



## The Bunkhouse Chronicle

Craig Rullman  
Columnist

### Owning it all

I'm not a builder. I have no professional training of any kind, though as a kid I helped my step-dad build a gigantic barn. I was mostly useful as an extra hand to drive nails, fetch this tool or that, or to hold the end of a tape measure. As I got older my pursuits went in different directions, but he went on to build several more barns, always by himself, for the horses and cows and sheep, each one of them a kind of old-timey masterpiece of creativity, architectural beauty, and rock-solid strength.

Don't we admire a thoughtful do-it-yourselfer, working with a limited skill-set but striving to learn more, do more, and with a practical bias for self-reliance? We should. Not so long ago, it seems we had a lot more of those types around. But sadly, a lot of that self-reliance has been sanded off as the country has filled up with people.

I get it. We need some

rules. And good ones, like smoke alarms, nobody disagrees with. But I mourn that loss of rugged individualism in the margins, because I think it also encourages laziness. That's true intellectually, for certain, and travels down the leash to a kind of physical laziness too. Why build a shed, and learn something, and maybe even have fun doing it, when you can buy a TuffShed at Home Depot and have it delivered to your door? Who wants that bother?

That loss of independence, I think, is somehow tied to the increasing pressures of conformity — HOAs love their copy-and-paste rules and regulations even where they make no practical sense — and we all labor under the ever-growing burden of government interference in virtually every aspect of life. But on the whole I remain unconvinced that we do a great job of encouraging our younger generations to build things, or fix things, or make things, anymore.

Maybe I'm wrong about that, but it seems close to the mark.

We can't do everything by ourselves, obviously, but we get better as human beings when we try. At least I'm sure that I do. Little things we take for granted, like laying pavers, for instance, look a lot more difficult when we heave-out to do it ourselves. It teaches appreciation for the skill, if nothing else, and we may never stride over a beautiful walk quite the same way again.

This week I've been working on our raised beds. I was unhappy with everything going on in the garden, essentially, and so stole each second of sunshine available — and worked a lot in the rain — to get things where I want them to be.

I have a friend who, years ago, built his own cabin in Bridgeport, California, in the Sweetwater country, and lived there for decades, mostly alone. It was Don, a voracious reader and writer, who told me, over a cold beer on Swauger Creek after a day splitting wood, that all real Americans were registered Independents. That's still hard to argue with.

Most winters, the road into his place was inaccessible, and so he skied in, towing his supplies on a sled. He built a hydro generator over the creek to keep his lights on, and the walls, twelve inches thick, kept the place incredibly warm with only a tiny woodstove. The picture windows framed a perfect view out over the canyon and across to the rugged Finger Peaks.

Don was a builder by trade, and so he had the skill. He'd built dozens of houses in the Bridgeport area, but like a lot of contractors, it was always his place that was never quite finished. But he had something else, too, which may be something we can't teach: a drive for self-reliance and measured, responsible, independence.

The final piece for his cabin was a front door that he carved himself. And the day he finally hung it I'm

sure he felt a mixture of pride at the accomplishment, and maybe a dollop of disappointment in those places it wasn't just perfect. I can imagine a long, deep exhale, and a mind filled with the immense satisfaction of knowing that he'd built that place, high up in the aspens, down to the front door, with his own initiative, and his own hands. Where the faults were, only he would ever know. The untrained eye just wouldn't see them.

And I think that's the metaphor that I like so much, because it is the way we live, mostly. If we have any self-awareness at all we know what's wrong with us, and we carry those faults around like bad wiring hidden behind a wall.

And sometimes, like it or not, we just have to tear open the wall and fix the problem.

So, I've got the raised beds mostly done. They aren't bad. Some professional would likely have done it better. But I have the enduring satisfaction of having done it myself. I know where the faults are and, regrettably, some of them are frustratingly obvious. But if the faults in this project are mine, so the good things are mine too. I can live with that. Owning our faults, and our successes, may be the very best we can hope for in this life.

And anyway, as the old cowpoke told the cowboss after slapping together a new outhouse at some mountain line-camp: "It may not be square," he said, "but it's damn sure level."

## Sisters shelter to host potluck

By Sue Stafford  
Correspondent

Sisters Cold Weather Shelter is hosting an end-of-season potluck for all their guests, steering committee, volunteers, donors, and the citizens of Sisters who have been so supportive and welcoming this winter.

The potluck will be held at Westside Church Sisters, 442 Trinity Way, where the shelter was located in January. Everyone is invited to come at 5 p.m., Saturday, April 1, to share good food with good friends in appreciation and celebration of an amazingly successful first season for the shelter and for a wonderful community. Bring food to share if you are able.

Friday, March 31, will be the last night of the season for the shelter, hosted in March by the Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration. On Saturday morning, April 1 at 9:30 a.m., guests, volunteers, and willing citizens are invited to help with the final packing away of supplies into the shelter trailer for storage until next November. The packing will take place at Sisters Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration, 68825 Brooks Camp Road.

## Artists! Have a class you'd like to teach?

Get that information into the community via the Nugget's "Classes & Training" classified ad category! It's a great value: the cost is just \$2 per line the first week, \$1.50 per line on repeat weeks.

And it goes online at no extra charge! Placement deadline is Monday before noon, at 541-549-9941 or nuggetnews.com.



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