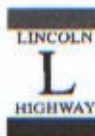




# TREEHOUSE TIMES

1983 25th Birthday Celebration 2008



The Big Treehouse is celebrating its "25th Birthday" in 2008. It is located at historic Shady Oaks Campground, which is observing its 83rd year of travel, tourism and accommodations. John Campbell staked his claim in 1848 and secured a land patent in 1850. This landmark provided a campground for his Rock Valley Mill, Methodist camp meetings and is the original site of the Rock Valley School.

Shady Oaks Cabin Camp/Campground began to provide lodging for early transcontinental travelers in 1925. Shady Oaks, the first cabin camp west of the Mississippi on the Lincoln Highway, is the oldest, established private campground in Iowa in continuous operation. Today, it is an architectural outdoor museum: 1925 cabin, log-style dayroom and office/residence, set in their original landscape along the loop drive. The giant bur oak trees are living witnesses to Shady Oaks history.

Michael (Mick) Jurgensen was three-years-old when Shady Oaks became his home. That spring, Mick named the south hill "The Valley of Deep Green Fern" and helped place stepping stones down its slope. Soon, his special "being alone spot" was in the low branches of a maple sapling in the backyard. In 1980, Mick's love for landscaping, lighting and gardening became his passion.

Early in 1983, Mick's "Treehouse Dream" (designed in mind and on paper) got off the ground after six pallets were delivered. Mick's imagination flourished. A single deck on the west side of the maple tree was called "The Morning Side," because it was shaded from the rising sun. Entry was made by ladder. Railings, lighting and furniture followed. Soon, the second floor, a perch at the top of a ladder, offered a lofty view.

Being a private attraction, you must make a reservation and wear tennis shoes. Weather permitting, your guide will meet you by the carved, legendary "Tree Spirit" at the south entrance. Going through the gate, you immediately notice the lush fern bordering the coiling steps in "Snake Alley" below. Hostas also flourish beneath the spreading bur oak umbrellas.

As you proceed down "Easy Street," the lower-left side is edged by a 50-foot-long flower box, overflowing with impatiens and trailing vines. On the right side, festive fun flags flutter above in the summer breeze. Drifting dulcimer music soothes the mind and taps the magic of this natural setting.

Via the elevated boardwalk to the Treehouse, sensors set off various sound effects as you pass. Button-activated voice recordings offer pertinent information. The Treehouse may be reached by crossing a replica of the 1901 M & St. L Railroad Bridge; the original can be seen across the field to the east. After "Raccoon Hollar," you discover the "Covered Bridge Museum" with photo-lined walls depicting the 158-year historical review of Shady Oaks and Rock Valley.

There, in the leafy branches of the maple tree, looms a fantastic treehouse with sturdy railings. Small and large rooms appear on strong branches amongst the leaves. There's a kitchen nook with running water. The internal stairway winds around the ever-growing trunk. There are benches and porch swings for sitting. A wooden bucket, on a rope attached to pulleys, spans five levels. Numerous hanging, illuminated red fishing lanterns cast light on each level at dusk. Six long wooden flower boxes on four levels seek the sun on three sides. Above the Bell Tower appears the Moon Viewing Level, or apex. All steps, including the 60-step "Spiral Staircase," may be lit (by wireless remote) with white rope lighting. Elsewhere, colorful rope lighting is spectacular at nightfall.

You leave by elevated walkway which overlooks a small stream. A Model T horn honks as you cross Mick's "Rainbow Bridge," which replicates the Lincoln Highway's 1918 Marsh Arch Bridge.

"Hospitality Booth" is where visitors from all 50 states, Washington D.C. and over 60 countries have signed our Guest Book.

**"I'm a special Treehouse to tour. The irregularities and variations of each level are characteristic of my structure and contribute to my uniqueness. Thank you for viewing me with care."**

Call (641) 752-2946 - For Treehouse Reservations

Fair Weather Visits Only -- Tennis Shoes Required (No Flip-Flops)

Take Hwy. 30, 3 Mi. East of Marshalltown or 3.5 Mi. West of Exit 192 at Le Grand  
Turn North on Shady Oaks Rd. & Travel 1/4 Mi. to 2370 (East Side)

Home of Historic Shady Oaks RV Campground

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Mary Gift

Judy Gift-Jurgensen

Mick & Liz Jurgensen