



## THE GOLDEN LINK



Last, but not least, is the "Golden Link" or the Big Treehouse. It is the youngest member of the group of structures at Shady Oaks. Both the Treehouse and its creator share a special part in linking the past with the present.

### Introducing Michael as "Mr. Treehouse"

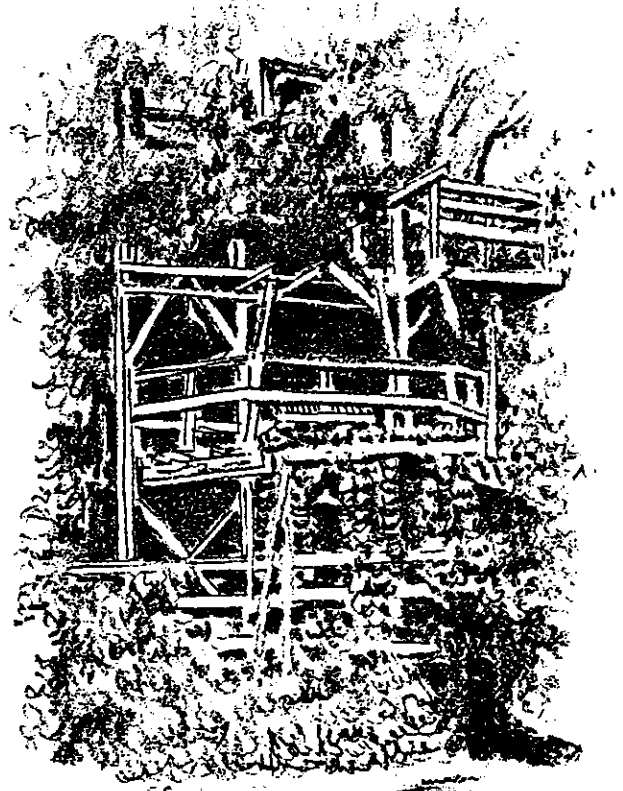
Michael (Mick) Jurgensen, my one and only grandchild, was three years old when we moved to Shady Oaks in January of 1966. He was a joy, and he diverted my thoughts away from the move and the recent loss of my mother and grandmother.

During the first Spring at Shady Oaks, Micky was fascinated by the playful squirrels in the two huge elm trees outside our living room windows. Eighteen elms succumbed to the Dutch Elm disease within the next two years. I believe he had his eye on the young maple tree in the backyard even then.

He called the south hill the "Deep Green Valley." During the first summer at Shady Oaks, Micky helped to put stepping stones down its grassy slope. In winter, he built igloos against the side of the hill.

Micky was very creative with Leggos and wooden building blocks. His sandpile was usually a work of art. Light and telephone poles were designed just like each new one he discovered. The pole creations outlined the roadways in his sandpile. One project was an under-sand water system made by connecting straws. Several boxes of straws went into this project. They say creators put their subconscious minds to work through conscious effort and then let their ideas develop while daydreaming, or cloud watching.

School years passed quickly, and Micky participated in Cub Scouts, plays, musicals, band and chorus. He attended LDF Community Schools (now East Marshall) from kindergarten through high school graduation. In the early years when something didn't go quite right at school, Micky's mother, Judy, could usually find him in the problem-solving maple tree.



### The Big Treehouse

Mick says, "I chose this tree, out of the dozens of others, mainly because it was easy to climb. It was friendly and soon became the companion of my boyhood thoughts. I have often had to take care of the tree because of the many injuries and scars it acquired through the years. One incident in particular was the terrible ice storm of 1973, which left permanent marks. Three branches, which formed the top of the tree, were broken off during this storm. I remember climbing the tree and using a hand saw to remove its broken stumps. The resulting cement filling can be seen on the sixth level of the Treehouse today."

Our home was literally wired for sound. Mick strung hundreds of feet of wire to the wall speakers in most every main-floor room.

## The Golden Link

During the disco years, his basement studio was a sight to behold. Reflections from a mirror ball shimmered on the ceiling and walls, as colored lights flashed in patterns in accompaniment to the stereo system.

"Imagination rules the world."

— Napoleon Bonaparte

Mick has always had a great love for this historic setting. In 1980, landscaping, lighting and gardening became his hobby and passion. At first, he used whatever materials were available. Limestone rocks blanketed the bare north hill back of the house; wood cut for the fireplace stood unevenly upright outlining the paths which were carpeted with grass clippings; and inverted berry baskets shaded the hanging, colored light bulbs.

Bricks and upside-down glass ashtrays made small, mosaic patios in the backyard. Little white Christmas lights under these clear inlays of glass made a spectacular sight at night. Creativity does not depend on expense. Commonplace materials, imaginatively used, have a beauty that surpasses cost.

After one year at Marshalltown Community College, Mick transferred to Iowa Wesleyan College ("IWC") in Mt. Pleasant. He was a junior when he conceived both the Treehouse and the Sound and Light Show for IWC.

"In Thy Halls Assembled Here" was a historical reenactment utilizing live actors, pantomime, extensive lighting, special effects and audio narrative set to music and sound effects. Similar in nature to the production presented in Europe at the Acropolis, this program depicted the history of Iowa Wesleyan College from the perspective of the most popular landmark building on campus.

He received his undergraduate degree in 1984 with dual majors in music (vocal, band and orchestra) and general education. Mick then taught vocal music in Lone Tree for five years.

In 1992, Mick recreated the Sound and Light Show for IWC's Homecoming celebration. It included more recent events such as the Old Main fire in 1989. This multimedia production, which depicted the rich 150-year history of the College, was originated in 1983 to fulfill Mick's Responsible

Social Involvement requirement. It was presented again several years later for the Sesquicentennial of the City of Mt. Pleasant.

After receiving his Masters Degree in Educational Administration from the University of Northern Iowa ("UNI") in August of 1990, Mick immediately began his position as elementary principal in Monticello.

He married Liz Fischer in June of 1992. A pre-wedding party for 128 guests was held in the Treehouse. Liz was a middle-school science teacher at Monticello.

Liz was first introduced to Treehouse construction in 1992 when she scaled the steps to Level 8 just to watch Mick build. Developing her carpentry skills and climbing to new heights was a challenge, and Liz no longer wondered what to do on the weekends. Levels 9 and 10 were actually completed before they were married.

When Raccoon Hollar was added in 1994, Liz once again joined the family in working on the project. Knowing that Mick's love for his Treehouse and gardens is deep-rooted, Liz is now a dedicated member of the Shady Oaks' team.

Mick and Liz were both awarded graduate assistantships at UNI and began working full-time toward their Educational Doctorates (Ed. D.) in the Fall of 1994.

Creativity comes from the mind, hands and heart of a person; it is never dated. Through selection and perception, Mick has been given the power to originate something in an unusual manner. His masterpiece, the Treehouse, is a web of engineering which has continually grown, blending strength, utility and beauty. Through this effort, his imagination has been made visible.

### **The Golden Link and How It Grew**

"All men of action are dreamers."

— J. G. Huneker

Mick's original dream was not conceived as the 10-level, five-story structure that it is today. He says, "It wasn't even supposed to be a treehouse. I only intended to build a deck on the back of the house, but my grandfather promptly denied my request. I looked for another firm structure on which to attach my dream deck where the family could meet and relax. I considered the maple tree in the backyard which was like no other.

"When we moved to Shady Oaks in 1966, the tree was a small, weak-looking sprout about 10-feet high. Through the years, it had grown quickly, like most maple trees in low, damp areas of Iowa. After some contemplation about the new location for my deck, I finally decided that the 10 by 12-foot structure would be attached to my favorite maple tree."

Mick believes that what you dream can become a reality. He created the Treehouse dream in his mind and on paper. Six grain pallets from a local seed company were delivered in February of 1983, his junior year in college.

*Michael built a deck this year,  
attached it to the maple tree;  
with just six pallets and some luck,  
plain to see a deck was meant to be.*

The original west deck was called the "Morning Side" of this enterprise, because it is shaded from the morning sun. A single ladder was the only means of entry. Redwood railing was added, and lighting and furniture followed. The Treehouse was destined to grow just as the tree would grow.

The second level of the Treehouse appeared late that first summer. It was merely a perch which could only be reached by ladder. It was on this level that we watched the 1984 Olympics on a black and white television.

In August of 1984, the TR featured a picture with the following caption, "This summer, Mick put the finishing touches on the third level and built the platform for the fourth level, in his childhood 'being alone spot'."

A landing between the first two main levels was built, and it resembled an old-fashioned sleigh with a long bench for resting. With this addition, it became a split-level treehouse. The summer kitchen alcove was also added for the gas grill.

In 1984, Kitt and Hazel, then kittens, explored the Treehouse. They are now known as the "Treehouse Cats." Hazel greets guests and precedes them to each level. Kitt, "The Swinger," loves to jump in the nearest porch swing to have his snow-white tummy rubbed.

Mick worked for Pioneer Hi-Bred International for five summers, using this

resource for his Treehouse fantasy expenses. When things were at an all-time low, video taping slides accompanied by music saved the day. Family tapes for Etta Schradle and Bill and Ellen Block and travel tapes for Otis Wolfe supplemented the dwindling Treehouse fund. At this time, Mick had resigned his Lone Tree teaching position to pursue his Master's degree in educational administration. He had to be resourceful, or his hobby would succumb.

During the last two weeks in May of 1995, Mick and Liz were on semester break and Judy had a few days of vacation. This precious window in time, plus ideal weather, allowed us to build the far east loop of the elevated walkway.

After buying, loading, and hauling home the lumber for this project, Mick's helpers were ready to start work. Immediately, we began unloading, measuring, and cutting the lumber near the construction site. Since the walkway in this area would stand quite high off the ground, post holes had been dug and cement was poured around the vertical supports.

Each bridge in this new section presented a special challenge to Mick, and he really looked forward to meeting his goal. The "Rainbow Bridge" required flexing and bending each moist 16-foot two-by-four to the desired curve. His plan called for six curved boards on each side, but three proved sufficient. Mick explained that this strategy is similar to designing wooden roller coasters.

The "Covered Bridge Museum" with walls and roof of marine ply presented another obstacle. The heavy four by eight-foot sheets had to be lifted off the ground to Mick who was standing on a ladder. Who would perform this feat — his 94-pound wife, his mom, or his granny? This challenge was met by pulling the large sheets up by rope. However, the roof was something else!

As luck would have it, Rick Dolash (local tree surgeon and former classmate of Mick's) happened on the scene and found Mick straddling a single beam approximately 15 feet in the air. Rick, tall and strong, raised the ply for the peaked roof to Mick's precarious position. Construction continued on schedule. Two new bridges and 70 feet of walkway were successfully completed. The Shady Oaks' team respectively returned to

school and work after the brief sojourn, which allowed them to drink in the fresh air and soak up the warm sunshine.

### Treehouse Tour

*Mick's Treehouse is a wondrous place,  
Bringing smiles to everyone's face;  
Where birds sing and bells ring,  
Folks from everywhere laugh and swing.*

For a Treehouse tour, make a reservation and wear tennis shoes. The shady front yard with its hosta beds provides a perfect setting for visitors coming to the Treehouse. You will be met at the "Tree Spirit" carving on the oak stump. This ancient form of wood carving dates back to the Middle Ages. The legend tells that each tree has a spirit. If you capture the spirit and bring it home, good luck will follow.

The "Mighty Oak" that arched over the south walkway entrance to the Treehouse had to be removed in 1992. The tree's trunk split as the result of a violent wind storm on September 12, 1991. Visualizing this giant oak makes me acutely aware of the airy, empty space above. Most of our magnificent bur oak trees are at least 150 years old.

As Rick Dolash stood safely on the ground after roping down this tall oak, he paused and gazed toward the Treehouse. He said, "Looks like Mick and I have both gone up in the world."

The fantasy that became a reality in our backyard consists of more than 430-feet of elevated walkways and the nearly 6,000-square foot Treehouse in the beloved maple tree. It is lovingly called "Our Family Tree" or "Tree of Dreams."

The shrine had a burst of growth in 1991 and again in 1992. Thanks to Mick, the Treehouse now has 10 levels. Music flows from many places, and surprise sound effects delight guests. In summer, the Treehouse nestles in the embrace of leafy branches, as the maple tree claims it as its own.

Entering the south gate, the Treehouse is to the east. Visitors immediately gain perspective of its size as they start down the elevated walkway. Below, along "Snake Alley," wildflowers proclaim the arrival of Spring. Later, impatiens, caladium and begonias grow profusely in the shade of an umbrella of oak leaves. The lush fern

flourishes to tropical heights, and the hostas multiply.

Along "Easy Street," a 50-foot long flowerbox overflows with fragrant, cascading petunias and trailing vinca vines. You pass apple, mulberry, elm, ash and oak trees. Colorful fun flags create a festive mood.

Many other street signs appear on the walkways, such as "Genius Street," "Lovers Lane," "Awesome Avenue," "Sex Drive," "Michael Drive," "Psycho-Path," "Purrfect Place," "Kiss-a-Me Street" and "One-Way-My-Way."

Oops! Be careful at the "Cat Crossing" sign, as you might step on a tail. After passing the first porch swing, you come to a junction entitled "Three Bridges." The walkway to the left crosses a replica of the actual 1901 railroad bridge which is visible across Timbercreek Meadow. On this bridge, a realistic train whistle sounds an alert that visitors are entering the Treehouse from the south.

Straight ahead is "Raccoon Hollar." In May of 1994, a 42-foot section of walkway replaced the "Travis Turn-around" section (built in 1986). In this area, you will hear authentic racoon sounds; and at dusk, you will see glowing eyes in the trees. One of the two porch swings located here has a roof above its small, cabin-like enclosure.

Beyond "Raccoon Hollar," you will cross over Mick's replica of the "Rainbow Arch Bridge." Real Model T sound effects can be heard. The original Bridge was significant to the Shady Oaks area and was a landmark to transcontinental travelers on the Lincoln Highway and Highway 30 from 1918 to 1948.

"Eagle Point," a monument to the eagles and all the other birds, stands on the corner of the walk. "Meadow View" is at the furthest point. A sight reminiscent of what the settlers must have seen in the mid-1800s is visible from this vantage point. Looking west, one sees a striking view of the Treehouse. This walkway parallels the small stream that borders our property on the north and east.

The tour continues to the "Covered Bridge Museum." Photos depicting the rich history of the Rock Valley/Shady Oaks area are displayed on its walls. As you stroll through this museum, 150 years of history pass quickly before your eyes.

After leaving the museum, you arrive at a four-way intersection of the walkways. Turn left on "Michael Drive" and proceed to the north entrance of the Treehouse.

The main floor, or Level 2, features "Swinger's Corner" (three porch swings) on the "Morning Side." There is also a picnic table for repast and conversation. This was the location of the original deck. The "Evening Side" has two additional porch swings, bench-seat railing, two large picnic tables and a storage cabinet. This cabinet houses a microwave oven, stereo and refrigerator. Phones and intercoms on the post above the cabinet provide communications.

As you squeeze past the trunk of this sheltering maple tree, you may pause to listen to water trickling from the red pump into the old whiskey barrel. The "Summer Kitchen"

has running water, work counter and a gas grill. Here, even the simplest foods are tastier.

A long bench on Level 3 provides a place for resting, reading and reflecting. On Level 4, there's an alcove dining area for four and a view of the garden from two porch swings on the "West Wing." The large "East Wing" overlooks the meadow, distant railroad tracks and perhaps a train skimming along the now quieter tracks. This area is wonderful for photographing clouds in the sky dome, sunrises and memorable rainbows or watching an eclipse of the moon or meteor showers. You might expect to find a partially-read novel. On the day of the sun's eclipse, erie shadows flickered over the meadow in a strange color, not found on the palette. The surrealistic quality of this event was captured on my video tape.



**The Bell Tower Atop The Big Treehouse**

In 1995, the buckeye tree took a sudden spurt of growth and sprouted a cardinal's nest in its crown. The nest and its occupants provided many hours of watching and close-up photography.

Level 5 is the "Mezzanine" (balcony) where you can view the long row of pole beans that form a trellis behind the house. Mick is convinced that yarn-climbing beans, cucumbers and tomatoes are easier and cleaner to pick.

*Oh how I love to go up on the deck,  
Up in the tree so high;  
Oh I do think most unusual trek,  
Even a person can try.*

*Up in the tree so very tall,  
Till I can see so wide;  
Streams and trees and cattle and all,  
Over the countryside.*

*Oh to look down on the garden green,  
Down on the flowers so bright;  
Up in the tree I'll climb again,  
To gaze on this beautiful sight.*

Flower boxes, equipped with a watering system, are on Levels 2, 4 and 5. On warm summer nights, the sweet smelling flowers in these lofty boxes create a tropical atmosphere. Portieres of vinca vines provide an illusion of privacy.

Level 6 is equipped with a dumb-waiter for dining, storage, TV and phone. My favorite summer living room is enclosed with leafy branches. "Stargazer Point" overlooks the small stream, meadow and the distant woods. The unique aerial walk, "Treetop Walk" (Radical Road), leads through the branches, past "Bird's-Eye View" and on to "Psychopath." There you will discover the steps to Level 7, a small landing between floors, called "Garden View."

In 1991, Level 8 was the uppermost; and a "Rock-a-bye Baby" still swings in what was the treetop. A small picnic table and porch swing are integral parts of the plan, where folks can stop and chat. It is inviting to all ages. It's a neat place to peer down on the levels below and observe the intricate patterns interwoven by the designer. Mundane thoughts are alien to this scene. Large katydids, resembling leaves, have been found at this height. You might

catch sight of a sleeping treefrog in the daylight. Many times, birds light in branches nearby and serenade guests.

Level 9, "The Loft," is a favorite place for sleeping. I shall never forget being rocked to sleep in a hammock under a sprinkling of stars, the softness of the summer breeze, the magical moonlight filtering through the leaves and the harmony that puts my mind at ease. It is a place to make the world your own.

You must ascend 43 steps and two ladders to reach "The Cloud Room" on Level 10. It is 55 feet in the air and has a ceiling of wispy, white clouds. This is also the home of "The Bell Tower." At the summit of the "Stairway to the Stars" (the ladder that begins on Level 1), a glance downward makes you aware of the height where you are standing. A sign says "Is this heaven? No! It's the top floor." I've heard people call to a friend below, "You better come up here; it may be the closest you ever get to heaven." It's all in fun, and laughter is a great tonic.

From this lofty place, I reflect upon the many Treehouse signs designed with treasured stencils. Sylvester E. Hanyan, Mick's great-great-great-grandfather, snipped the perforated letters out of brass over 125 years ago. "Ves" was a pioneer hardware dealer and tinsmith by trade. Our "Family Tree" silently links the undaunted spirit of six generations.

To go back down, you must descend the ladders. A retired Naval officer said "Feet first! How else can you see where your are going." However, a retired railroader suggested, "Always face the ladder so you won't fall." Both explanations have their merit.

The trek to the top is only part of your adventure. As you go back down the way you came, views from the Treehouse are exciting as well. Robins sometime build nests under and on the Treehouse floor. The wrens and cardinals are always near. You may see or hear orioles, bluebirds, grosbeaks, flickers, indigo buntings or red-headed woodpeckers. It's always delightful to watch young squirrels learning to use the walkway railings as expressways.

To leave, let us saunter by the old honeysuckle bush on "Michael Drive." The north walkway winds its way past a structure that looks much like an outhouse. Is it really what it seems? Looking inside, it seems to be occupied by a very prestigious couple; and a

voice says, "I'll be done in a minute!" Excuse us!

At "Inspiration Point," an owl, with eyes that light up, hoots as you pass. "Fisherman's Landing" is a pier that overlooks the small stream dubbed as "Nuisance Creek" by our neighbor, Clifford Chinn. Sometimes a large turtle may be seen basking in the sun along its banks, or a colorful toy boat may be anchored mid-stream.

Ahead, you will pass "Two-Old Men Bend" which is an unusual pair of oak trees; one is bent over, and the other stands very tall. Around this Bend, Mick built a bench to pause and view his creation. Just beyond the willow tree, a cow moos at the "Cattle Crossing." The drawbridge, originally in this area, met its demise along with the old walkway in 1993. The "Hospitality Booth" is near the end of the walkway, where visitors from all over the world have signed the guest register. It's an excellent place to take a final look at the Treehouse or photograph it.

As you exit the walkway, the scarecrow repeats the entry gate's message, "The Treehouse and garden areas are private. Please do not enter without permission or supervision. If you wish to visit, please call 752-2946." The scarecrow points the way to the parking area or to the raised garden beds behind the house.

For those who must use wheelchairs to visit, they can (with the help of a friend) experience most everything on the walkways and main level of the Treehouse. Although they cannot climb the steps and ladders, they can watch and converse with other members of their group as they explore the Treehouse.

Visitors who take the steps down the north rock hill and walk in the shade of the bean trellis quickly discover the stepping-stone path between the "Strawberry Patch" and the "Herb Garden." These stepping stones lead to the garden entrance of the Treehouse and Level 1.

Judy, my daughter, has often remarked, "The Treehouse and gardens at Shady Oaks are inseparable. It is impossible to think of one without the other."

The transformation that takes place just after dusk is often memorable. Twilight allows the fantasy to grow. In 1993, the elevated wooden walkways and lighting were replaced. Lights underneath the flooring serve as guides.

Originally, strings of miniature white lights outlined each deck and festooned the smaller trees. At that time, artist friends said the structure resembled a pagoda, while others likened it to a cruise ship adrift on the meadow. Now, illuminated, red fishing lanterns glow throughout the leafy branches; their lantern wicks were replaced by bulbs.

More lanterns light the way along "Tomato Path" and the green bean trellis. Each riser is lit on the curved steps of "Snake Alley" that coils through "Wildflower Bend." Other subdued lighting is visible on the south hill midst the hostas and fern.

For several years at Christmas time, a large, illuminated star, 15-foot above the top level, changed color patterns. On summer nights, a strobe light flashes against the heavens and beckons me to the top.

Racer lights, on the "Stairway to the Stars," dance like fireflies that soar over the treetops. They are choreographed to the romantic music of Zamfir and his pan flute.

The woodland at night provides a chorus of lusty treefrogs, katydids and locusts. The wise old owls hoot back and forth in the woods near Timber Creek where the meadow and trees are companions. By moonlight, a lonely coyote howls in the distance. Sometimes childrens' voices sound like crickets. On warm summer evenings, just as the birds are saying their last good-nights, a branch in a nearby oak tree answers in a low, comforting groan. The ambience impinges on your imagination.

The happy music of Danny Davis and The Nashville Brass is a Treehouse specialty. A six-cassette player allows diversity to please everyone. Other selections vary from Mutton Hollow Vibraharp (woody and quaint) to motion picture sound tracks such as "Somewhere in Time" (reflective).

Many out-of-state visitors are from densely populated areas. They sense the quiet beauty in the remoteness of our location. Time stops, and silence echoes. To some, it has the aura of a tropical paradise; to others, it has the solitude of a sanctuary. Fresh air and earthy odors induce relaxation.

Mick recently said, "Though the Treehouse is a place to celebrate nature, it is also a place to celebrate people. It is the people who visit that give the Treehouse its life. People from all over the world have made the Treehouse their home, if only for an hour."

"We have been friends together  
in sunshine and shade."

— C. Norton

### The Seasons

#### A Prelude to Spring

As I was walking in Shady Oaks early one March evening, I heard the trees talking. The breeze seemed to be in the treetops and not in my face. The naked branches of the large oaks were musically conversing, creaking and cracking in various pitches, as they swayed and stretched their long, arthritic limbs. Were they just waking and yawning after a long, winter's nap? Does this phenomenon often escape our ears? Maybe the warmth of the sun had relieved the stiffness in their extremities. The chorus of 150-year old oaks was an unforgettable, auditory experience.

#### Spring

*"Flowers have been a symbol  
of spring, growth, color,  
happiness and peace throughout time."*

— Georgia O'Keefe

For my April birthday and Mothers Day, I have received a garden cart, gardening utensils, perennials and flats of bedding plants.

Usually a weekend, or two, in mid-May are reserved for buying bedding plants and seeds. On the trip home from the greenhouses, Mick's pickup looks like a colorful, traveling kiosk. Once home, the Shady Oaks' team begins the task of sowing the seeds for the greenbean trellis and borders of marigolds, planting the flowers and vines in the flower boxes (Treehouse and walkways), setting out tomatoes, peppers, herbs, etc., and adding a new perennial or two.

*God tends my garden with his love,  
Waters with showers from above;  
Then nurtures with the warm sunlight,  
This fanciful place by moonlight.*

#### Timbercreek Meadow in Summer

*"Light fades, stars appear,  
evening angels, gather here."*

— Unknown

Nearly 30 years ago, the sky over the meadow was darker at night. When we first moved here, the aurora borealis was visible; and it shimmered across the night vista. Now, the countryside is brighter at night; and this phenomena can no longer be seen, even when forecasted.

One evening, just at dusk, an Australian film producer was here. He spent one and one-half hours photographing the lightening bugs; he was enraptured by them. They do not exist in Australia; however, they do have glowworms that are always lit in New Zealand's caves. Folks from Norway tell me that their lightning bugs stay in the grass.

The mother of two teenage daughters recalled the summer she suddenly realized that fireflies did not glow in many colors. This was the dawn of her growing up years. It was almost like finding out about Santa Claus.

*"That beautiful season, the Summer! Filled  
was the air with a dreamy and magical light;  
and the landscape lay as if new, created in  
all the freshness of childhood."*

— Henry W. Longfellow

#### The Treehouse and Gardens Glow in Iowa's Summertime

*"Summer afternoon, summer afternoon,  
to me those have always been  
the sweetest words in the English language."*

— Unknown

It has been said that a garden is a living thing which requires constant care and attention. Each gardener is a student as well as an artist. A garden is a grand teacher. The love of gardening is a seed that is sown and never dies.

To create a garden, you must perceive its ambience. Mick allows his ideas to form until the main theme and arrangement are inscribed in his brain. Thus, the network of beams in the Treehouse and under the walkways blend into the landscape. Simplicity and surprise exemplify his garden, as flower boxes on the Treehouse carry color high into the sky.

*"The sun does not shine for a few trees  
and flowers, but for the wide world's joy."*

— Henry Ward Beecher



Mick's garden presents a daily challenge for me to photograph as color, light and composition vary from moment to moment. The seasons collaborate with nature to present an ever-changing scene. Many things in the garden attract bees, butterflies, humming birds and sphinx moths; they are also a delight to photograph.

Some of Mick's early gardening techniques were unusual. I will never forget the tripod effect of pole beans interlaced with tiny, white Christmas lights. In his informal garden, vegetables and flowers grew side by side; and by fall, the orange pumpkins were overlaid with red petunias. Castor beans and sunflowers vied for the sun and grew over 10-foot tall.

Growing tomatoes was one of his first passions. At least 30 varieties appeared on the scene including pink, white, yellow, beefy, globe, pear, etc. Twice a week, they were picked; and the hatch of the red Chevette was loaded early in the morning to head for Farmers Market. Mick also experimented with red, white and blue potatoes.

The green bean trellis has been interspersed with long yamatos, cucumbers and gourds. One year, it was a challenge to walk under the trellis back of the house, as many of the gourds that hung heavily were of the birdhouse variety. Guests often pick green beans after a Treehouse visit.

Bright colored nasturtiums add spark to the greenery. Bursts of color, such as spikes of glads or groupings of caladium, vary yearly. I often think of the joys I would have missed if things had stayed the same from year to year.

Kitt and Hazel, the resident cats, discovered seven baby bunnies hidden beneath the green, leafy foliage in the "Strawberry Patch." They had been attentive to that area for over a week. The cats knew about the bunnies, but we didn't.

I wanted Chinese lanterns, and still do, but not where they want to grow. The prickly, black raspberries on the south hill, under the limestone rock cover, also remain persistent.

For a few years, ground cherries grew in abundance for pies and preserves. All went well until the year the plants didn't look quite right. The leaves pronged out in every direction, and clusters of purplish fruit developed; they were huckleberries. One pie and that was it. Never again!

The south hill has seen many transformations, from a Rocky Mountain waterfall and pool, after a trip to Colorado, to the existing "Snake Alley." When Mick first landscaped the hill, he didn't realize it was a place of beauty nearly 70 years ago. In the 1920s, a 25-foot long bridge, between Shady Oaks Cabin Camp and Cafe, overlooked a rock garden, fountain and a small lily pool below.

*I love our ever changing view,  
sometime familiar, oft times new;  
nature's color scheme changes too,  
glad to share its beauty with you.*

#### Fall at Shady Oaks

*"October had a party,  
the leaves by hundreds came,  
The ashes, oaks and maples,  
and those of every name."*

— Unknown

Shady Oaks in autumn is a symphony of burnished gold and brown leaves. When the wind blows, they float to earth in crescendos, swirling in wild waves, shifting here and there. In the morning, a part of the lawn may be swept clean; but by afternoon, an abundance of leaves may have collected. As thunder roars during a fall rainstorm, the fast-falling leaves collect in damp, soggy piles. The lightning becomes obviously brilliant as the diminishing umbrella of leaves bare the skeleton-like branches.

Birds add audio to the visual panorama. Blackbirds herald the coming of fall, and they enjoy shaking down the plentiful acorns. Crows, cawing loudly, fly in threes, one leading the other two from treetop to treetop.

Three tall oaks are each entwined with a vine that turns crimson red as it spirals to the treetops. In the blinding sun, they glow like flames against the blue sky. The shagbark hickory stands up straighter as it sheds golden leaves and nuts for the squirrels. The leaves on the maple trees seem to stay green forever. But since nothing is forever, they too must go. Fall is fleeting, the next day it's sleeting; and the bitter

winter returns to blanket the earth in snow.

*The lush and green of summertime,  
Turned gold and bronze and red.  
Then autumn splendor turned to white,  
And winter lay ahead.*

### Winter Panorama

*"In the midst of winter, I finally learned that  
there was in me an invincible summer."*

— Albert Camus

A winter day is a beautiful sight. The snow covered meadow reaches over a quarter mile to the railroad bridge. Hawks barnstorm the blue dome. On misty mornings, the entire meadow scene and low-lying clouds are spray painted aluminum. As the sun breaks through, the icy branches reflect the sun's rays like prisms. Sometimes the snow changes from a cold, steel blue to a soft, rosy pink.

My living room has five east windows (18 feet in length). The splendid windowscape is like a big-screen TV and presents a panoramic view. At night, to the north, the twinkling lights extend almost to the little town of Quarry; and the red warning lights blink at the railroad crossing. When Amtrack is using the northern route, its whistle penetrates the night air, and the window lights of the passenger cars are visible as they skim on silver rails over the countryside.

Lights from Highway 30 sparkle through the timber to the southeast. A spectacular moonrise is like a giant spotlight focussed over the meadow. For brief interludes, it plays tricks with the Treehouse as though different sections take turns in the limelight. I can imagine shadows flitting here and there.

In the absence of the Treehouse cats, Kitt and Hazel, the whole Treehouse is a jungle maze for the squirrels. However, summer guests seldom see these arboreal, bushy-tailed rodents as they are early and late visitors and elusive throughout the day. Sometimes you may sense them jumping from one bouncy branch to another, hear their noisy chatter or see a red, bushy tail scrolling in waves. In winter, these comical creatures of habit activate the whistle at the Railroad Crossing around 8:30 a.m., two hours later than in the summer.

A warm evening in February brought out seven deer along the edge of the timber. A single deer, or many, may streak in single file across the visible expanse, as though spooked by a predator. One below-zero morning, some pheasants were at the base of the Treehouse steps. They looked like statues frozen in place. I was relieved when they moved and flew away. I don't often see the rabbits, but their busy tracks are visible.

The position of sunrises, constantly changing, makes me realize the movement of the earth. The morning sky often presents a kaleidoscope of patterns and colors. Sometimes it is more important to enjoy the view, rather than seek my camera to look through the lens. Over the past ten years, my photographs show a remarkable change as the rising and setting sun continues to move northward.

As the black Angus cattle walk single file across the meadow during a snowstorm, they make a sharp contrast. It is like a living Ansel Adams print.

I've often wondered why there are so many pictures of Shady Oaks in the winter. I have come to the conclusion that residents were far too busy in the summer to photograph it.

In winter, the pristine snow cover reflects the soft glow of the moon and illuminates the entire meadow. Thin, bare branches, like arms, reach heavenward. Harsh reality is banished, and gentle thoughts prevail as the meadow slumbers under the white blanket of snow. The peaceful vista is mine just for living here.

### Publicity

Vic Wainwright from Station KSSK, the Hawaiian Islands, in Honolulu called Mick requesting a live interview. Stations from the following cities also called for either live or taped interviews: Joliet, Champaign and Chicago, Illinois; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Webster City and Mason City, Iowa; Memphis, Tennessee; Dearborn, Michigan; Washington, DC; St. Paul, Minnesota; New York City; Eugene, Oregon; Dallas, Texas; Calgary, Edmonton and Regina, Canada; and San Diego, Ventura, and several other Southern California cities.

The Treehouse has been featured on WOI-TV 5, Dennis Douda, "Douda's People" (1987);

KCRG-TV 9, Dave Franzman, "Eyewitness News" (1991); KCCI-TV 8, Liz Merdian, "People You Should Know" (1992); KCRG-TV 9, Keith Rich, "Our Town Marshalltown" (1992); KWVL-TV 7: Gary Sarnoff, "Neighborhood News" (1993) and "Favorite People and Places" (1994); and KCCI-TV 8, Virginia Huie, "Live Link Report" (1995). Some of the above clips have appeared on other channels coast to coast (ABC, CBS, and NBC).

This site is recognized as a private Marshall County attraction. A visit to The Big Treehouse was on the itinerary for The Iowa Division of Tourism's Familiarization ("FAM") Tour on July 16, 1994. On September 12, 1995, Talbot Tours (San Jose, California) FAM Tour for travel agents included the Treehouse in their highlights of Iowa. Robee Gardner, Area Sales for Talbot, later wrote, "It was the highlight of the day for the group."

### Did You Know?

Since a tree grows up and out, it will die if the bark (cambium layer) is choked.

Treehouses are not new! For centuries, trees provided protection to cultures from floods, wild animals and rival tribes. Treehouses were the rage with the ruling class in England during the Elizabethan period.

A tree is worth \$196,250, according to a professor at the University of Calcutta. One tree living for 50 years will generate \$31,250 worth of oxygen, provide \$62,000 worth of air pollution protection and increase soil fertility to the tune of \$31,250, recycle \$37,500 worth of water and provide a home for animals worth \$31,250.

This figure does not include the value of the fruits, lumber or beauty derived from trees. Originally, this information came from "Update Forestry," conservation newsletter from Michigan State University.

### Quotes From Feature Stories

On September 27, 1989, Marshalltown's TR featured an article by Donna Andrews; it was entitled "Pure Imagination Is The Theme Of This House." The next two quotes are from the article:

"If you build it, they will come. The building of a fantasy was told in the current

movie 'Field of Dreams' and now another dream has been brought to life on the real life stage of a rural Marshalltown home.

"I used affordable lumber, stuff the lumber yard calls junk. Economy boards have style."

On August 16, 1992, the article "Living High," by Jim Pollock appeared in the Des Moines Sunday Register. Pollock stated, "Mick Jurgensen's masterpiece is a remarkable example of what you can do with galvanized nails, treated lumber and a deep-seated obsession.

"He fastened pallets together to make a 10 by 12 foot deck and that was that.

"The next year, Jurgensen experienced the classic reaction that made America what it is today: 'I thought, gosh, there's all this room . . . ' and he proceeded to make use of it.

"Jurgensen worked weekends every spring and fall, stimulating the lumber industry and worrying the squirrels."

The following quotes are from the "Lifestyles" section of the June 10, 1992 issue of The Monticello Express; they were written by Keith Brake, Editor:

"The atmosphere is akin to an amusement park. At a 'Beware of the Dog' sign, a dog barks. An owl, whose eyes light up, hoots when you pass 'Inspiration Point' and cows moo at the 'Cattle Crossing' sign.

"Mick who is 29 now said, 'It will never be finished. I don't know that I want to build a second one. It just wouldn't be the same'."

The Iowan, Summer 1992 edition, featured Mick's "Tree House Extraordinaire" in "An Iowa Treasury" section. "Jurgensen's tree house belies all childish notions of rope ladders and cramped quarters. . . . The treehouse itself features alcoves on every level, each bearing its own name."

The "Discoveries" page of the June 1992 edition of Midwest Living, "The Magazine of America's Heartland," showcased "Iowa Tree of Dreams." It noted: "Six picnic tables pack the Convention Center section, while the Swingers Corner sways with three porch swings. A talking scarecrow greets guests at the entrance; piped-in music serenades strollers."

The AAA publication Home and Away for January/February 1994 presented "Iowa Triptiks." The first of a series of articles,

highlights an area in Central Iowa. The Marshalltown area attractions includes The Big Treehouse.

In the 1995 book entitled "Let's Travel Pathways Through Iowa," Mick and his Treehouse are featured in the profile of Marshalltown.

### Makin' Memories

*In my backyard, the maple tree  
is ever there for me;  
So filled with happy memories,  
since nineteen eighty three.*

A treehouse is a wonderful place to make memories. It's a romantic world away from reality, although it may be only a few steps from the back door. Imagination is the key to building a treehouse retreat. Gentle breezes elude to daydreaming and meditating about the mysteries of the universe. Most treehouses are never completed.

To Mick, each tree makes a statement. Some, he visualizes as a hotel, or convention center. Mick enjoys sharing his split-level dream home with others while he continues to add on, up and out. Building and maintaining the structure is a family project and provides diversion from the work-a-day world.

Sometimes Mick goes to the Treehouse during inclement weather to test the strength of the structure or check how it responds when the winds buffet it. When the Treehouse creaks and sways under the weight of its wet, leafy foliage, he compares it to a ship riding the waves in rough seas. The structure provides support for the tree, and the tree does the same for the structure.

Recently, Mr. Treehouse said, "It would be impossible to trace all of the additions and remodeling projects that have taken place. I have completely redrawn and replaced the entire Treehouse at least once, piece by piece. For me, it is a good place to take out frustration and enjoy music, nature and the outdoors. It's fun! Everyone is a child at heart."

Mick is often asked these questions which he cannot answer. How many hours have you spent on the Treehouse? How many boards are in it? How much money

have you spent? However, he can tell you that there are seven picnic tables and 13 porch swings.

"Art is the most intense  
mode of individualism  
that the world has known."  
— Oscar Wilde

### Memorabilia

Two treehouses have appeared on the White House lawn. The first was constructed for Caroline and John-John Kennedy and was located so it could be seen from the Oval Office. The second was built for Amy Carter.

Some governors' mansions have treehouses. The Great State of Tennessee has a two-level structure which was built when Lamar Alexander was Governor from 1983 to 1987. The Mansion Host in Nashville said that the two-level structure is not in a tree; however, children still enjoy it.

The son of Louisiana's Governor, Charles Roemer (1988 to 1991), had his own treehouse. The four levels are entwined in a live oak, and it is located in back of the Governor's Mansion in Baton Rouge. The oak is very large in girth, and its huge branches support the levels. The grandchildren of the present Governor, Edwin Edwards, enjoy this treehouse. From one of the levels, there is a slide. It was described to me by the Mansion Hostess, Desiree Worsley, in February of 1994. This treehouse is not open to the public.

Most treehouses are built in maple or oak trees. Some have been constructed in yew, birch, evergreen, Windsor spruce, fir, hemlock and willow. Tree trunks, or more than one tree, sometimes support the structure.

Many photos exist in state historical libraries from Oregon to Massachusetts. Two of the oldest, existing photos of treehouses depict: An 1884 treehouse picnic in Nebraska, and a 1905 Minnesota get-together in a treehouse.

"Art is the desire of a man to express  
himself, to record the reactions of his  
personality to the world he lives in."  
— Amy Lowell

### Build It and They Will Come

Visitors arrive by different modes of travel: On foot, horseback, bicycles and motorcycles; and in cars, trucks, vans, stretch limos, recreational vehicles and buses (both school and chartered). Several years ago two hot air balloons landed in Timbercreek Meadow.

Folks from everywhere come to discover the Treehouse magic. They range in age from two months to 96 years; and they come from all walks of life: Architects, business professionals, clubs, doctors, educators, exchange students, farmers, homemakers, lawyers, ministers, retirees and children.

Representatives from 38 countries have visited the Treehouse in the 1990s: Australia, Bolivia, Brasil, Canada, Chile, China, Columbia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, England, Estonia, France, Hong Kong, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Laos, Latvia, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Panama, Poland, Russia, Samoa, Scotland, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay, Venezuela, Wales and West Germany.

People from 49 states and Washington, DC, have also visited this unique attraction. We are still awaiting visitors from Vermont.

Many return bringing their visitors, so another state or country may be added to the guest book. A lady from Council Bluffs paid at least three visits one summer with her house guests from afar. Others make an annual pilgrimage to the Treehouse.

On May 18, 1994, Iowa's 99 County Treasurers arrived in three Marshall motor coaches for a late afternoon visit to the Big Treehouse, preceding dinner at Elmwood Country Club.

On Sunday, July 31, 1994, Iowa Valley Continuing Education sponsored their first tour of four local gardens. The day was gorgeous, and the response was unbelievable. Close to 300 folks experienced the Big Treehouse in just a few hours.

Throughout each summer, bank tours have visited from the near and far corners of the State. Other groups include Friendship Force, Farm Bureau, Air Stream, garden clubs, school and church groups, daycares, as well as social clubs with names such as "Go for it!" and "I'll be seeing you!" The "Merry-go-rounds" from Nashua admit they

have been going around together quite awhile. Tours have supplemented many birthdays and anniversary celebrations and provided a "show and tell" subject for teachers and students alike.

In October of 1994, a World Experience Group met for a weekend in Marshalltown. Some of the students were from Russia, Mexico, Poland, Ecuador and Norway.

### For The Record

We have received out-of-state mail addressed to "The Big Tree House," "Tree House Residents," "Mick Jurgensen, Creator of the Treehouse of Dreams," "Mr. Treehouse" and "Treehouse Lane."

Other remarks are as follows:

"Something right out of Disney World!"  
— Walter Erbach, Lincoln, NE

"Really cool! Spectacular view!"  
— Ryan Weeks, Lacona, IA

"After a five-week trip, the Treehouse was one of the best things we saw. Time spent here was a generous gift."  
— Betty Eib, Indianapolis, IN

"It's the best kept Marshall County secret!"  
— Sue Burns, Marshalltown, IA

"Mick's Treehouse is ...well...amazing!"  
— Keith Brake, Monticello, IA

"That maple tree looks like a giant tomato plant in a cage!"  
— Jim Pollock, Bondurant, IA

"Treasure Island!"  
— Jennie Cortes, Bronx, NY

"If there's not enough room for both girls, they can go up one at a time. I don't have to go up."  
— A grandma making a reservation for her twin granddaughters.

"I won't sit on anything that moves (porch swings)! Do you have ramps?"  
— Embers Tour Member

"The pink cat!" (title given to Kitt, the cat)  
— Some Visiting Children

"Lots of timber!"  
— Gentleman from England

"The architecture is from the  
Robinson Crusoe period."  
— Dennis Douda

"This lofty inspiration brings  
out the child in everyone."  
— Dave Franzman

"Mick's Treehouse gives a whole  
new meaning to living the high life."  
— Cynthia Fodor

"It's a Treehouse that would  
make Donald Trump proud."  
— Jeanette Trompeter

"Mick and I, as members of the exclusive  
Treehouse Builders' Club of America,  
have learned about the art and  
craft of living out on a limb."  
— Mark Tucker (Treehouseman  
from St. Louis Park, MN)

"Cool!" is a typical remark of the 1990s. The essence of what is good is cool, not awesome, ducky, super or nifty. This term is used by all ages, and it appears in the guest register frequently. It often sounds like a two-syllable word. This slang term, now 50 years old, is used globally.

### **Humorous Incidents**

A very special guest called for a reservation; and she said, "This is mother Goos, and I would like to bring my little ones to the Treehouse this afternoon." I anxiously awaited the arrival of "Mother Goose and her goslings." They were delightful guests. Mrs. Goos often introduces herself in this unique manner.

I received a call for someone wishing to visit. When I asked where they were calling from, their answer was, "We are parked in your drive right now." That was a first, but now many people call on their cellular phones when they reach the area.

One grandmother stood in dismay when she asked her cute, little grandson if he liked

it. He stomped his foot and loudly said, "No!" Embarrassed, she stood aside with him and asked him why. He screamed just as loudly, "Cause, it's not mine."

"Birds of a feather, stick together!" Once-in-awhile, a group remains so close to each other that it is like a human chain. Usually only one asks the questions. They seem to enjoy everything in their own way, that is in unison.

Stefie Hustosky was one of our summer folks in 1994 and 1995. Her husband, John, was a bulldozer operator with 30 years experience. While he worked on the Marshalltown Expressway, Stefie became an enthusiastic Treehouse tour guide in 1995. On one occasion, a gentleman gustily announced, "I came all the way from Indiana just to visit this place." To his surprise, she quickly replied, "And, I, sir, came all the way from (Erie) Pennsylvania to show it to you."

One Sunday morning in South Dakota, we were having breakfast at a Holiday Inn when a lady across the dining room started waving her arms frantically. I imagined I heard the word treehouse. I did! Her voice carried across the room, "It's the Treehouse Lady from Marshalltown!"

As Gary Wilson of GTE in Grinnell and his guests were leaving, they passed some new arrivals. A lady in his group convincingly remarked, "I hate to tell you folks, but the elevator is out of order today. You will have to use the steps." When we arrived at Level 6, one lady stopped, looked me in the eye and asked, "Where is the elevator?" Momentarily, I was dumfounded, but then we all laughed.

In response to one of Mick's radio interviews, I received a telephone call from a farmer near Webster City. He had heard of the Treehouse on the radio while in the field on his tractor. He asked if it were true and was delighted even more when he came the following weekend with a neighbor couple. They thought he was making it up.

One Wednesday, a gentleman from the Chicago Board of Trade paid a visit. His daughter was attending the University of Iowa. The following Wednesday, three more men came from the Board of Trade; and more came the following week. I wonder if they all had daughters in Iowa City?

A grocery store publication entitled Happiness routinely appears in a chain of grocery stores in Kansas. The blurb about the

extravagant Treehouse brought numerous, unannounced guests rolling in from Kansas. They loved it!

### Memorable "Golden Link" Rewards

I find it somewhat difficult to write about something to which I am so close. I look at the Treehouse every day, and it is as much a part of me as looking in the mirror. My thoughts reflects many happy experiences in planning, constructing and sharing it.

Judy and Michael hosted our 50th Wedding Anniversary in August of 1990 in Mick's Treehouse. Although Bob and I got lost on different levels and it was difficult to locate us together, the Treehouse was where folks wanted to come and where I wanted to be.

Many guests will never be forgotten, as they have added a special touch.

Some young women from Russia never dreamed they would visit a treehouse. They introduced me to Truman Capote's book, "The Grass Harp." They overflowed with enthusiasm, even though they had been to Washington, DC, and traveled from coast to coast. One of the girls kept saying, "I can't believe I am really in a treehouse." For me, many quotes from the book create much the same ambience as does the Treehouse:

"Just entering the woods there was a double-trunked tree, really two trees, but their branches were so embraced that you could step from one into the other, in fact it was like a raft floating in a sea of leaves."

"The raftlike tree-house seemed to be treading over shrouded vaporish waters, . . . the mild rain had not penetrated the parasol of leaves.

"It was time to leave . . . the treehouse woods we left to winter."

A couple from Indiana stopped to see the Treehouse. The young woman had been hospitalized in Omaha for a bone-marrow transplant. They found solitude in the top of the tree at dusk. A priest had given her a few dollars to spend for some entertainment on their way home. She wanted to give it to the Treehouse fund, as it stood for a dream.

She commented, "This is the only place the two of us have been able to share our feelings with peace of mind. We have been

smothered with nurses, doctors and machines." When they left, the young man's eyes were full of tears. They were so sincere that they called to let me know when they arrived home to Indiana.

Young and old alike enjoy the mind-boggling puzzles that are usually on one of the picnic tables. A boy from Holland was a genius with all of them. His skill with these puzzles won the admiration of his host family. This activity helps many visitors break the ice and bond with others. Success often brings cheers or applause. Pete, the repeating parrot, is also good for smiles and laughter.

One day, architects from Oregon, Tennessee and Kansas met in the Treehouse. They called Mick an "arboreal architect." They enjoyed looking at the structure. One said, "When a man builds something, you know what, why and who that man is."

A visitor, whose homeland was Laos, noticed the willow tree. It reminded her of the "angel trees" in that faraway land. When the breeze blows, the trees' branches (wings) flutter softly. She was twelve when she came to America.

A local retirement community has made several visits. One 90-year old sang a delightful version of "Oh! How I love to go up in a swing!" while swinging in a porch swing.

When a day care from Ames scheduled a visit, I was slightly surprised when it was an adult daycare group. There were Japanese and Russian-born grandfathers who spoke little English. That day, sharing smiles with one another was their only means of communication. One lady took it upon herself to explain the purpose of the dumb-waiter.

I was told by an attendant that they had never before heard one of the fellows talk in anyone's presence. It was a breakthrough. Two agile members proudly made it to the top to ring the bell. For them, it was a victory bell.

The Dammanns, a couple from Norway, made a return visit to the Treehouse on their fifth wedding anniversary; Christina Dammann is the granddaughter of the late Carol Norris.

Jill Manning, a young teacher from Centerville, has made several treks to the Treehouse. She enthusiastically reflects on

## The Golden Link

childhood memories of the area when her family first moved to Marshalltown and lived at Shady Oaks Mobile Home Park.

"Amazing Grace" began to softly play as a group of ladies were offering silent prayers. The recording was appropriately timed but totally unplanned as six cassettes were randomized. The pastoral setting, sun filtering through the leaves and rippling sound of small stream transformed the mood of the morning to a few moments of reverence.

A delightful, impromptu visit was paid by a couple from Cardiff, Wales, who last visited the United States 12 years ago. They stopped with a fellow Rotarian on their way to a meeting in Boone. The couple was as entertaining to me as the Treehouse was to them.

A lady from Atlanta, Georgia, called from Ames and wanted to see the Treehouse the next morning. When she arrived, she had her copy of Midwest Living with her and opened to the correct page. It had been opened to that page many times. She took my picture and requested that I autograph her issue. Her husband was also appreciative.

The most recent gypsy to discover Shady Oaks and the Treehouse was Boris Sodoma from Bratislava, the capital of the Republic of Slovakia. This gypsy ambassador, who rose above his culture to be a teacher and principal, was the interpreter for a delegation of Slovakian educators. Sodoma's soulful guitar accompanied this talented musician to America and to Marshalltown. Before leaving the Treehouse, Boris proudly presented a decorative pitcher from his homeland. His family has been dedicated to their ceramic industry for many years.

Dr. Jim Kelly returned to the University of Northern Iowa ("UNI") campus after attending an Administration Workshop sponsored by UNI. He reported, "I had to go all the way to Slovakia to see Mick's 1995 Treehouse video." It was shown by Sodoma to a group of school administrators.

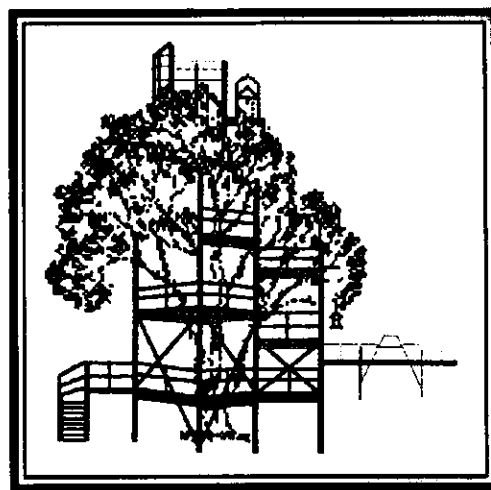
The Golden Link is treasured. I am grateful for the many pleasant experiences that have descended upon me throughout the Treehouse years. The words Treehouse and pleasure seem synonymous. I believe the summers spent gardening and sharing the Treehouse with friends has enhanced my

health and energy. It's an investment in living life to the fullest, right in my own backyard.

Robert and I continue to be the guardians of the Treehouse. I am the official tour guide and "Treehousekeeper." Robert does all the mowing; and the maple tree in our backyard reaches out to welcome visitors.

For me, the Treehouse is a love story. It holds me in its clutches throughout Spring, Summer and Fall. My life does a complete flip-flop when I return to a traditional lifestyle in Winter.

Look out my window,  
know Michael was there,  
Not just the garden,  
but EVERYWHERE!



**The Big Treehouse Logo**