

Author built high-end Redding home

Written by Liz Skalka

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Part of a new memoir by Andrew Hoffman about building high-end homes takes place in Redding, where the author worked on a 29,000-square-foot home on a 180-acre estate in the 1980s.

A chapter of Mr. Hoffman's memoir, *Builder's Apprentice*, published by Huron River Press, details his experience building the "Shaw house," a name given to protect the true homeowners' identity.

Mr. Hoffman said pursuing a calling is the memoir's strong undercurrent. While an engineer and applying to Ivy League graduate schools, Mr. Hoffman helped a friend build a deck and "got a real charge out of it," he said.

"I had to sit down with my parents and say, 'I'm not going to Harvard or Berkeley,' " he recalled.

So began Mr. Hoffman's journey in construction that ultimately landed him in Redding, and also Ridgefield, where he built a 13,000-square-foot home.

While in Redding, Mr. Hoffman, who grew up in Norwood, Mass., rented a room in a home near town center. He recalled his co-workers frequenting the Redding Roadhouse, where they would go for beers after work.

Mr. Hoffman's memoir also focuses on those alongside whom he built homes. "That element of the story I think is unique," he said.

Helping to construct the Shaw house was a "once-in-a-lifetime experience," Mr. Hoffman explained. "It was an extreme challenge. It took all my attention and focus."

Years after the experience, Mr. Hoffman decided to turn this period of his life into a memoir.

"I wrote the book 20 years after the experience," he said, "after 20 years of hindsight and 20 years of growing up."

"I'm always interested in hearing about people who take sharp right turns in life," he added.

Mr. Hoffman, who earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, is now the Holcim professor of sustainable enterprise at the University of Michigan. He said how he got there is a "story for another day." He is also the author of seven books and more than 80 articles. He lives in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Builder's Apprentice is for sale at book stores nationwide and on the Web.

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