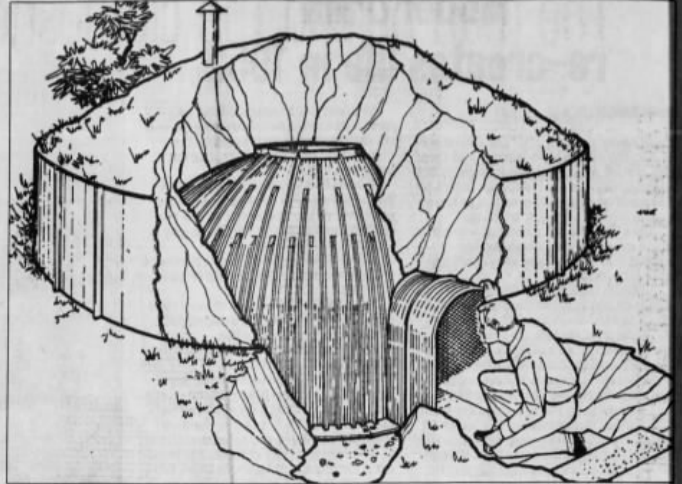


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Outside semimounded plywood box shelter



Outside semimounded steel igloo shelter

Y2K furor spawns look at old Civil Defense plans

By Darlene White Natale

The Y2K furor, the recent political controversy over a nuclear test, and a Japanese nuclear accident combined with a recently discovered 8-by-10 glossy of my

dad's Civil Defense group was a blast from the past for me.

The photograph showed these citizen soldiers standing straight, clad in white — even their helmets. They were all lined up, not unlike Dad's army pictures.

Most of these young men had seen the foreign menace face to face in our wars with Germany and Japan. They understood and embraced their responsibility to their families, community and country.

My dad's white CD helmet still sits poised on his closet shelf, always a reminder of the great legacy of

fear that flourished in America from the late 1940s and into the '70s as a consequence of the Manhattan Project and Hiroshima.

Many don't realize that President Kennedy popularized the term "civil defense." When Kennedy challenged a generation to do what they could for their country, he provided a group of WWII vets with an outlet for their patriotism and a new acronym.

In the box that had my dad's CD photo, I found Department of Defense pamphlets on civil defense in nuclear emergencies.

"Survival in disaster can be achieved by each of us only when we join hands together in a team effort for mutual protection. Civil Defense cannot give us survival until we give civil defense our service in the interest of our families, children and government," Kennedy said.

My dad and many of his friends took up Kennedy's gauntlet and formed local CD groups. As they sported their white uniforms and shiny white helmets, we all felt safer as we practiced our fallout drills.

These pamphlets brought back a flood of fearful memories.

It is probably not dissimilar to the experience kids today have as they walk through metal detectors at school. They are reminders of helplessness and accomplish little.

Department of Defense publications from the early 1960s said that the keystone of Kennedy's accelerated civil defense plan was to provide fallout shelters for all Americans.

Every elementary school kid knew that if the sirens

began to wail, you should take shelter — preferably in a building that displayed the snappy black and yellow nuclear fallout placard. Most schools and public buildings qualified and stocked food and emergency supplies.

We were taught to be ever vigilant since we lived in a small steel town and would undoubtedly be in the target area of any attack. If the communists had any chance of victory, it would be by crippling our steel industry.

Kennedy's plan detailed that home fallout shelters were needed and in isolated areas were essential. So the Department of Defense provided publication H-7 with shelter designs and material lists.

There were people who built their own shelters. The government supported this strategy and provided plans that detailed everything from the fallout protection factor of each type of shelter to materials lists and construction costs, drainage and fire protection.

"The effects of an atomic or hydrogen bomb are spread by three forms of energy — heat, blast and radiation. The heat flash is over in a matter of seconds, but it lasts long enough to set fire to exposed paper, cloth,

rubbish and dry wood over a large area. Immediately following the heat flash comes a tremendous blast wave.

"A nuclear explosion could start dozens of small fires in and near your home. You can minimize that risk by practicing fireproof housekeeping."

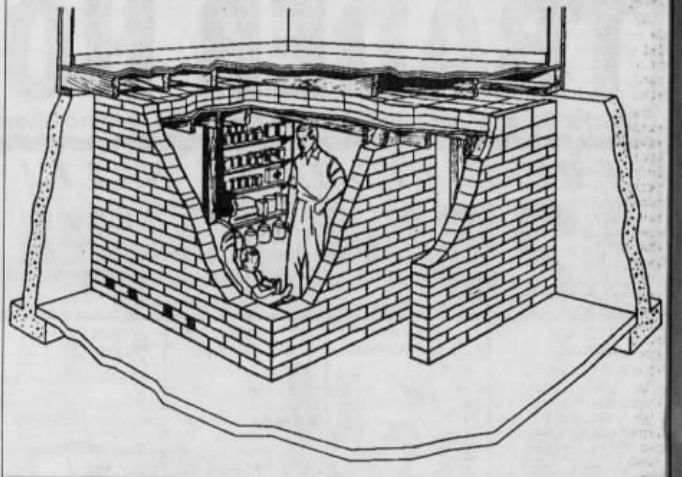
The Defense Department suggested each family appoint a fire marshal and helper to systematically search the home for fire hazards from attic to basement. (Apparently, my family fire marshal shirked his/her duties or I would not have found all these civil defense handouts.)

I would like to share some of my favorite shelter plans and family preparation worksheets. The shelters would make nifty storage areas for Y2K hoarding and could provide a secure location to protect your family when starving Y2K-ravaged neighbors begin pillaging.

Remember that some of these shelters could double as game rooms, allowing you to partially recoup the cost when you sell your home.

Darlene White Natale is a free-lance writer.

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