

Amazing Aging!

For Seniors and Those Who Love Them

**A free publication of the Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc.
Advocacy, Action and Answers on Aging for Shawnee, Jefferson and Douglas Counties**

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Our Mission

Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc. advocates on aging issues, builds community partnerships and implements programs within Shawnee, Jefferson, and Douglas counties to help seniors live independent and dignified lives.

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*Kennith and Wanda Whaley
welcome you to the House
that Love Built*

(Please read story on page 3.)

The House that Love Built

By Marsha Henry Goff

The stone and brick home at the intersection of two country roads near Baldwin City that Kenneth and Wanda Whaley and their five young boys moved into 48 years ago was built with love by Kenneth and his father, Howard. The Whaley boys are grown and on their own now — although four of the five live nearby and stop in often — but it is obvious that love still lives within the walls that are many years older than the house itself.

Although he doubts that it would be allowed today, the house was constructed of lumber that was harvested by Kenneth and his father from a big barn and three longtime homes of families — Kampschroeder, Bradley and Whitaker — whose land was sold or acquired through imminent domain to make way for Clinton Lake. The Kampschroeder

home belonged to Wanda's parents, LaVerne and Myrtle, who brought her there from the hospital as a baby and where she had lived until she and Kenneth married on June 22, 1957.

The men also extracted a bathtub and submersible well pump from the Whitaker house. "We had permission to take whatever we wanted from those houses," Kenneth says, "and we didn't even have to clean up boards we removed that we didn't want." Still, it was time-consuming, especially removing the sheeting from the barn which was 1x3 tongue and groove and using it on the new home's roof. "It went slow," Kenneth remembers.

Both of the Whaley men were active farmers so they worked on the house when weather did not allow them to farm. Surprisingly, they built the house without blueprints or inspections.



This is the house that love built.

"Our only requirement was buying a \$25 building permit and the only plans we had were floor space," says Kenneth, who regards his father as a "genius at construction."

Although his father believed hallways were wasted space, the walkout ranch home does have a hallway leading to the three bedrooms and two bathrooms on the main floor. The lower level boasts a large family room dominated by a pool table. "The boys had sold some straw," Ken-

nith explains, "and we took some cows to Kansas City and came back with a pool table." Wanda says, "This pool table was great when the boys were growing up," then adds that the grandchildren play pool when they visit.

There are also two bedrooms and a third bathroom in the lower level. Not one of the home's three bathrooms accesses from the kitchen. That was Kenneth's stipulation

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This watercolor of the Kampschroeder farmstead painted by Wanda's Aunt Ruby Wagner has a place of honor over the Whaley's living room fireplace.



Aerial view of the Whaley farmstead.

The Whaleys

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because the two-story farmhouse on the 160-acre farm they bought in 1965 had only one bathroom that was just off the kitchen. Under the garage is a large all-concrete room where wood is stored for the downstairs fireplace which helps heat the home; that room also serves as a tornado shelter.

With the exception of having the concrete walls poured, the two men did all the work—including electrical and plumbing—themselves. The all-electric home (except for a propane heater which solely heats water in the laundry room) is equipped with radiant heating in the ceilings and each room has its own thermostat which makes it easier to save on their electric bill by shutting off heat in rooms that are not in use.

A sunroom was added later as was a walk-in shower in one of the bathrooms. A deck off the sunroom was built upside

down by Kenneth, then turned over with a tractor and attached to the house. Their son Don, who grew up to be a stone mason, improved the house by adding stone to the front and brick to the back. The house cost only \$20,000 to build, but is so well-constructed that it has stood the test of time and looks as beautiful as it did when the family moved in all those years ago.

There are many family treasures in their home. A lovely painting of the Kampschroeder home where Wanda grew up, painted by Wanda's Aunt Ruby Wagner, hangs over the fireplace in the living room, while a buck deer head hangs above the stairs descending to the lower level. The sunroom contains a smoker stand that was made by Howard Whaley when he was in high school.

A trophy won by Kenneth when he placed first in a Farmland truck-driving contest has a place of honor in the family room. That first-place finish won him a trip with Wanda to California where he competed



The Whaleys enjoy spending time in the sunroom with beautiful views of their farm. The table with the red candle is a smoker table Kenneth's father, Howard Whaley, made in high school.

against winners from other states. But one of the most charming treasures hangs in the bedroom: a lace art piece framing their wedding picture and embroidered with a heartfelt family blessing.

Kennith proved the truth of

the adage that "you can take the boy out of the country but you can't take the country out of the boy." After marriage, he worked at Reuter Organ Factory but says he did not like factory work because he missed being

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Imagine what this creative plant holder will look like in summer with colorful flowers spilling out of the pot.



The kitchen—with updated appliances—has well-served the family for 48 years. The curtains at left screen the sunroom during cold weather.

The Whaleys

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outdoors. That is why they purchased the farm and moved into the existing farmhouse. He had such great memories of his boyhood as a farmer that he

purchased and restored a 1953 Farmall tractor that was exactly like the one he drove as a youngster.

Farmers are accustomed to hard work. So are farm wives. The Whaleys raised show pigs, crops and operated a dairy, eventually milking 80 to 90 Holstein

cows. Wanda's job was to bottle the milk they sold at Quality Oil at a rate of about 40 gallons a day. "She bottled a lot of milk," Kenneth says proudly. Even the boys had chores beginning at the age of six. The younger boys fed the calves before going to school while the older boys had heavier work.

During the late 1970s when interest rates rose to 18 percent, the Whaleys had to make a hard choice. Their home and farm were not mortgaged but the new milking parlor and the dairy business were. "The interest was eating me alive," says Kenneth, "and the bank wanted me to mortgage the farm. I asked the banker what other options I had and he said I could have a sale. So we had a sale and got out of the dairy business. That is when I went to work as a truck driver." He worked for Farmland from 1979 until he retired from there in 2003.

He now leases his land although three of his sons each have ten acres that were part of the original 160 acres. Duane has a house to the east, Don has a barn with living quarters to the south and Roger has ten acres south of Don. Eric, who graduated from K-State, lives in Wamego.

Jeff lives nearby and he and his wife adopted five young children — three boys and two girls, ages 12 to 3 — that the media dubbed the Fab Five. Hundreds of families in the United States and as far away as Australia wanted to adopt the siblings but Jeff and his wife Toni were chosen to become their parents. "They went from having no children one day to having five the next," says Kenneth. The Whal-



This sentimental lace decoration which holds the Whaleys' wedding photo, an embroidered poem and other treasured items hangs in their bedroom.

ey's have embraced their role as grandparents to all of their 15 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Last year, Kenneth was badly burned in a freak trash fire that sent him to KU Medical Center. He is fully recovered now, but says those treating him at the Burn Center said they "liked to deal with farmers because farmers are tough." Their church

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Comfortable chairs sit in front of the fireplace.



This pool table provided a lot of fun for the five Whaley boys during their growing-up years.

The Whaleys

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brought them many meals during his recovery. He was deeply appreciative but embarrassed that he and Wanda were the recipients of meals instead of the donors.

Two other serious accidents have proven his toughness. At 18, he lost part of his foot in a combine accident and several years ago, a cow butted him and knocked him out. His son Duane found him lying on a flatbed wagon and asked him if he was OK. Kenneth told him he would be fine as soon as he caught his breath. "I must have looked like death warmed over," Kenneth admits, "because he took me to the hospital where I was transferred to KU Med and

hospitalized for ten days for five broken ribs and a punctured lung."

Accidents aside, Kenneth and Wanda Whaley will tell you that farm life has been wonderful for them and their sons. As

for living almost half of a century in a home built by her husband and his father with lumber from the house where she grew up, Wanda says, "It feels pretty good." Indeed it does because love lives there!



The Whaley family, fewer than now, posed for a photo several years ago.



Kenneth won this attractive 1st place trophy in a truck driving contest.



The wood-burning fireplace helps heat the house.



This bathtub with a seat at the back (not shown) was removed from the Whitaker house.

Please call Kevin at (785) 841-9417 to place your display ad in the SPRING 2024 issue of Amazing Aging! The deadline is April 15.