

Builder's home is 40 years in the making

By Dan Klapheke
IVN Staff Writer

In a community full of eccentric individuals and one-of-a-kind roadside attractions, it can be hard to stand out. But 11 miles down Caves Highway, partly hidden in the trees and bumping up to Siskiyou National Forest land, a house 40 years in the making demands attention.

Todd Henry moved to the Valley in 1972 from San Diego, where he grew up, but it was only meant to be a pit stop on a longer journey.

"I was 22 years old, on my way to Canada," Henry said. "And I stopped to visit a friend, who lived on Caves Highway here, and he showed me around the area and I never left."

He never made it to Canada. Instead, Henry packed up his belongings in his work truck and hauled it to Cave Junction. He bought an old miner's shack in 1975 and he's lived there since, but the house is unrecognizable from 40 years worth of renovations and additions.

"My motto used to be, 'I'll get it going,'" Henry said. "I can always come back and finish it."

That motto has turned his home into a maze of ideas and inspirations, and its tough pinpointing where to start.

"A lot of times I come up with an idea or concept, and I say, 'OK, I'm gonna do that. That's what I'm gonna do. I've made up my mind,'" Henry said. "And a year or two will go by and I go 'Wow, glad I didn't do that because I got a way better idea now!' It's an evolving thing."

Whole parts of the house have been the product of some antique Henry finds at a yard sale. He built an addition to the kitchen when he found a classic coffee grinder, as well as a barbecue island in the kitchen after he saw one while working on a house in Grants Pass. One of the largest additions is a tower resembling a lighthouse.

"I did a job for someone in the Valley, a local builder, and the guy had a tower on his house. And I go, 'Man, I gotta have a tower,'" Henry said.

Henry has a story for every part of the house. He delivered his first two children in his office, once the only bedroom. A back room features a full bar with surfboards covering the ceiling, one of which he remembers buying for \$27.50 in San Diego. There's an enclosure attached to the living room just for his parrot, MacGyver, who yells for Henry by name if he's out of sight.

That short list doesn't come close to describing the whole house, let alone the entire property. Behind the house is a concrete swimming hole that was originally intended to be a fish pond. Along the water there's another bar shack, as well as sand, beach chairs and a concrete volcano/waterfall structure. A concrete wall stands at the opposite end of the water, built in the style of southern California flood barriers. And throughout the whole property are antiques and yard sale finds that all have a unique back story.

"I've been collecting stuff for years,"



(Photo by Dan Klapheke, Illinois Valley News)

Todd Henry in his home woodworking shop Thursday, June 30. He built mostly everything pictured, including the building itself.

Henry said. "Had to quit going to yard sales and secondhand stores as much as I used to. Running out of room."

Then there's the workshop, where Henry's plethora of ideas become reality. Various types of wood are scattered throughout the building, and most of it Henry has milled locally. One current project is the reconstruction of an old telephone booth that once sat on the California-Oregon border in the early 1900s.

But out of all his projects, Henry said what he's best known for are his doors. He built his first in 1964.

"My dad was like me: never finished nothing. He built his own house in 1948 and I didn't have a bedroom door. I had one of these accordion-type things," Henry said. "And it was 1964 where I was in 10th grade, and I built this door in high school wood shop. And me and my buddy carried it home on the top of our heads."

Henry still has the door, and it sits on display next to his current door projects.

One of Henry's latest involvements is with DIY Network's "Treehouse Guys" show, as he builds doors for the program's treehouses, as well as personally for the cast. He's currently working on a door for Michael Garnier, owner of Out'n>About Treehouses and one of the treehouse guys.

The door is for one of Garnier's personal treehouses, and it's curved, which Henry said he's never done before.

"I owed him a door for, like, 10 years, and I said, 'Okay, time to settle up,'" Henry said. "So I went out there and said, 'Okay Mike, what are we doing?' And he said, 'well, you see that curved wall?' I go, 'Oh boy...'"

There will also be hand-carved designs in Garnier's door, like most Henry builds.

Although Henry has built everything on the property, he often lets other specialty craftsmen come in and work on things like plumbing and metal working.

"I'm a firm believer in letting the different tradesmen do their thing," Henry said. "And it frees me up to do what I do. I got over the glory of saying you did it all yourself a long time ago"

Due to his motto of "I'll get it going," Henry said he has a lot of unfinished projects around the property. But over his 40 years of living there, he's never stopped evolving.

"You can't just do one little thing on a lot of this stuff," Henry said. "I've been a builder all my life, that's what I do, and you can't just do this part without doing that part all the way through."

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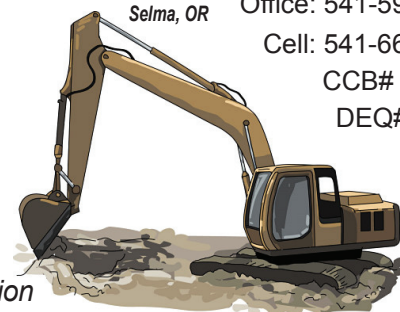
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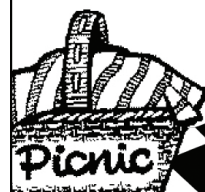
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