

This old green house

For its 50th project, PBS home repair show "This Old House" will do a completely eco-friendly remodel in Texas. The project premieres Thursday, Feb. 8 and will run for eight episodes. **METRO**

Living green with Ed

Actor Ed Begley embraces environmentalism, and takes his wife along for the ride

ALLISON WILLIAMS
allison.williams@metro.us



ENVIRONMENTAL LIVING. It takes a certain something to forgo the limo and arrive at the Academy Awards on a bicycle. Some would call that characteristic "insanity," but actor (and Academy member) Ed Begley, Jr., calls it good common sense. His wife's opinion, on the other hand, falls somewhere in between.

On HGTV's "Living with Ed," Begley introduces viewers to his environmentally friendly lifestyle — one of solar panels, an electric car and a stationary bicycle that runs his toaster. Never pedantic about his beliefs, he understands that such total commitment isn't for everyone. Even his wife, Rachel Carson, gets sympathy for putting up with him. "They wonder, 'How can you live with a guy

that's such an environmental zealot?'"

Carson isn't exactly a neophyte in the green world. Named after environmentalist Rachel Carson by her father, she maintains interest in her husband's cause, even if she doesn't embrace it quite as wholeheartedly. "We've certainly had our arguments about it," Begley says, "But at the end of the day she cares deeply about it." Their reality show explores their life together and is an environmentally sound production itself, using recycled materials and charging cameras off Begley's solar power.

AT 57, one-time "St. Elsewhere" actor Begley remains as busy as ever in Hollywood, appearing on television shows

like "Veronica Mars" and "Boston Legal," and popping up in Christopher Guest's "For Your Consideration." His environmentalism streak came about in his early days as a Boy Scout in Southern California. The early '70s brought the first Earth Day and, for Begley, a realization. "It

was so smoggy here in L.A. in 1970," he says. "I just



Carson and Begley

finally had a bellyful and I went 'You know, I don't want to be part of the problem anymore.' I know I'm not going to change it overnight, but I want to be part of the solution."

Begley moved to remote Ojai, Calif., in the '80s, to "get away from the rat race," but he eventually returned to Los Angeles. "I wanted to try to do my darndest to try to fix L.A., if you will," he says. "L.A. is part of the ecosystem too, it's not just in Yellowstone or Yosemite. If we can make L.A. more sustainable, I think we have a shot at the rest of the world."

KNOWN FOR his fully electric car and his line of "Begley's Best" biodegradable cleaning products, Begley has since become an environmentalist icon in urban Southern California. As a friend of Al Gore, he sees the success of the

film "An Inconvenient Truth" as a good sign, as well as the fervent interest in hybrid cars. "The electric car had popularity too but sadly there weren't many of them available," he says. "With hybrid cars, they've really built them. I believe if you build them, they will come. People are lining up to get them."

When people approach Begley about how to reduce their carbon footprint, or impact on the environment, he advises that they start small. "I always suggest people pick the low-hanging fruit first. Do the cheapest, easiest things that have the most effect right away. Start off with a compact fluorescent bulb or two. Get an energy-saving thermostat, take public transportation ... once you've done those things, you've gone up the ladder and saved enough money to make rain barrels to catch some rain water, then maybe get some solar hot water for your house."

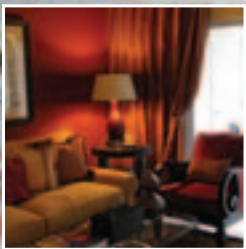
And the next thing you know, you'll be powering your toaster with a bicycle.

'Living with Ed' airs on Sundays at 10 p.m. on HGTV

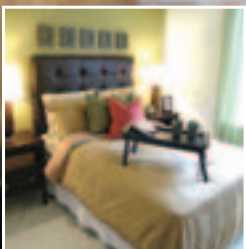
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