

They Have A Yen For Housing

By George Porter

By the time you read this I will have been to Japan to show a group of people over there how to set-up Manufactured Housing. Who would have thought that laying in the dirt slugging wedges for twenty years would have led to this!

The Japanese are not very familiar with multi-section homes although they are quite involved with the travel trailer industry. When you sell land by the square inch you probably don't want a very big home for obvious economic reasons so our type of housing is just right.

It is very interesting to observe the social attitude over there toward Manufactured Housing, they consider it a home. In fact it is a very good home because properly set-up it is not as prone to damage in their constant minor earthquakes and therefore safer. They use the steel frame as a selling point, it is massive and strong and ordinary houses don't have one, it's a big plus.

They also don't have the strange notion that these homes devalue the surrounding property, lead to social decay, or destroy the serenity of neighborhoods. They think of them as places for people to live and they need lots of that.

Please don't get the idea that they have no requirements for these homes because Japan has one of the strictest fire codes in the world. This is necessary because in a nation of so many people the homes are very close together and the exterior has to be made of 100% fireproof material. Using this as a standard certainly changes the characteristics of the home. Add this to the earthquake, wind, and roof load requirements and the support system and set-up changes as well.

If there was ever a reason to use the manual, setting homes in Japan is it. There are no general public building supply or hardware stores because the home owners do not do any of their own work. If there is a problem the home owner # 1 does not expect any and # 2 the person who sold it to him fixes it. This means any problem, from a large leak in the roof; which would be so unthinkable that the seller would probably close his business in shame; to a hairline crack in the drywall. The average Japanese home owner has no time to do these things himself working an average 14 to 16 hour day. He also doesn't see why he should and has no interest in being a handyman. They pretty much stick to what they know and try to do it better than anyone else in the world. This attitude seems to have served them fairly well in the last 20 years or so.

Did I mention that there are very few lawyers in Japan? They solve almost all of their problems and disputes between themselves on an honor basis and don't need them.

I can't wait to see this place, more on this next month.