

# Centre geared to learning amongst 45 acre forest



Don Cave, left and Dave Dineen, two members of the executive of Halton Hills Centre, discuss renovations inside and outside the house. A three-car garage is being converted into three bedrooms and a bathroom, and there are plans for building a glass enclosed dining area to the back of the house.

by Diana Waltmann

As the long, dirt driveway runs its winding course through the forest, a quiet, restful feeling overcomes you.

Although you're only a hop, skip and a jump from Highway 25, and a truck rumbles past just to prove it, you feel light years away.

The house is at the end of the road, nestled among evergreens and gardens. It's been christened the Halton Hills Centre by five men and women from Kitchener, who created it.

The Centre is off Highway 25 on the Niagara Escarpment between Acton and Milton, near Speyside. It's formerly the Fitzpatrick's residence, a huge stone house with large windows and a view that would take your breath away, if trees weren't in the way.

At night though, you can see the lights of Toronto twinkling below.

That's just part of the reason the Centre's management group president David Dineen, secretary-treasurer Don Cave, Directors Jan Culley and James Dudek bought the house and converted it to a combination conference and training and development centre.

"The centre has two purposes," says Cave. "First in a passive sense, it's a conference centre." The facilities are available to rent to organizations and companies wishing to hold learning seminars in a secluded and peaceful area.

"Secondly," he adds, "in an active sense it's a training and development centre with workshops open to the public."

Cave said the group was making themselves and the centre known to groups who might want to use it for residential learning.

The first seminar, a parenting workshop is scheduled for July 18 to 20.

Cave, sitting in the midst of sawdust and leaky plumbing, says the Centre will definitely be ready by July 18. "It has to be."

He said the group (one of them is a silent partner), had been talking about creating a Centre for quite some time.

All five make their living in the psychology field and all have held seminars in other centres and hotels for several years.

"It's something we believe in," said Cave. "There is a need for a learning experience like this."

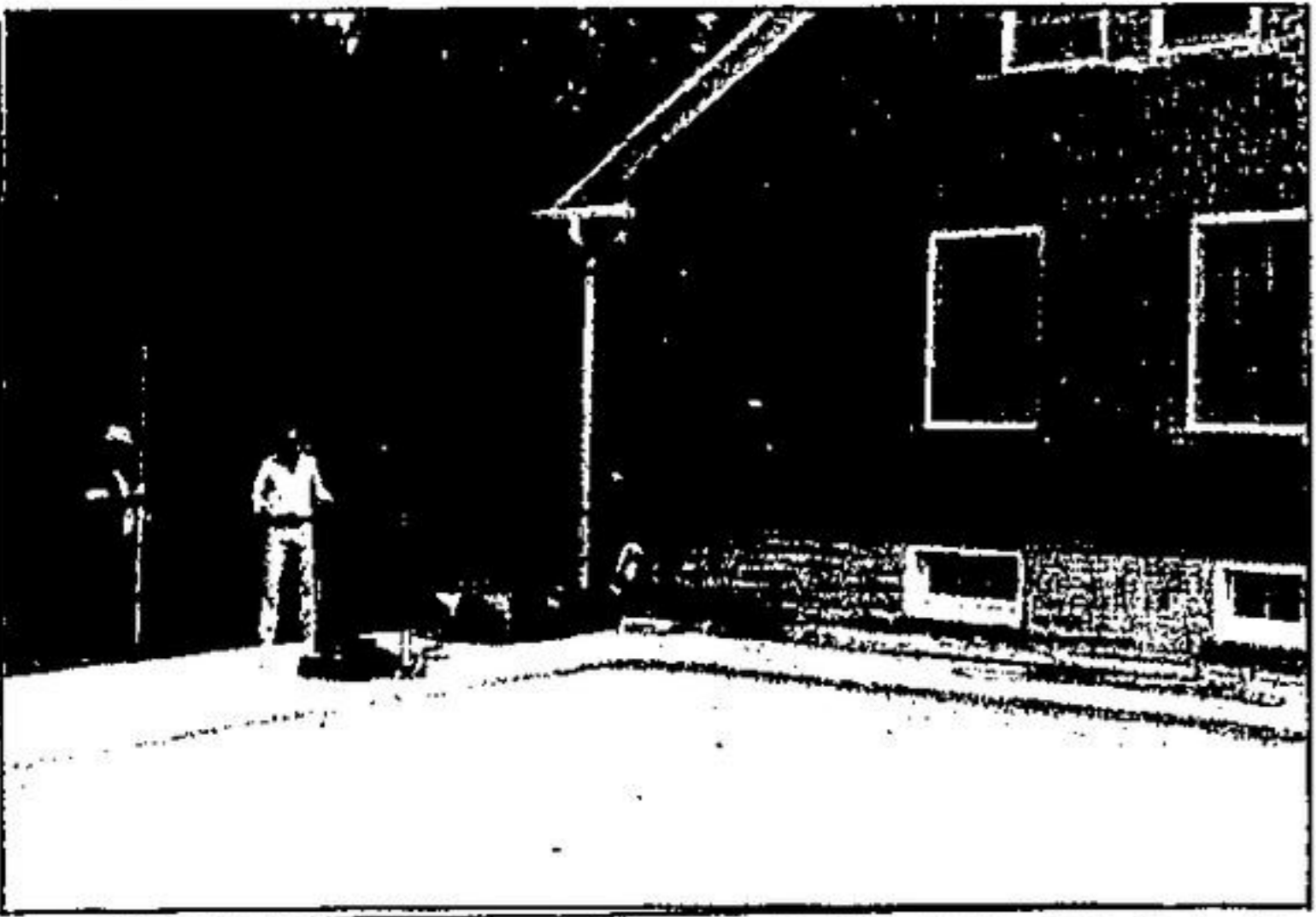
He said he first saw the property in December of 1978, bought it in April of 1979 and took possession in June of the same year.

They had a bit of a problem with Niagara Escarpment Commission since the land is part of the development control area. The Commission saw the Centre as part of a commercial development; it took a year for the Centre management group to prove otherwise.

Dineen said there are many centres like the new one in Halton Hills around Ontario, such as the Nottawasaga Inn, Abraxis north of Toronto, Five



Halton Hills Centre is hidden off Highway 25 between Acton and Milton by large evergreens and a long, winding dirt driveway. It's a combination conference, training and redevelopment centre.



Dave Dineen, left and Don Cave work on the pool outside Halton Hills Centre. The Centre, formerly a private residence, is situated on 45 acres of forest, reaching back to the Bruce Trail. The pool will eventually be covered for year-round use.

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Oaks in Paris, Ontario, and the Queen of Apostles in Mississauga. Hotels are often used as conference centres for companies.

"But we offer a better deal," he said. "Not only are our facilities available for rent, but we have our own programs."

"And it's cheaper than a hotel too. You can get meals and accommodation at \$38 a day."

Dineen added government and business groups, church sponsored groups and groups from education are most likely to use the Centre.

Some of the seminars are directed towards these organizations. For instance there are workshops on Stress Management for Teachers; Managing Students Effectively and The Consultant; process, skills and responsibilities, lined up for the summer.

There are two weekend parenting workshops and a Holistic Health seminar July 25.

And there is Assertiveness Training, Leisure and Your Lifestyle and It's Your Future to round out the summer.

In the future said Dineen, they hope to hold seminars on organizational development—that is the study of effectiveness and ability of company employees for ongoing improvement.

"We can help an organization run better, even a newspaper," he said.

Cave said a lot of programs at the Centre deal with prevention in the medical and psychological sense, hence the Holistic Health seminar.

"People won't be coming here for therapy," Cave stresses, "nor are we supporting one religion. We are not a secret mission trying to recruit people."

"But we do like to give seminars on anything we think has a message, for example, solar energy."

Cave is a behavioural consultant with the Waterloo County Board of Education and a freelance consultant. Dineen and Culley, who is Cave's wife, are also freelance consultants.

"I've been to many of these seminars," says Cave, "and they are a real high. You're learning through experience, which is a fun thing."

Both said there have been inquiries about the Centre from groups mostly interested in accommodations and surroundings.

The Centre has two large meeting rooms or lounges each with its own stone fireplace, a large kitchen, seven bathrooms and 10 bedrooms. The three-car garage and what was formerly the maid's quarters have been converted into bedrooms and bathrooms.

Eventually, said Cave, a glass-enclosed dining area will be added to the back.

The large pool will be heated and covered for year round use.

The Centre will be staffed with a chef, some maintenance personnel and a maid.

The stone house is part of 45 acres of land, most of it forest, stretching back to the Bruce Trail.

There are also a couple of barbecues on the back patio.

There are no bookings yet, although a group did use the facilities a few weeks ago, despite the ongoing renovations.

"We're also starting to prepare for fall and winter bookings," said Cave, "since workshops like these are planned far in advance."

He said the topic of seminars knows no real bounds. "We'll try to get a program under each subject."

ject."

Dineen said "although everyone has given workshops before, we are limited to our skills. Then we'll be recruiting resource people from speciality areas."

The Holistic Health seminar will be given by Dr. David Rowland, a nutritional consultant in private practice in the Scarborough area.

The Centre will bring in Dr. Robert Woodburn, an adult educationist and author of By Opportunities of Leisure and Leisure Resources for Educators and Rick Mansell who works in recreational administration for the seminars on It's Your Future, and Leisure and Your Lifestyle.

Dineen will be giving the workshop on the Consultant. He's worked as a consultant at University of Toronto and McGill, taught a marriage preparation course at University of Waterloo, and a youth leadership course with Cave and Culley.

The Centre is a business as well as a dream, admits Dineen, so of course they hope to break even on costs. He added he's not sure how well the Centre will do financially, but others like it are successful.

"We felt there was a need for it in this area."

"I think as we become known groups will find their own reason for coming, with their own group leaders. It's so quiet here."

Except for the trucks.

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