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The Owner-Built Home — Chapter 4 Planning Systems: Group Living Space

By Ken Kern

Many of the New House building concepts can be used to economic and esthetic advantage by the Owner-Builder. These notions cut through all the established criteria and standards, and for this reason naturally meet with consumer resistance. Mainly, these design-concepts influence way-of-life, and this is sacred territory to most people.

New House design concepts indicate that rooms should be planned for a complete range of activities, not for singular, specific functions: there should be several possible locations for any single action and one particular location should serve a number of different functions. We may do some hobby work, read a book, eat lunch and take a nap all in one room over a span of a few hours. Of course noisy and messy activities should not conflict with quiet, passive ones. The best solution to this problem is to provide alcoves and nooks that can be closed off but at the same time "linked" to adjacent spaces. A hallway doubles very nicely as an office, sewing-laundry, storage, or hobby alcove. The Japanese plan changed living functions by moving pieces of furniture from the storage into the rooms.

New House planning offers the prospect of closing off certain defined functions (located in halls, alcoves, nooks) or opening the total into one grand continuous (endless) space. This architectural feature runs consistently throughout the structure and includes all living functions.

Even the group-living fireplace can be planned around these new design concepts. The fireplace is traditionally located in the exact center of a wall. The mantel, raised hearth and fire-box opening are all properly designed and symmetrical. The customary over-stuffed couch directly in front of the fireplace cannot be used when the fire dies out. At least 14 feet required between fireplace and couch—but at this distance all intimacy and privacy are lost.

A fireplace supplies warmth or a sense of warmth, and solid backing to the adjacent seating area supplies a sense of shelter. Both are necessary for desired effects. This can be achieved by backing the seats against tall cabinets or bookcases, and placing the seats at right angles to the fireplace. A type of *inglenook* is thus created. The seats are best placed to the left (as one faces it) of the fireplace alcove, for the same reason that right-handed people prefer rooms that open to the right.

A more elaborate fireplace alcove can be created in the form of a *conversation pit*. An impromptu yet intimate atmosphere is effected in this recessed (about 12 inches) space. From a practical standpoint a conversation pit will seat a large number of people in a relatively small area.

The same New House design concepts that create group-living arrangements are also employed in developing individual-living and cooking-eating spaces. A description of these other functions will be given in following chapters.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Art of Comfort, William Masee, 1952.
Guide to Easier Living, Mary and Russel Wright.
Communitas, Paul Goodman.
Homes For Family Living, Gutheim.

Fiddlers, cont'd

(Joe does it alone with the aid of a tackle) to the next bin when one is full. This happens to be about a year for our family of five. Thus, when the third bin is full, the compost in the first one has aged two years. Although heating is probably sufficient to pasteurize the human wastes, this extra aging makes it more acceptable to many who might otherwise reject the idea. So long as we have materials at hand to keep it working properly—sawdust to absorb the urine and its nitrogen and earth to keep flies off—it is almost odorless. It usually smells of the garbage we have put in last (cabbage leaves, orange peels, rotten apples).

Sauna and Heating

For bathing, we plan on a sauna; it is warm in winter, most refreshing, and one gets cleaner than in any conventional American way of bathing. Besides that, it requires no plumbing and very little water — three can bathe with a bucketful, if necessary. The same fire that heats the sauna ought to be able to heat water for laundry. And we also have plans for using this same stove and outbuilding for sap evaporating and greenhouse in the spring, as sap evaporation about coincides with the time tender plants started in a greenhouse need heating. And the plants ought to like the moisture.

Other Thoughts

Washing machines may be worthwhile. We don't have one now. I use garbage cans, a wringer, and a metal plunger with a long handle. It does a very thorough job, but takes time I could use more efficiently on other things: children, sewing, craftwork, walking, reading, and

contemplating.

Freezers strike me as something planned to make women work more. It is no less complicated than open kettle canning, and for the most part I'd rather put vegetables into a root cellar at harvest time and take them out to eat raw, or just slightly cooked.

A wood stove we find far more efficient than any other kind; the whole stove is hot, so that a pot or kettle of any size receives heat over its entire bottom. I can pasteurize cider on one as fast as I can handle it — more than 50 gallons an hour. The same fire heats the oven and the top. A rack above dries apples, socks and mittens, and gives gentle bottom heat to hasten sprouting seeds.

In and Out of The Disease Hole

By Pauline Pidgeon

Upon spotting the May 1966 *Harper's* magazine and the article, "America's Unhealthy Children" (An Emerging Scandal), by Roul Tunley, my heart pounded to think, "They're finally going to openly admit that we are truly a sick nation." But no, it was only another limp hand held out to old Uncle Sam for more socialized medicine: more patches for roofs ruined in the storm of ignorance, more braces for the crooked teeth of our narrowing dental arches, more drugs to prop up kids so they can appear well as they continue in their self-destructive ways — encouraged by ignorant parents who believe food is entertainment rather than nourishment, more drugs to keep our pharmaceutical industries in financial health, more medical personnel and facilities to treat the

(continued on page 4)



KEN KERN is here seen developing an inexpensive, top-of-the-ground concrete cistern. An able homesteader, surveyor and architect, he plans to be present at the School of Living Workshop, Freeland, Md., Aug. 24-28, 1966.

School of Living Meetings Planned

June 12 — NFA Convention participants meet at School of Living Center, Freeland, Md.

June 17-26—Intentional Community Conference at School of Living, Freeland, Md.

July 2-4—Homestead Festival and Ohio Regional Meeting, Smart and Loomis Homesteads. Write to Rose Smart, 4998 Twin Creek Road, West Alexandria, Ohio.

July 5-Aug. 5—Intensive study for 8 to 10 qualified persons of Major (End All War) Problems of Living, at Lane's End Homestead. Mildred Loomis, discussion leader. Also training in writing, group process and personal dynamics. Students will maintain themselves in our building. Fee, \$10 a week.

July 16-17 — Bay Area School of Living meeting with Pres. Leo Koch, San Francisco.

Aug. 6-7—Los Angeles Area School of Living meeting with Pres. Leo Koch, in Los Angeles.

Aug. 24-28—SCHOOL OF LIVING ANNUAL MEETING AND WORKSHOP. Come early, set up camp, and assist in work and renovation projects.

Sept. 10-11 — Michigan Area School of Living meeting, near Traverse City, Mich.

To Florida, cont'd

ry comes in at night and if he's carrying contraband." Etc.

Each was discussed briefly, and to one youngster who showed some impatience at the whole proceedings, another said, "This is important! This could get us in trouble with the neighbors and authorities in Orange City."

Others suggested, "Limit Larry's spending money. See that he doesn't have any, and pledge not to loan him." "Tell the tavern people downtown not to sell to Larry." Etc.

None of the ideas seemed to please the whole group. At one point a staff member asked Larry how he was feeling. He made quite a response, but all I could hear included, "I feel angry."

Finally, an engaging youngster beside me turned to Luke and asked, "Luke, what do you think we should do?"

Luke transferred the "chair" to a student beside him, and then said, "I move we ask Larry to brew 5 gallons of beer and share it with the rest of us."

This did it. A hearty laugh indicated unanimous acceptance. Tension broke, the meeting adjourned, and everyone dispersed to wash dishes, clean garbage pails, etc., with the feeling that they had "handled" another sticky "problem" in their midst.

Send us names and addresses of your friends who might like to see a copy of *The Green Revolution*. We will mail samples.

Youth Opportunity This Summer

This year, tons of fruit, vegetables and grain will rot in fields for lack of harvesters, while more than a million and a half youngsters won't "find" summer jobs. A wise Californian became a "demonstrator." He led seven boys into the berry fields, and, working beside them, receiving the same remuneration as they, was able to show—not merely tell—them what should be done.

Dr. G. H. Earp-Thomas, a leading soil expert, reports that "in this country more food rots ungathered in the fields for lack of harvesting help than is shipped to market."

Why shouldn't this idea of small squads of American boys and girls, under competent demonstrators, spread? Why not a hundred thousand such units—seven boys from 13 to 17—each under the competent leadership of some person who not only knows and can tell them about the art of harvesting but can show his followers how.

Here's an idea for individual action, as well as for government departments.

New Book On Natural Healing

Reviewed by Rosetta Schuman*

Get Well Naturally, by Linda Clark, \$5.95, Devin-Adair, New York City.

This is a do-it-yourself book. Doctors do not make us well; we make ourselves well as we make ourselves ill. If we can believe, as did the 15th-century Italian, Cornaro, when he reached the age of 40 with health broken, that we can regenerate ourselves, we can find a blueprint for it in Linda Clark's *Get Well Naturally*. Dr. Royal Lee compared it to a well-organized menu. Beyond that, it is a complete repast (easy to digest) of health information which leaves out the "academic course."

Not "Is it orthodox?" but "Has it helped?" is her criterion for inclusion. Many are the orthodox sources, but there as many of the fringe: the Doctors Shute, Quigley, Knibht, Morrison, Sandler, Pottenger, Jarvis, McCay, Shadman, Gerson, Ratner, Bicknell and others. This is a resource book par excellence for the ailments that beleaguer mankind. Homeopathy, osteopathy, chiropractic, herbalism, acupuncture, radiesthesia, macrobiotics, autotherapy—all are given a hearing. For all have helped. In Russia, 40% of the therapy is herbal! As one reads the many arresting ideas, one should remind oneself of William Penn's plea: "Help us not to dispose or oppose what we do not understand." You will find out what Dowsing is. One eminent physician said of it: "I don't believe it; I don't understand it; but it works!" And five Nobel prize winners agree! Linda Clark vouches personally for Edgar Cayce, and tells us that there is a research organization for studying his work. He left behind a treasury of untapped health information.

Practical Helps

The chapter on infections will be of immediate and continuing use. It alone justifies owning the book. It is replete with empirical information — the somewhat simple cause of leg cramps, the value of using buckwheat and

*Mrs. Schuman is director of a three-county district home for elderly persons, Manassas, Va.

Read THE CONSCIENCE OF A RADICAL by SCOTT NEARING

Review from *New World Review*, January 1966

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BOY, 14, active, enthusiastic, interested in livestock. Needs farm, country experience, work for summer in Christian home. No heavy lifting. Mrs. F. E. Simpson, 4720 3rd Place, N.W., Washington, D. C.

LIVING HIGH by June Burn. Joyous homesteading classic. New illus. edition, \$3. Wellington Books, 346 Concord, Belmont, Mass. (y4)

WANTED—Someone to live on our homestead; food and lodging in exchange for work in garden, house and health food store. Lefever's Sonnewald Homestead, Spring Grove, Pa.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS FOR ALL by O. B. Johansen. Provocative essay on purpose of education. Why it should be conducted as private enterprise. 50c.—Committee of One, 825 Walnut St., Roselle Park, N. J.

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flaxseed, the fact that human blood parallels sea water in mineral analysis, a discussion of flatulence, a thorough-going discussion of arthritis, etc. You'll find out what "weapon salve treatment" is, and why it may be an illusion to feel safer at the practice of underground testing.

During the period I was reading this book I had a fall. Immediately I applied a cold compress to my leg. Inflammation (continued on page 4)