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"YOUR GOOD NEWS PAPER"

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History buff are you?

If you want to learn about the character of a business, look into the history of who started it.

This article is a little piece of history my mom surprised me with a couple years ago, complete with a black plastic picture frame and handmade construction paper mat. I was mildly mortified when she showed up at my office and proudly presented it to me for my birthday. Others in the office all had that "don't be embarrassed, we have moms too" look on their faces.



Steve's Place has been the scene of many happy hours for Steve Kuhl, of Mayview Road, Minnetonka, who is peeking out of the lower window, and his friend Chris Hlavka, of Woodridge Road, Minnetonka, above.



"We used to just go in over here," the youngster pointed out, but this year we added an eight-foot tunnel. Access to the tunnel is this trap door, which Steve is shown lowering. The tunnel door is locked when not in use and because of its placement on the ground, can be camouflaged quite nicely with a variety of things. Note the shoes....the entire little house is carpeted [floors, walls, bunks, etc.] so friends quickly learned that Steve cares about his "Place" and means business when he says he wants to keep it clean.

Hole turns into fort which grew into an earth sheltered A-frame

BY TONI JASKOWICK

Little boys like to dig holes....it's a known fact. So last year when Steve Kuhl went in one morning and asked his mom if he could dig around in the backyard, Nancy Kuhl-Edwards agreed....but "just for today and just over there."

"We were going to make a booby trap," explained 11-year-old Steve, "Randy and I. We've been best friends since first grade."

The dig was more eventful than anyone could have dreamed. "It had just rained but the ground was still kinda hard because it was spring," Steve explained, "but we uncovered the corner of a wooden box. I wanted to unbury it right away and see what was inside," he said in a rush about the container which was about two feet long and maybe a foot wide.

And what was in there?

"Some bones and rocks and stuff."

Bones?

"No head or backbone or any good stuff," replied the young man. "Just some bones about this long," he indicated, holding his hands about eight or ten inches apart.

With that kind of "find" so early in the dig, the boys couldn't walk away. "We wanted to dig a big hole for the fun of it 'cause there wasn't anything else to do that day and then we thought it would be fun to see how deep we

could get it."

And deep it got...."like eight feet," he described. But then it rained some more and caved in a bit; not too much, but maybe a couple of feet.

Holes being dangerous things that they are, Steve either had to fill it in or do something. There was probably a little "fast talking" involved, but Steve managed to convince his stepfather, Cody Edwards, into lending a hand to turn the nuisance into a

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I believe residential contracting is one of the most personal experiences one can have with an absolute stranger (Let's keep this clean people). You trust me to rip your home apart, put it back together and do it in a professional way for a fair price in a reasonable timeframe. And so I offer you this little piece of my private (albeit dorky) history so you know just a little bit more about who will show up at your door if you schedule a meeting with me.

Points of Interest

A. Humble beginnings. I started Kuhl's Contracting from my bedroom in 1987, most likely from the closet which doubled as my executive headquarters. At the time very few homes in Minnetonka had two phone lines so it was a big deal when my older sister Mary was given one for her birthday. Within days I tapped into the line in the basement, ran it through the heat vent and hid the plug in my 'office'. That's right, I totally double-o-sevened my sister and it took months for her to figure it out. By the time the next summer rolled in the second line had officially been adopted by Kuhl's Contracting, with Mary maintaining special use priveledges. We are still using 935-9469 as our main number to this day.

B. I can still remember the smell of molding wall to wall carpet in this tunnel. Good times.

C. The gable end of this fort was made from 1/2" plywood. I'll never forget it because I cut this crooked hole for the window out with a jig saw! It was my first solo project with a real power tool. I remember getting bits of dust in my eyes and sort of loving it.

D. This sounds a bit too awesome to be true. I probably made it up to impress the reporter.

Six people can sleep in 'Steve's Place'

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cabin, or fort, or what has ultimately become a "really neat earth shelter, energy efficient" little A-frame house.

The first year [last year] the structure was little more than a rectangular affair, four walls, flat roof, side opening. "We used half-inch plywood, but three-quarter inch would be better," explained Steve. "We put 2 x 4's into the ground in every corner and then reinforced them with more 2 x 4's going across. "Well, we did use the three-quarter inch plywood for the roof, which is now the floor of the loft

because I knew we would have people up there. And we used some 2 x 2's too," he explained.

And then the young man got a little more serious about the project. This year the A-frame portion went up. "He did it by himself," explained his mother. "Cody wasn't even around, but both he and my father have given Steve a great deal of latitude and trust. For three year's now, Cody has allowed him to work with power tools."

After it was built, there were, of course, a few problems to remedy. Rain caused

leaks. It really wasn't deep enough to be comfortable. The mud floor wasn't too attractive. Reinforcements here and there; the addition of a wall safe where there had been a window-type opening; and re-excavation to make the lower level about 5 feet three inches high were undertaken. And then there was still the little matter of a proper door.

That was solved this spring with the addition of an eight foot tunnel, completely pre-built from plywood and then put into the ground and covered with dirt. A trap door with a padlock allows Steve to lock things up when not in use and because of it's design, can be camouflaged with brush, dirt or some left-over building materials.

Inside Steve and his friends have been busy decorating. Left-over carpet from the family home was used to cover the walls, floor and a bunk, which is hinged to the wall so that it can be raised to seat or sleep guests and then lowered to make more room. Even the ladder which leads to the loft has been carpeted.

And there is light....both inside and out.

"His initial interest in electricity started with a shock," explained the fifth grade Glen Lake Elementary student's mother. "When he was about six months old, he got into electricity...." she said. How? "There was a hanging cord

and he put it in his mouth. He was really lucky though. Only about two percent of the children who have this kind of accident come out of it as lucky as he did. He had to have plastic surgery on his mouth, but when I think what could have happened..." she continued.

The young man seems to have mastered at least basic electricity with the help of his grandfather. He has installed lights both inside and out and just recently removed the television set ["reception was poor"] and in its place put an old stereo the family was no longer using.

"Steve's Place" can comfortably sleep six, he estimates, although up until now guests have been limited to two. "We have a little club at school, maybe I'll invite them over sometime this summer," Steve suggested. "But I've slept out in there a lot," he continued. "Like the last seven nights in a row."

The young man offers his "consulting" services to other families in the area. "He'd like to be a fort-building consultant," said his mother. "Maybe that's not such a bad idea on his part. Most parents would probably hate to put that much time into something like that for their kids and he certainly has found out some of the tricks to doing it. If anybody is interested, they can call him at

935-5964. I know he'd be thrilled."

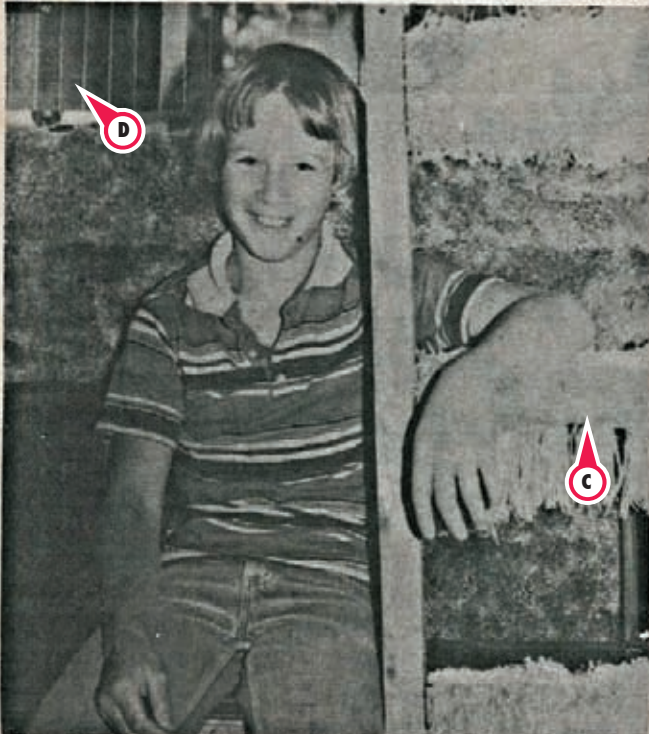
Obviously the bulk of Steve's time is spent in and around the cabin. Is there time for anything else?

"Oh, sure. I like gymnastics and electronics and engineer-

ing and mechanics, stuff like working with gears," he explained.

"And he loves camping and fishing and rock climbing," added his mother. "Those are things we like to do as a fami-

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Steve is necessarily proud of his "Place," a cabin which developed after the youngster dug a hole in the backyard. He is shown in the lower level of the structure, seated on a stereo, which he wired up for entertainment, next to his homemade ladder which allows easy access to the loft area.



Going to Grandpa's always turns into something more than just a visit. On a recent trip, Steve learned how to wire a socket, which he is showing to his mother, Nancy Kuhl-Edwards on the deck of the family home.

Points of Interest

A. Six small people.

B. Hey, that's our office number.

C. Carpeted ladder to loft.

D. Yep, those are mirror strips glued to the wall. Remember, this was the 80's.

E. Now I get paid for that. Life is cool.

F. I 'helped' my grandpa George build this deck. A few years later it was also the first deck I ever pressure washed.