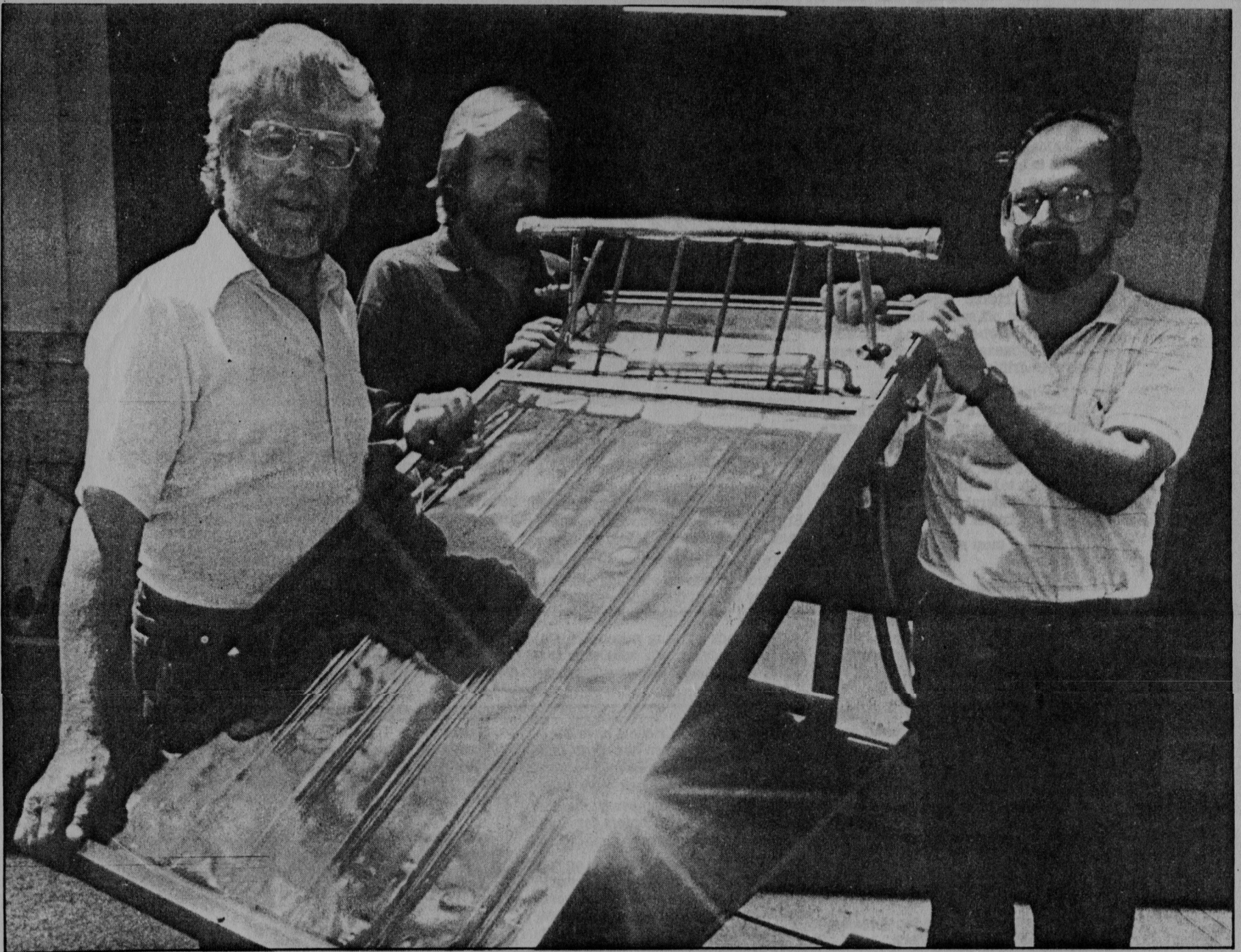


## BUSINESS

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staff photo by Paul Petersen

Eldon Haines (left), Tom Scott (middle) and Bob Block with small working model of Copper Cricket, a solar water-heating system being called a technical breakthrough

## Solar heater chirps onto the charts

By PAUL DUNWIDDIE  
The Register-Guard

After nearly 10 years of toiling in obscurity, the folks at Sage Advance finally are getting their day in the sun.

The Eugene company is beginning commercial-scale production of what critics are calling the decade's hottest development in solar water-heating systems.

A glowing story in the July issue of Popular Science magazine generated about 600 calls and letters. A giant power utility has begun a test program using the water heaters. And orders, if sustained, are coming in fast enough to put the company in the black for the first time.

### Innovative 'Cricket' gets raves

The focus of the excitement is a deceptively simple tangle of plumbing called the Copper Cricket.

The Cricket (named because it chirps like the bug when boiling water) has three virtues:

1) It is efficient, providing about half the hot water needed by a family of three and saving about \$100 per year in electricity.

2) It is reliable, mostly because it has no moving parts, not even a valve, and also because it can survive polar conditions without freezing.

3) It is relatively cheap, costing \$1,880, most of which can be recouped through Oregon tax credits.

"It's really technically fascinating," says Steve Still, a solar energy analyst with the Eugene Water & Electric Board. "It's kind of a breakthrough."

Unfortunately, you have to be a first-rate physicist to appreciate the technology. The Cricket looks simple enough to build on your kitchen table, probably in one night, during commercials.

Actually, you wouldn't stand a chance.

The Cricket's roof panel can boil water at 60 degrees Fahrenheit — the temperature of a very cold shower. Its next trick is slicker. It heats water to well above shower temperatures and gets hot water to the sink and cold water to rise back to the roof — counter to basic laws of physics — and all without a pump or valve.

The guy who pulled it off is Eldon Haines, a busy, cheerful man who delights in stumping visitors at the company's Ping-Pong table.

Haines and a friend sketched out the initial idea for the Cricket 10 years ago. Haines was a nuclear chemist at the Jet

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