

# The home that friends built

By D.R. BAHLMAN  
Staff Writer

GRAFTON — Trees completely surround William Schermerhorn's new house on Taconic Lake Road here, just as they surrounded his old house.

But when fire destroyed his old house in March, and he spent ten weeks in Samaritan Hospital for extensive burn treatment to his right leg, Schermerhorn might have returned to find only charred remains of what had been his home for 30 years.

Instead, he found a new house built by friends who surround him as completely as the trees.

"That's friends," he said as he walked around the small yard.

"That chimney up there — that's a nice one. Tight."

Schermerhorn likes to show visitors the inside of the house. The wood burning stove is in one corner, a bed across from it. His easy chair is next to the stove, and a winter coat hangs on a hook on the wall.

"Got all I need right here," he said.

Two of the things Schermerhorn said he can do without are electricity and telephone service.

"Never had 'em. A man came by here once from the power company, and he said 'Bill Schermerhorn, you're a smart man'."

Outside the house again, Schermerhorn surveys his garden which is totally unaffected by insects, weather, or other natural elements.

The flowers and shrubs are plastic.

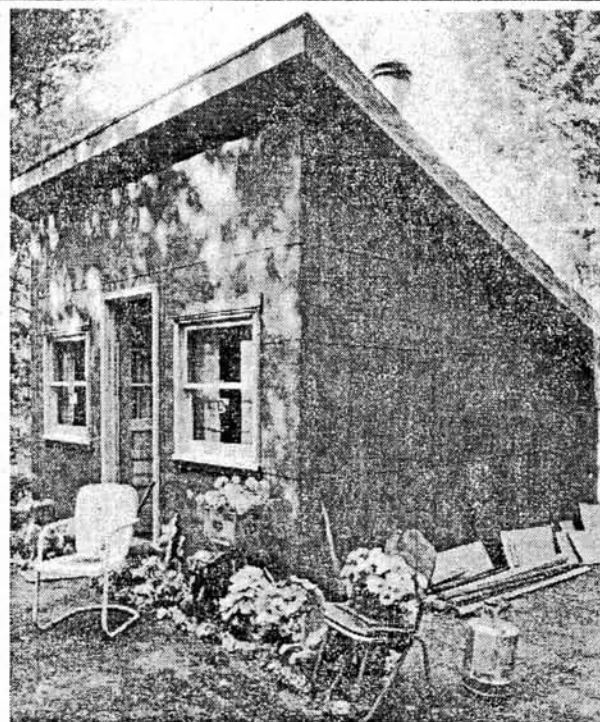
"My girlfriends bring them to me," he said. "They make them and drop them by. A couple of years ago, a car from Virginia stopped and the people wanted to take pictures. Said it was the most beautiful place they'd seen on their whole trip. Doesn't matter if I'm out, you can always look around."

Schermerhorn plans some interior improvements, including the installation of slot beams on the ceiling inside.

However, the work done by his friends Jack Sweeney, Roy Fowler, Jr., Joseph Pulito, Charles Myers, and John Smith, Jr., will remain essentially unchanged and that's the way Schermerhorn wants it.

He also has a simple and complete idea of why the six local men built his new house.

"They're friends," he said, looking at his house. "That's friends."



THE HOUSE THAT FRIENDS BUILT for William Schermerhorn stands surrounded by especially hardy flowers on Taconic Lake Road in Grafton.



LOOKING AT HIS NEW HOUSE Schermerhorn talks about friends.

Photos by G. M. Dzaman



STOCKPILING WOOD FOR THE WINTER keeps Schermerhorn busy. The logs are cut to fit in his new stove. (Photos by G. M. Dzaman).