enough money to pay our mortgage and support our family. Dennis started with his truck and trailer outside the transfer stations and people would drop off the metal and keep it out of the landfills. Gradually he was outgrowing that and we just started leasing space right next to the landfill. That was [03:47 inaudible] property there. Bob gave us our start and now we have purchased property just three lots up from where we used to be so that we can do more things for our community and to kind of be diversified and support our metal recycling. When we first started prices were so high it really helped a lot and now prices are lower so we need to do more.

Jason: I have to say every time I've-it's usually been your husband that I've talked to but I've always been inspired by the story. The fact that he was on partial unemployment, you guys were really struggling and instead of just sitting around complaining about it and not doing anything so many people do, you guys said hey here's an opportunity, people have metal that they're just throwing away, we can recycle this, we can turn it into a business and some of the most successful people in the world have started out in businesses doing recycling. I'm really excited to see where this is going to take you guys but I'm also so grateful because in our community I do want to recycle things we're not using anymore so share a little bit more about how you guys are actually benefiting the community and how all these different recycling programs that you have going now.

Beth: We keep the metal out of the transfer stations. That helps lower the cost that people have to pay to get rid of their garbage. By recycling it's helping the environment but it's helping everybody in the community save money. The transfer stations they don't want the metal in their bins. They want it to be recycled also. That's one of the ways that we're helping economically for this community. We also have an area that we have kind of unique items that have been brought in and if they have any use left to them we put them in our for sale area and we offer those to the community at a discounted price.

Jason: What would be an example of these unique items?

Beth: Sometimes we get in some different types of tools that there will be a move or an estate sale and these would be tools that are still in really good shape but the people who are dropping them off no longer have use for them. That even goes towards-you were talking about the lawnmowers and there are several people that come in on a regular basis that check out our lawnmowers and all of our small engine items and they will fix them up and then sell them to people in the community.

Jason: Beth I want to just back up for just a quick minute because again I'm always inspired by the story. You guys were on partial unemployment, your hours were being cut back, you were in a position where you needed to pay your mortgage and support your family so you had to start the business. How did you even realize that there was an opportunity to make money from recycling metal?

Beth: It's really funny. Not a lot of people know this but this is probably back in 2006, we were just getting really frustrated. Every time that we would go to the transfer station we would see people throwing metal into the bins. One day we were driving out we're thinking, the lot where we ended up leasing from Bob Whitworth, he hadn't bought it yet and we said we should buy that property and do metal recycling. That was like three years before we did it.

Jason: Is that right?

Beth: Yeah, we'd been thinking about it and that's just kind of where we are.

Jason: You have that entrepreneurial spirit in you that says hey you can't see opportunities where other people see waste. You know they're just throwing something away, you guys see an opportunity and turn it into a business and I just think that is awesome. It's awesome because it gives you an opportunity to create jobs in our community, support your family and provide real value to the people that live here, especially right here in Kitsap County. Now you started with metal recycling, one of the things I was surprised about, you know I had an old car battery that I had to get rid of, you guys actually purchased that from me, an old car battery. But what are some of the other things you guys are recycling today besides just metal? You mentioned have some tools that come in and sometimes you'll have those that you can just resell. What are some other things that you're doing up there?

Beth: One of things that we started after we purchased this property was being and E-Cycle collector for the state of Washington. That means that we can now take TVs, computer monitors, computers, laptops and it's free of charge and it's right here at our metal recycling facility. It's easy to drop off your metal items and then your e-cycle.

Jason: What do you guys do with them? Somebody brings in an old TV, an old computer, do you guys tear it apart and take pieces out? How does that work for you?

Beth: We are just like the transfer station. We just collect the items, we put them on pallets and when we have 10 pallets we call a freight company. They take the items to a processor in Washington State and the jobs stay in Washington State. They take everything apart, they recycle about 98% of the e-cycle items and the other 2% goes to the landfill.

Jason: 98% you guys are able to recapture and reuse on these old computers and TVs and things?

Beth: Yeah.

Jason: That's amazing.

Beth: The program, people think that because we're an authorized e-cycle collector through the state that it's funded through the state but it's not. It's through the manufacturers of the electronics. It's their responsibility to pay for it and to make sure that these items get recycled.

Jason: Is that right? That's interesting, that's great. So we're not putting more of a burden on state resources. So we do have something in place then that requires manufacturers of electronics to have some kind of plan in place to help recycle those items. That's interesting.

Beth: Right.

Jason: What else are you guys doing? You've got the e-cycle business, you've got the metal recycling, you've got the tools. What else are doing out there?

Beth: We just recently started selling new steel for welders and fabricators. We have a stock that we keep on hand and then we also do special orders once a week.

Jason: Wow. That's incredible. So now not only are you recycling metal but you've got new metal coming in so people that are needing the resource you guys are a storefront for them.

This has to of been-I mean starting a business is never easy. What are some of the hurdles or some of the challenges you guys have experienced as you've been going through this process?

Beth: We do everything ourselves. We have some help, we definitely have help but for the majority of what we're doing it's all Dennis and I doing this on our own. It's a financial struggle even though this is why we started it was to us help us financially it is still a struggle. It's in a different way because we're trying to get the business going and expanding. We keep saying that if you put in enough sweat equity it will be worth it.

Jason: Absolutely and what I'm hearing is you guys are innovating. If it was too easy you probably wouldn't be coming up with all these new programs and so because you do have to get out there, when you think about this business that you guys are running now and the sweat equity and all the hard work that you're putting into it and you compare it back to the time when you were just working as an employee for somebody else, would you say does this feel rewarding to be providing this kind of business and service in our community?

Beth: Definitely. We hear everyday people that are so happy that we're here being able to take the metal, that they didn't have any place to take it and I remember when we first started and we would have people come in and I would tell Dennis I'm meeting everybody in the community that I didn't even know. I knew they were there but they were coming into see us and talk to us and it just felt like now we belong.

Jason: When you think about your vision going forward, what does that look like for you guys? What do you ultimately hope to build here in Kitsap County?

Beth: We have a lot of plans for the future. There are materials that aren't recycled in Kitsap County. There's no place to recycle styrofoam. The plastic that a lot of these outdoor kids toys are made out of, like the slides and things like that, you can't recycle that. We want to be able to recycle those hard to recycle items. We want to give that to the community.

Jason: That's awesome.

Beth: We also want to be able to do what's called zero waste. It's huge, it's involving the entire community and eventually you end up not using a landfill at all. That every single item, every product is used by you, your neighbor, by somebody. It's just this huge network and that's really long-term. That's way out there.

Jason: Now what about this thing with bikes that you guys are doing?

Beth: Bicycles for humanity we started donating bicycles several years ago. It's a program that takes usable bikes, they don't fix them, they put them in a cargo container about 4-500 hundred bikes and they ship them to South Africa to these villages that have no transportation at all. Those bikes are used to take medical supplies to the villages. They can transport patients to a hospital. Kids can go to school. They have to have a bike to go to school. Those bikes, people when they bring them in I tell them that, that bike will save a life in one way or another. It feels good, it's just a very rewarding program.

Jason: That is awesome. Boy you guys are doing so much good in so many ways and I am thankful for the work that you guys do, very grateful. We're just about out of time but I want you to tell our listeners how they can learn more about you if you have a website. Then also if you have just one word of advice for people that are thinking about starting a business, maybe you could share that with us also.

Beth: Yes we do have a website. It's [www.nkmetal.com](http://www.nkmetal.com) and we also have email [info@nkmetal.com](mailto:info@nkmetal.com). We're on Facebook and the advice I can give anybody that wanted to start a business is research it as much as possible. Find out not just about what you want to do but also about running a business and that's the hard part of it.

Jason: Very good. So folks if you're just tuning in to the last part of this program it's going to archived online. You can listen at [soundretirementradio.com](http://soundretirementradio.com). I've been speaking with Beth Kommer she is one of the owners, founders of North Kitsap Metal Recycling. Beth thank you so much for being a guest on Sound Retirement Radio and sharing your story.

Beth: Thank you.

Jason: Alright, take care and keep up the good work.

Beth: Thanks.

Jason: Seattle, Tacoma, Olympia, Gig Harbor, all the good people here in Kitsap County, welcome back to another round of Sound Retirement Radio. This is kind of a fun format, different interview that we're doing today. I'm inspired by some of the business people in the community, other people that I get to meet that are serving folks right here in Kitsap County. I also know that a lot of times when people are thinking about retirement one of the things they're considering is maybe starting a business so I thought it would be interesting to bring some different business people with different perspectives onto the program to talk about their experience with business. Today I have one of my favorite people in the entire world on the program with us. Monica Downen is the president and owner of Monica's Waterfront Bakery and Café right here in Old Town Silverdale. I eat lunch there almost every single day. She and her husband formed or started the business several years ago but I want her to tell the story. Monica, welcome to Sound Retirement Radio.

Monica: Hi Jason, thank you.

Jason: Monica first of all before you tell your story about how you guys got started just go ahead and share with our listeners the work that you guys are doing currently, what your business is.

Monica: We're technically considered a quick service restaurant and I say we're quick serve with a fine dining attitude. We make everything from scratch in the morning from the pastries and bread and quiche all the way to day's soups, salads and dressings and slice our meat for our sandwiches and we get pretty creative too. We also do coffee service and then full catering.

Jason: Yeah it's awesome, awesome. Let me tell you folks if you are listening to this program and you have not had a chance to eat at Monica's next time you're coming through Silverdale it should definitely be on your list of places to experience. It definitely is an experience. Monica tell us how did this all get started? How did you and Mark come to start Monica's Waterfront Bakery?

Monica: My last job was what I thought was going to be my career and I ended up feeling the need to get away from it and I so I cashed out to see what could happen. Since I cooked for stress relief all of my friends of course said that I should open a restaurant. I knew it wasn't quite that simple so I started doing appreciative interviews of women who owned restaurants that I admired and began a learning process and eventually connected with a woman who owned a café that was in the same space that mine is in. It's similar in some ways but we've taken it far beyond where she had it. I started learning from her and it all kind of came together organically. She didn't know she was going to sell her business when we met. Actually she didn't, we took over asset but she was ready to move on to something different and we were ready to take the plunge.

Jason: That's awesome. So for our listeners out there though I think people would be interested to know what kind of work were you and Mark doing before this opportunity presented itself? Before you decided to change careers?

Monica: I have a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and at that time I was working for King's County Sheriff's Office in the dispatch center, 911 calls and police dispatch. Mark had been in the Marine Corp and then when he got out his godfather hired him at his automotive mechanic station that he'd had since 1967 and Mark was a manager when he left and had actually planned to eventually own it someday.

Jason: That's huge. These are established careers what you went to school for and you guys just got up and walked away from a lot of opportunity and stuff that was working really well. Was there a point in your life where-I mean what was the point in your life where you guys both just decided hey we want to do something different? How did that come about?

Monica: I was starting to feel just a little bit too much to be an effective dispatcher and it's not a good thing to have emotion when you have emergency calls coming in. I just decided that I wanted to go towards the feelings instead continuing to shut them down so I needed a career change. Luckily I have the most supportive husband in the world and he supported me every step of the way. When I said I was quitting with no plan he supported me. When I said I wanted to start a restaurant he supported me and then when I said by the way it's much bigger than I ever imagined and I need your help he jumped in.

Jason: That's awesome.

Monica: He was scared but he jumped in.

Jason: That's awesome. Has it been a good decision for you guys? Are you glad that you made this choice to leave those established careers to go start this awesome café and bakery here in Silverdale?

Monica: We're extremely happy. Even on the scariest times and the worst days I'm happier for having made this decision. We have learned so much, we're definitely different and I think improved people and we love this community. We've become such a great part of it. It's really been a lot of fun.

Jason: I know from eating there just about every single day, am I the number one points holder there at Monica's or is there anybody ahead of me?

Monica: I don't actually know. I'd have to check. You're very close that's for sure.

Jason: For our listeners out there that don't know Monica's does have a points program so you get rewarded for eating there. As if the experience wasn't enough they actually give you these points and so I like to think of myself as a points collector. I'm just trying to eventually have a hostile takeover through points accumulation.

Monica: You're more of a hoarder than a collector.

Jason: So Monica I noticed you guys have this sign hanging on the wall in the bakery there, in the café that says best of Central Kitsap Awards best bakery first place 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013. I mean you guys are winning all kinds of awards but I know that one of the things you're really passionate about is community. Tells us a little bit about your purpose, what you hope, what your mission is and then share with our listeners some of the work that you're doing to try to build a stronger sense of community.

Monica: The overall purpose of our business is to inspire others. Our mission is to nourish our community through engaged relationships one customer at a time. These things are really important to us. When we started taking on and realizing the responsibility of a business, to me it was much more than just single bottom line of money. We do live our lives that way and I was smart enough know that the business was going to take over our lives so we couldn't have a separate block of principles than we do in our lives. I wanted to be the boss that I never had and always wanted and I succeed and fail at that every day. We wanted to source locally and promote other local businesses and really focus since we're a local independent really focus on others doing the same kind of thing and partner that way with the community. Somethings came up just because it's just what happens when you own a business. For instance, charitable giving. Everyday we are asked for donations of all different kinds from several groups. You can't just give everything away and you can't say yes to everyone unless you've got a really good program which we do. It took us a few years to figure it out and we actually borrowed the concept from Canlis in Seattle, the finest dining restaurant in the state. The program allows us to say yes to almost everyone. It's a matching program. Our focus is feeding, so if there's a program around feeding and hunger out there then we will donate to that with very few restrictions if any. But everybody else if they want a donation from us then they match it or we match what they want to purchase. So you can get one cake and pay price or two cakes for the price of one and pretty much everybody that was coming into contact with loved that and it helps us get out into the community even more.

Jason: That's awesome. You know Monica there's a lot of people out there that are thinking about when they retire maybe starting their own business and doing something that they're passionate about. Maybe in some cases they wanted their entire life to do. If you were going to be counseling or giving advice to people who are thinking about the next stage of their life, you know retirement's changed and a lot of people don't like this idea of just sitting around playing golf everyday. They want to be active, they want to be involved, they want to be engaged. What kind of recommendations or what kind of warnings would you give people before they venture out and start something?



Monica: I think one of the big ones for sure is that you can't base a business just because you're good at something. I found out the hard way and luckily I have an acumen for it but you have to be a good businessperson no matter what kind of business it is. Any cook can cook in any restaurant but not many cooks can run a restaurant. A lot of people who run businesses and are really successful at it aren't working in the business. They're spending more and more of their time working on the business. I think that's really important to know and to focus them on one thing or one set of things and be good at that. You can't please everybody no matter who you are, no matter what you do there's no way you will always please everyone. Find some things that you are good at, find some things that you enjoy and certainly make those the focus of your business and get those really well done. You can always expand but it's kind of more difficult to reduce your business once you've got it going.

Jason: That's great, those are great pointers. I have a question for you. In partly because I'm struggling with this a little bit, my book came out and we have all these positive reviews and I've had two people give less than positive reviews of the book and of course even though I have a lot of positive reviews out there for whatever reason I can't stop focusing on the two that were less than positive. In your business I mean you work so hard to not just make amazing food and serve people well and create a sense of community and I'm sure there are a lot of people out there that just say wonderful things about you guys but then every once in a while you probably come across somebody that gives you a negative review and in this world where we're all interconnected how do you deal with that?

Monica: It's my policy to address every review that we find every time we find it. Of course my favorite review is the one who comes to me and says that they had less than stellar experience so that I can address it instantly face to face. Every so called complaint is a gift. It can help us grow, it can help us learn and our customer service policy is not the customer is always right. It is the customer is nearly always worth retaining and those relationships are far more important than any one person being right or wrong. That's my preference but there are people who go on and post things online and do so more anonymously or at least not face to face and we still-my mentors have always said to address those things and so we do. I thank them for their time. If it's something that I feel like we really can remedy or explain then I try to do that. Not giving excuses because nobody's interested in excuses but to help them better understand what they experience sometimes and you have to move on. I would say 98% of the time I don't get a response from those people when I address it. So I don't know if it makes a difference or not but I keep doing it for some reason.

Jason: I just think if anybody wants to sit in my position and give the advice that we give and take responsibility for those recommendations, anybody can be a critic but there aren't very many of us that are willing to stand behind what it is we believe in. What's been your greatest joy in going down this adventure, this business that you and Mark started? What's been the best part?

Monica: That's a very difficult question to answer. I think it would have to be the sense of community. The support and loyalty around here has been overwhelming and really wonderful. We had applied for a sort of a grant recently and had to give a presentation at the conference center over in Bremerton and there were five businesses giving presentations and I would say that 90% of the audience was there to support us, only us. It was incredibly touching. That's got to be the biggest joy.

Jason: That's awesome. Monica for our listeners out there that have not had the opportunity to have the Monica's Waterfront Bakery and Café experience, how can they learn more about you guys?

Monica: We have a website, monिकासafe.com and we have a Facebook page of course. We have Twitter, we have Instagram and we're working to grow those things all the time as well as Pinterest. The best information is our website and our Facebook page.

Jason: Awesome. Monica thanks for taking time out of your busy schedule to be a guest on Sound Retirement Radio. Keep up the great work.

Monica: Thanks a lot Jason, have a good day.

Jason: Alright, take care. We'll be right back folks. Seattle, Tacoma, Olympia, Gig Harbor, welcome back to another round of Sound Retirement Radio. This is Jason Parker your host. This has been kind of a fun radio session that we've been doing. We've been featuring local businesses for a number of reasons. Number one a lot of people tell me when they want to retire they're thinking about maybe starting a business, contributing back to communities in some way that adds value to people's lives. That's a cool thing. This final guest that I have for our program today I think you're really going to enjoy this. One of the things I love about the work that I do right here in Silverdale, Washington and really we have this amazing opportunity to contact with people all around the country now too, but I love when people come into my office. I get to sit down with them, I get to hear their story and I get to hear what it is they're doing in their lives and the things that they're excited about. That's really how this next guest is becoming a guest of the radio show. His name is Greg Williams. He is a senior solar design consultant with Sunergy Systems. I have some folks that came into the office and they were saying Jason we installed this solar system, we're just so happy with it. They were telling me about all the benefits so I thought heck there's probably a lot more people right here in our own community probably people around the country that are interested in solar power. I know I'm fascinated by it so we have Greg Williams on the program with us. Greg, welcome to Sound Retirement Radio.

Gregory: Thank you Jason. I appreciate the time.

Jason: Yeah. I know that one of the most exciting things about solar right now are some of the incentives that are being offered as well as the cost of these programs. I was hoping-I want to get into the nuts and bolts of solar and how it works and is it viable for here in the Northwest. Could you start off talking about the incentives that are available and we'll go from there?

Gregory: Right now Jason the state and federal incentives for solar energy are pretty amazing. Some of the best in the nation actually. We have a 30% federal tax credit which a lot of people know about. That's throughout the nation. That's for solar water heaters and solar power systems or solar electricity, solar voltaic. We also have no sales tax in the state of Washington. You buy a solar energy system up to 10kw which is a big incentive for residential. Then the other incentive which really drives these systems quite a bit financially is the Washington State Production Incentive. That's where a solar energy system gets installed and the amount of kilowatt hours that are produced each year get paid for by the local utility. They basically pay a certain amount of money for every single kilowatt hour that is generated. no matter how it's consumed, it's every kilowatt hour that's generated is a kilowatt hour that the utility does not have to produce so they're going to provide an incentive for that. That's the state production incentive and it really emphasizes solar energy systems that are manufactured in the state of Washington. We have two manufacturers in this state. The incentive program is really driving our customers to install the largest solar energy system that can efficiently be placed on the roof. Typically we install on the south side of the roof so most people want to just fill up the entire [36:31 inaudible]

Jason: That's fascinating. You know you're cutting out a little bit there. I hope our listeners are able to stick with you as we're recording because this is such a great topic. There's incentives, there's tax incentives. Now how long do they have to capture some of these incentives? Are they going to be around forever?

Gregory: There are different incentives that have different life spans. The federal tax credit is on the books until 2016 so we have a couple more years left on that. It actually has been extended three times so we actually-there's a good chance it might get extended again. The federal tax credit is pretty cool because if you don't use it all up the first year again it can carry forward to the next tax year. The production incentive which is the biggest dollar figure that expires in the year 2020, June of 2020. We still have like 5-1/2 years left in that program. It's pretty special. That is what is making these solar energy systems being very, very cost effective.

Jason: This gentleman when he came in the person that I'm referring to you, he came in he was telling me all about this solar system that he had put in and how happy he has been and how low his energy bill has been. In fact I think in most months he was saying he didn't even have an energy bill but let's talk about the nuts and bolts of this. Obviously it's viable for this particular client right here in Kitsap County, he was sharing me a pretty amazing story. I guess the concern we have in the Northwest is we don't have enough sunshine to really make solar work like the folks down in California or Arizona. Take a minute and tell us about that.

Gregory: Jason solar energy systems work on light energy [38:22 inaudible]. It's interesting actually how well they do work on an overcast day. When you have an overcast day the light's not coming from one point, the big golden object up in the sky. It's coming from all over the sky dome. It's basically hitting from all different directions. What happens is even on an overcast day you still get a significant amount of sunshine energy coming out of your panels. The solar panels are very sensitive. It's amazing how early [38:54 inaudible] kick on and start working.

Jason: What could people expect? What does the average home owner experience when they install solar in their home from an energy standpoint, from a cost standpoint? What usually happens to their energy bill?

Gregory: What is interesting to look at is both the dollars that the power bill represents as well as the kilowatt hours on that power bill. What we see quite often is the home, three bedroom, two bath, a family of four, whatever, quite often the [39:32 inaudible] in that house will support approximately a third to a half of the kilowatt hours [39:40 inaudible] consumed in that house. We can make those up by the solar energy system. I'm talking about an average throughout the year not the dead of winter or the bright part of summer. It can have an annual average of somewhere between a third to a half to 2/3, something like that of the customer's power bill. However, what's interesting is that because the incentive program is there [40:04 inaudible] more per kilowatt than what we pay the utilities for our kilowatt hours. That means that quite often a modest size solar energy system can have a [40:19 inaudible] annual power bill or positive cash flow. It's very interesting the way that works. I have customers that are on a modest sized system [40:32 inaudible] more than covering the monthly payments for the solar energy system.

Jason: Is that right? Yeah, that's kind of the story that I was hearing. But that has to do with the incentives that they're currently receiving from the energy company. So it's possible that by the time 2020 rolls around if you're not getting those incentives anymore it may not pay you to have solar but the hope would be that those solar systems would still be helping to offset half of the kilowatts being used. Is that accurate?

Gregory: Well the solar [41:04 inaudible] the typical ones are actually any of the energy systems we'll install have a 25 year limited power output warranty. They're going to last for quite some time. In fact the three oldest panels that I have at my place in Polesville were built in the early 70s, I looked at the serial numbers and those things are still cranking away every single day. That's 40 years ago and the things are still cranking away. The technology is pretty doggone mature. The technology is very, very reliable. Most of these systems have zero moving parts and we expect them to last 30, 40, 50 years. We don't really know what's going to cause them to quit working. The intent of this incentive program was to help subsidize the cost of these systems while they're expensive and kind of make it to the point

where hopefully it reaches a break even point when the program expires. I don't know if that's going to work. I mean we had some people with their crystal balls looking at but all we know is that power rates keep going up. How fast they go up is [42:16 inaudible] and the idea here is that get your system installed now while the incentives are out there and get a good quality system. Have it well installed by professionals and [42:29 inaudible] using that system for many decades to come.

Jason: I just find this whole conversation about solar fascinating. I think a lot of people love the idea of being off the grid if you will. Not necessarily having to be tied in and dependent on other sources. If you have the ability to generate all the energy you need for your own home, maybe you live on a well and so you get your water directly from the well source. A lot of people just love that idea being completely self-sufficient. Is that possible with solar? Is it possible to completely be self-sufficient, just using the solar?

Gregory: That's a good question [43:11 inaudible]. When I first started doing solar like 27 years ago my only customers were the off grid customers and the people that were living out in the hills and had no access to the utility. Those folks were putting in systems, solar electricity panels back then were very, very expensive. You might have six panels and that would be a [43:33 inaudible]. Nowadays the panels are so much more efficient and the grid connective, the utility grid connective systems are so efficient that we hardly ever do battery based systems anymore. Batteries are, I call them the bane of my existence, they're expensive, cumbersome, inefficient and you've got to be able to replace them pretty regular. I think that with all the electric car research that's going on batteries are going to improve quite a bit but unless a guy really needs to be electrically independent 24/7, he's got a very important refrigeration system or a radio station running out of his house or something, it really doesn't make a lot of sense to have these batteries. Because these cut down on the efficiency and increase the costs dramatically. We may do one or two battery based systems a year out of 3 or 400 installations.

Jason: What should people expect from a cost standpoint? How much do these systems cost to install?

Gregory: It varies a lot. It depends on the size of the house and the size of the power bill. When I do an analysis for a customer I look at two things. I look at the overhead imagery of the house on one of the online services so I can measure the square footage that I have. It's on the south side of the roof. I access whether we have any trees and stuff and of course I can't really firm those numbers up until I do a site visit and get up on the roof and make the measurements directly. I also look at the power bill. If a guy has a real low power bill then they don't need a huge system. Having said that the range seems to be lately in the \$17-\$40,000 and that's an installed number before they've taken their tax credit. When I quote a price it's before any incentives. The average price if you want to look at what might be the

average of all the projects we've done in the last few months, it's probably between \$25-\$30,000. Of course on a \$30,000 system you get a \$9,000 tax credit which is a pretty healthy discount on your taxes that year. We do have a local credit union, Puget Sound Cooperative Credit Union which works with us quite a bit. They have a very, very attractive solar energy financing program. Most of our installations, I'd say over half right now of our installations are financed and most people choose to put no money down and finance it for as long as possible to keep the payments as low as they can. The credit union will go out to 15 years which makes for a pretty reasonable monthly payment. Quite often what we find is that the monthly payment, if you add up the 12 payments, that amount is covered by the incentive program during the period of time this incentive program is in existence. It's a pretty attractive opportunity for people to get into. I basically say to people if you've got a south facing roof or even a west facing roof, that is unencumbered by trees and other buildings shading it and you have sunlight on that roof from around 10 o'clock in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon, you probably would qualify for a solar installation. We don't install systems on every house. There's only a certain limited number of solar panels that are available and so we make sure that the house qualifies by having a certain percentage solar access. That depends on the amount of tree shading as well as the orientation and the angle tilt of the roof.

Jason: Is there any cost for people to have you come out and do an analysis to see if it's viable?

Gregory: No I'm still doing free solar site surveys. If it's something that's a long distance away or a very, very cumbersome installation, sometimes I might charge for some design work or engineering work or something but 95% of the time all it costs is a couple hours of your time, the foresight to send me a power bill, answer some questions on a phone call and be willing to listen to me with an open mind.

Jason: For those of you just tuning in if you're just catching the last half of this program, I have Greg Williams on the program with Sunergy Systems and we've been talking about solar. The reason this came up is because I have a client who came in, he's been very happy and with his experience having installed solar on his home and so I thought there's probably other people right here in our community that would like to hear about it. I'm sure many of you around the country are also fascinated by this. I know that I personally think that it's amazing technology and I just love that we have access and it's a resource and we can plug into it right now. Greg Williams if you would be so kind, I'm sure some of our listeners locally especially are probably going to want to reach out to you. If you could tell our listeners how they can learn more about the work you're doing and how to contact you, we'd appreciate that.

Gregory: We have a very complete website, it's at [www.sunergysystems.com](http://www.sunergysystems.com). My direct line is 360-265-5621. Once again that's [www.sunergysystems.com](http://www.sunergysystems.com) 360-265-5621.

Jason: Greg Williams thanks so much for being a guest on Sound Retirement Radio.

Gregory: Thank you very much Jason. I appreciate talking with you.

Jason: Alright, take care.

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