

Book tells about building top-end house in Ridgefield

Written by The Ridgefield Press

Monday, 16 August 2010 06:12

Huron River Press has just published *Builder's Apprentice*, a memoir by former Ridgefield builder Andrew Hoffman, describing how he quit an engineering job, declined acceptances for graduate school at Harvard and Berkeley and took a carpenter's job on Nantucket — entering the world of high-end custom building.

Within four years, he was supervising the construction of a 29,000-square-foot mansion on a 180-acre estate in Redding and a 13,000 square foot house off North Salem Road in Ridgefield in the late 1980s.

"My goal in writing this book was first, of course, to describe how uniquely high-end homes are built for select clients," said Mr. Hoffman, now a college professor. "It is a glimpse into the lives of blue-collar workers as well as architects, engineers and clients that come together to make these projects a reality. It allows readers the opportunity to experience the joys and challenges of building one-of-a-kind homes."



He said he also wrote the book as "a coming-of-age story, and a celebration of the pursuit of creative impulses. I wanted to create a story that would inspire others to pursue their own dreams."

"Right now, as a professor, I see young people struggling with a desire to have more than a career; a desire to have their work be what really makes them passionate; a desire to have a 'calling.' They are developing their 'careers'; they are building their resumes; they are taking jobs that they don't really like, hoping they'll lead to jobs that they will one day like. And deep down inside, they are dissatisfied and frustrated."

Mr. Hoffman recalled good times in Ridgefield. "I always enjoyed breakfast at Nina's, especially early when all the contractors and tradesmen came in before work," he told The Press. "One of the architects I worked with — Chris Moomaw — had an office on Catoonah Street and we would have meetings at little restaurant right next door, the Rusty Nail."

He said he "got a lot of my supplies from Ridgefield Supply and so, came in to Ridgefield with my pickup truck a lot for materials or to meet with my salesman, Bob Duvall, or the owner. I loved coming into the store and placing an order — or calling one in."

Mr. Hoffman is currently the Holcim professor of sustainable enterprise at the University of Michigan. He has published seven books and over 80 articles. He has received numerous awards for his writing and has received international notoriety in his field. He lives in Ann Arbor and keeps his carpentry skills honed by constantly working on his house. He said his neighbors tease that he doesn't live in a house, he lives in a project.

For more information on Professor Hoffman and his writings, visit webuser.bus.umich.edu/ajhoff/

Source: <http://www.acorn-online.com/joomla15/theridgefieldpress/people/67450-book-tells-about-building-top-end-house-in-ridgefield.html>