Build own log house

Deep purlin gives chalet look

After Emil and Ella Burkhardt of 248 Elka Drive, Richmond Hill, came to Canada from their native Switzerland in 1956 they were impressed by the stories they heard and read of the early pioneers in this area, who carved out their farms and built their log homes with simple tools and much back-breaking effort.

To quote Ella, "They were really something special to come to a wilderness and build everything from scratch.

I even envied them. They were not just a wheel on a big machine. To be able to build with what nature offered them must have made them feel more a part of nature and more alive.

This led me to expressing the wish that when we retire to go into the bush, cut trees and build ourselves a log house. Emil agreed.

When we bought our cottage lot we decided not to wait for retirement but to build our dream house right now."

Kawartha lot

The Burkhardts bought a cottage lot near Buckhorn in the Kawartha district in the summer of 1969 and spent weekends and holidays that first summer living in a tent there and cleaning up the site.

It was littered with old bottles and broken glass and the beach area was full of rotten trees, reeds and grasses and big stones, and even when the trees were removed the two younger members of the family, Sylvia and Noldy, had to wear running shoes when they went bathing because of the broken glass.

A dock was built from some old logs found on the lot, a huge stone moved by Emil with a boom and some cottage siding found in the dump.

When the water dropped in the fall (the lot is on the Trent) the whole family worked at cleaning the beach area of wood and stones. A stone wall was built along the beach even though the weather got so cold the water for the cement to hold them in place had to be boiled.

Begin search

In 1970 the driveway was built, the dock finished, another stone wall built and the search for logs for the house begun. They purchased some pine logs from a farmer for $1.25 each.

Since they were not very large it was decided to transport them on a trailer Emil had built.

Ella peels a log

Each load contained five logs and it was back-breaking work rolling them to the trailer and skidding them up a slide made of two logs. Ella and the two youngsters peeled the logs immediately since the bark was being eaten up by worms.

The search for suitable logs continued but prices quoted ranged up to 50 cents a foot which would have meant $18 a log without transport.

Finally they came to a deal with the Department of Lands and Forests to cut the logs themselves at $2 each for 40 to 50 foot logs. Along with a ranger Emil visited two sites and marked 78 trees for cutting.

The family then decided to buy a used house trailer to use as a temporary shelter while the log house was being built and finally bought one with a furnace for $625.

They also purchased a chain saw and one day in December pulled the trailer up to the first logging site near Mississauga Lake. The sideroad was already snowed in and they had to leave the trailer at the side of the highway.

It was quite a thrill when Emil cut the first tree and he managed to fell four that first weekend. But the job went on weekend after weekend and Ella kept the children far enough away from the falling trees to be safe as they enjoyed skiing and sleighing.

The trailer was warm but crowded and since wet clothes had to be hung up to dry, Ella had to duck through them to do the cooking.

Skidding logs

Now the problem was hot to get the logs out of the bush. This was solved when Emil bought an old Volkswagen for $50 and coverted it into a winch with a 700 foot cable obtained from a construction company.

One Saturday they hooked the VW to the back of the car and hauled it north to the bush. Emil thought he could attach the cable to a tree and winch the VW into the desired position.

But this proved a much harder job than he had expected since the snow was so deep.

Ella tramped the snow down ahead of the VW as Emil drove and shovelled. Sometimes they sank in past their knees and progress was very very slow, in fact two days of strenuous labor failed to get the VW to the exact spot, but Emil decided it could be used where it sat.

Hanging pullies high up on standing trees (protected by girdles of branches) the next weekend, he pulled the cable through them and the winching began with Emil directing the logs and Ella operating the winch on hand signals. Later Emil devised a telephone after walkie-talkies proved unreliable.

The trees dug themselves deeply into the snow, necessitating a lot of shoveling and lifting by Emil. At the end of the first weekend only five logs had been moved up a little hill, but the

Burkhardts were not to be denied and went on and on, rehanging pullies, searching for the logs in the deep snow when crawling was often easier than walking, repairing the VW motor when it conked out not once but twice — and the permit expired on March 31.

An extension was obtained, spring finally came, the snow slowly disappeared and the towing went much better. By Easter most of the logs on the first site were in front of the hill and the VW was moved out to the road in one hour, (the same trip that had taken two days in the snow).

Emil erected a boom out of a 40 foot tree to turn the logs and then they moved the VW to the second location where it was winched into the bush again. After a few weekends of hard work all the logs on this site were moved to the top of the hill and then close to the highway.

By this time the black flies were out in full force and everyone was well bitten.

The logs were loaded by a boom on to the trailer with three logs to a load and then unloaded on the cottage lot by means of a tripod. It was some time in June 1971 before they were all where they would be used.

Then the peeling began with all four members of the family doing their share as they wanted the bark removed before the worms got into the wood. With very hard work Emil peeled eight trees a day.

Every log was listed and numbered — its length and its bends noted.

More logs

By fall they knew they had to have more logs — big, straight ones. Again the best price was about $18 each, so it was back to the Department of Lands and Forests' ranger and another 20 trees were marked.

Concrete blocks, sand and cement were ordered for the foundation, which Emil built on the rock base. By the time the winter snows put a stop to the work the foundation was in place, the 20 trees were cut, dragged out of the bush and nine of them brought to the lot.

The first trip to the cottage lot from Richmond Hill in 1972 was made March 31 , and Emil and Noldy peeled logs, but it was not until the April 22 weekend that they were able to reach their lot by car.

The next weekend they found their trailer had been broken into, the VW vandalized and many articles missing. Other people in the area also reported losses, and in one cottage a fire had been set on the living room floor.

Builds derrick

To raise the logs into position on the foundation, the ingenious Emil built a derrick of logs. He also installed four logs on the outside of the foundation as workhorses and brought home the last 11 logs from the bush.

The logs were all treated with pentox, knots cleaned off, three holes drilled to fit over three iron rods set in the foundation. A groove was cut in the top of each log into which a strip of styrofoam was inserted and the next log fitted.

Each log was notched to fit over the log coming from the right angle.

After the first four logs were in place the floor joists and flooring were installed and everything was given a coat of pentox.

Emil, Sylvia, Noldy derrick in background

Interior rot

The first log was installed May 28 and by September 3 the sixth row, almost half the walls, was completed. But on August 28 Emil had discovered, as he planed a log down that one of the logs which had been put in place, and one that they had cut themselves, had developed interior rot.

Imagine their quandry! Was only the one log affected? Was there anything they could do to ensure that others wouldn't be affected?

Would the only solution be to tear down what they had accomplished and start over again. Experts recommended treatment with solignum, but it had tar in it, did not soak in much and looked a mess.

At the Peterboro library they learned that heat would kill the fungi or putting the logs into the water or keeping them below 20 percent dampness would arrest the growth. But none of these were practical for them.

After being told by the owner of another log house (which also had developed rot) that their

log house would outlive them, they decided to go ahead and complete the work they had started.

The bad log was removed and replaced with a sound log.

Then some black fungus patches started to appear on the logs. Ella soaked them with pentox and then took them off with a paper towel. In preparation for the winter Emil covered the logs already installed and the ones stacked on the ground with plywood at a cost of $300.

Still more logs

During September Emil ordered 30 trees from Lands and Forests and arranged to have them transported for about $150. He also changed the winch over to be operated by electricity. Ella started to treat the logs with a chemical (which dissolved her gloves) to cure the fungus growth, and gave the logs a second coat of pentox.

By mid-October the seventh row of logs was in place.

Two dividing walls to separate the kitchen and one bedroom and the livingroom and one bedroom were an integral part of the plan and grew as the outer walls grew.

By November 25 16 more logs have been brought to the site and are peeled.

By the middle of February 1973 Emil had made arrangements with Lands and Forests for more trees from another district at 75 cents each.

This time he rented a snowmobile to bring the trees out of the bush and although the snowmobile broke down three times the job finally was completed and the trees were peeled. A rented truck proved too small to transport them and a man with a tractor-trailer transported the logs for $100.

The first log in 1973 was raised into place May 4 and by July 8 the walls were finished. Them Emil started work on the

purlin, or overhang, and the gables at each end. By the end of September he was working on the roof trusses and when the first was installed continued work on the purlin.

Roofed in

This brings us to Easter weekend in 1974 when work on the purlins began again and was completed by May 5. Then came the rafters, and by June 1 it was time to look for roof boards. This also entailed finding someone to dress the lumber and tongue and groove it, which was time-consuming. Emil helped with this work and the lumber was delivered June 22. All were painted with preservative before being installed.

The roof was finished before winter came that year and in 1975 the Burkhardts took a holiday from their house-building. The next job, slated for 1976, is to cut window and door spaces and install frames, sash and trim.

Then they will be able to enjoy the home they built for themselves.

They will enjoy it the more because it contains so much of themselves and of their labors, every member of the family having been involved.

The hard work, the black flies, the mosquitoes, the back problems, the worries, the accidents, all became worthwhile — and they hope to continue to enjoy the fruit of their herculean labors for many, many more years.

(Photo by Hogg)

Tell Martin of Sunnywood Crescent, Thornhill, is pictured above with a display of her pottery at the recent York Potters' Guild bazaar in Hillcrest Mall. In addition to studios in Aurora and Newmarket, the guild now has its own rooms in the Burr Craft House on Carrville Road in Richmond Hill.

Potters' Guild bazaar a success

With proceeds from their recent bazaar, members of York Potters' Guild will be purchasing some badly needed equipment for their studios.

The bazaar in Hillcrest Mall auditorium was a departure from its usual fund-raising programs. Previous sales have featured pottery only.

This year, in addition to a wide selection of pottery made by guild members, there were stalls for home baking, handcrafts, jewelry, plants and white elephant items.

Members enjoyed the change and felt the results of the sale were well worth the effort.

No sewer connection, no septic tank

By Mary Dawson

"The left hand shall not know what the right hand is doing."

That appears to be the motto of two departments of the Region of York.

When a rezoning application for a portion of a site on the north side of Oxford Street to allow construction of a combination restaurant-office building by Larma Investments was being circulated, Regional Engineering Commissioner Robert Hodgson said connection with the town's sanitary sewer would be refused because of overloading of the sewage treatment plant on Pugsley Avenue.

The applicant then redesigned his proposal to include a septic tank and tile bed to serve until sufficient sewage disposal capacity is available to permit the connection.

This time it was Dr. Owen Slingerland, medical officer of health, who scuttled the plan.

He said a septic tank and tile field would not be approved because of the proximity of town sewers.

Petition council

The applicants sought help from Richmond Hill Council's planning committee at its Nov. 12 meeting.

"This is most unfortunate," commented Regional Councillor Lois Hancey," but is indicative of what's going to be happening in the future."

"It means a virtual freeze on development in Richmond Hill, whether it is industrial, commercial or residential."

"I regret the connection of the Pugsley plant to the big pipe was not approved, or at least an agreement secured for the use of septic tanks until sewage capacity is available and this council given authority to screen applications to determine what is desirable for the community."

"I suggest council request the regional engineering committee to take a position and advise us what it is."

Graham comments

"My understanding in this particular matter, and it could happen in others, is there is a lack of communication between departments at the region."

"I also get the impression that we are not being allowed any type of development. We should be able to judge it on sensible planning," stated committee Chairman Marylo Graham.

"Every member of council should be aware the regional engineering commissioner has stated there will be no more sewage going into the Pugsley plant because of alleged over-capacity use," said Mrs. Hancey.

Increased capacity

"Richmond Hill has spent substantial funds to increase the plant's capacity by building the equalizing tank which has resulted in improved effluent and spread the demand on the plant over the whole 24 hours."

"A side benefit was to have been additional treatment capacity. We have also spent money (not a modest sum) in making every attempt to remove storm water from the sewage disposal system."

"I have been told there have been significant improvements and there has been only limited development in the area served by the plant."

"If the commissioner is saying no more sewage will be going into that plant, he should relay that message to the MOH," Mrs. Hancey continued.

Plant switch

A letter received a week-and-a-half ago from the minister of the environment, Mayor David Schiller pointed out, stated that as soon as the Arnold pumping station is switched to the BAIF plant, a capacity of 1,900 people would be available in the Pugsley Avenue plant.

Part of this switch has already been accomplished with the switch of the hospital pumping station to the North Don plant.

The committee decided to ask the region's planning commissioner, engineering commissioner and medical officer of health to enunciate in writing their policies in respect to development in Richmond Hill.

Duplicate bridge results

Winners at the duplicate club were: Nov. 7 — NS — Ruth and Gerry Browning, Bob and Edna Dunn, Natalie Platner and Larry Stumpf; EW — Hank and Ann Jansen, Joe and Lorrie Coen, Stewart and Marie Cole.

Winners on Nov. 10 were: Men's pairs — Stewart Cole and Gerry Browning, Doug Milner and Rod Sandford, Brian Whalley and Bob Seabrook, John Hall and Murray Hallatt, George Payment and Al Lehman, Bert Rawlinson and Bob Dunn.

Women's pairs winners were — Ruth Browning and Kathy Millgree, Lorrie Coen and Billye Mavers, tied with Diane Harris and Doreen Bernhardt, Florence Laundry and Marie Cole, Sandy Jenkinson and Ann Payment were tied with Theresa Tierney and Ann Manning.

Side game winners were: Pat and Alan Sanderson, John Carrick and Jean Seguin, Jim and Marilyn Munslow.

On Nov. 12 winners were: NS — George Armstrong and Bev Jones, Mary Arnison and Lil Thompson, Cleta Dieken and Ann Jansen. EW — Mabel Howe and Phyllis Mountjoy, Heather Burling and Marg Davis, Natalie Platner and Betty Hull.

Winners in the student game were Steve Rudakas and Brian Graham, Catherine Connolly and Jenny Shepherd, Steven Spiery and Benard DeLamessan.

Coming events: Nov. 21 — Swiss Team Tournament, open side game, Nov. 25 — continentwide charity game — preset hands — hand analysis sheets available at end of game — 12 King Sideroad, Oak Ridges, 8:15 p.m.

For partners and information — Natalie Platner 884-1689 or Marie Cole 773-4280.

Legal

THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK

Bathurst Street Widening And Reconstruction

(Regional Road No. 38)

THE COUNCIL OF THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK PROPOSES TO PASS A BY-LAW AUTHORIZING:

The widening of Regional Road No. 38 (Bathurst Street) in the Towns of Richmond Hill and Aurora and the Township of King from Regional Road No. 11 (King Road) to Regional Road No. 15 (Aurora Road) to a basic width of 120 feet with additional widenings at cuts, fills and intersections; the clearing, grubbing, fencing and grading thereof to accommodate a basic four lane roadway and the gravelling and paving thereof to provide a basic two lane roadway with additional turning lanes at intersections, together with the construction of all culverts, drainage works and all related works and undertakings, and the acquisition of the necessary lands and interests in lands.

The Engineering Committee of the Regional Council will, at its meeting to be held at 2:00 p.m. on the 16th December, 1975, at the Engineering Building on the west side of Woodbine Avenue one and one-quarter miles north of the Aurora Road, hear in person or by his counsel, solicitor or agent, any person who claims that his lands will be prejudicially affected by the by-law and who applies to be heard.

Engineering drawings of the above proposed work may be inspected at the office of David Hill, Director of Property, at the Engineering Building (Tel: 895-2303).

DATED at Newmarket this 6th day of November, 1975.

EDWARD OAKES,
62 Bayview Avenue,
Newmarket, Ontario.

Solicitor for The Regional Municipality of York.

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