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110-FT. WALLS KEEP CLIMBERS IN SHAPE

Old Grain Elevator Now A Rock Climbing Gym

With a lot of imagination and hard work, Chris and Pam Schmick of Bloomington, Ill., found a unique new use for an abandoned grain elevator.

The Schmicks bought a 50-year-old, deteriorating Funk Brothers grain elevator near downtown Bloomington, Ill., and turned it into a highly popular rock climbing gym which they call "Upper Limits".

Four of the elevator's 13 silos have been rigged for climbing inside. One 110-ft. high outdoor wall is lighted for night climbing and has eight separate roped routes. There's also another non-lighted 110-ft. high wall. Altogether, the facility has more than 20,000 sq. ft. of climbing surface available and 44 separate roped routes.

Shoes, harnesses, chalk bags, relay devices, and other equipment can be rented, and rock climbing classes are offered.

An average of 30 climbers per day work out in the gym, but the Schmicks have hosted as many as 120 per day. While most of the climbing is done inside the converted silos, those seeking the ultimate mountain climbing thrill can show up on very cold days and climb a frozen ice wall. It's created by trickling water down the side of a 64-ft. high silo. Chris says he can climb the ice in 10 minutes.

Pam says most of their customers are city kids with an average age of about 21. However, students in their classes range from 9 to 65 years old.

Rock climbing is gaining fast in popularity. Ten years ago there was just one rock climbing gym in the U.S. Now there are more than 250. The American Sport Climber's Federation predicts 30 new rock climbing gyms will be built this year alone.

Chris, who is 28, did a hitch in the Army and then did some college but dropped out to travel and do rock climbing. He and Pam then operated a much smaller rock climbing gym in Peru, Ill. They were searching for a better facility when they came across the grain elevator. They decided it was right and tried to rent it. However, the owners didn't want the responsibility of a rock climbing gym so the Schmicks purchased it.

First they had to do a massive cleanup and get rid of tons of rotten soybeans and old steel. Then they had to install lights, heat, water, and restroom facilities. To get the silos ready for climbing they drilled thousands of holes into the walls in order to attach handholds and other equipment.

Rock climbers work in teams. Each climber wears a body harness to which is attached a rope and pulley, with the rope reaching down to the climber's buddy who remains on the ground. As the climber scales the wall, his buddy removes the slack from the rope and keeps the rope tight and secure with his own body weight. If the climber loses his hold - and this can happen easily - there's no danger of falling as long as the buddy is doing his job right.

The Schmicks say Upper Limits is well located for a rock climbing gym. Bloomington is the home of Illinois State University and is also close to the University of Illinois at Champaign. Students from Decatur and Peoria also find it an easy drive. Still other climbers think nothing of driving from Springfield, St. Louis, and Chicago.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Chris and Pam Schmick, Upper Limits Rock Gym and Pro Shop, 1304 W. Washington St., Bloomington, Ill. 61701 (ph 309 829-8255).

Years Of Persistence Results In Safe Cattle Crossing

We recently read a story in Farmweek about an 80-ft. long "cattle tunnel" that was built under a busy highway for dairy farmers Charles and Barbara Bickford of Plainfield, Vermont. The tunnel, built by the state Agency of Transportation, allows the Bickfords to herd their cows under the highway instead of across it.

Getting the \$200,000 tunnel built wasn't easy. The Bickfords had been trying for 27 years. State officials had originally promised to build the tunnel as part of a major road improvement project, but the project stalled repeatedly. After years of persistent lobbying, they finally got the state legislature to pass a bill last year authorizing construction.

The Bickfords' farm is located on U.S. Route 2 near the top of a hill. Traffic on the road is steady. The road runs right through the Bickfords' place, with their house and milk barn on one side of the road and a pasture on the other side. As traffic grew heavier over the years, the Bickfords built two silos on the barn side of the road so they could feed cows at night when traffic was heaviest without having to drive them across the road. Signs with flashing lights were used to warn drivers when cows were crossing.

Son Dale Bickford, the fourth generation of the family on the farm, has three kids of his own who helped get the cattle across and says it wasn't a safe crossing for the kids,



Agency of Transportation built the crossing for the Bickfords.

either.

The tunnel consists of an 8-ft. dia. steel pipe with an asphalt floor and is long enough to accommodate highway expansion if the road is ever widened. It was completed about one month ago. "It works even better than we thought it would. The cows love it and come home with no problems. They walk single file through the tunnel on their own without having to be persuaded," says Barbara.

"After the original story was published we got calls and letters from all over the U.S. One farmer said his cows had to go through a similar tunnel but that it was only 6 ft. wide. It was so long and narrow that when one cow tried to turn around she got stuck and was trampled to death. Our tunnel is wider so that hasn't been a problem."

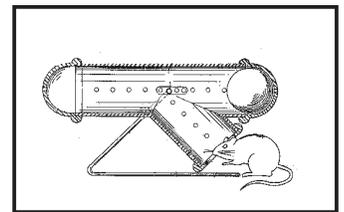
He Built A "Better" Mousetrap

"Attorneys at the patent office use me as the prime example of someone who built a truly 'better mousetrap,'" says inventor Bill Oviatt about his new-style mousetrap that uses a ping pong ball and teeter-totter to catch mice alive.

It consists of a 6-in. length of 1 3/4-in. dia. plastic tubing with removable end caps. It balances on a piece of wire. An "entrance ramp" goes down to the ground when the trap is in the "set" position.

You put the bait in front and the ping pong ball in back. When a mouse climbs into the tube, the trap drops forward and the ball plugs the hole, trapping the mouse.

"Conventional spring-type traps crush the mouse, contaminating your home with body parts and fluid," Oviatt notes. "Also, skin mites and ticks leave the dead mouse look-



ing for a new home. This trap eliminates those problems."

Sells for \$9.99 plus \$3 S&H (\$4 outside U.S.).

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Teeter Pong! Company, P.O. Box 1399, Lander, Wyo. 82520 (ph 307 332-5200; fax 5600).

He Makes Tool, Horseshoe "Gate Sculptures"

B.J. Godard of Cottonwood, Arizona, recently sent FARM SHOW photos of these "sculpture gates" made by her father-in-law, Don Godard, of Cornville, Arizona. Here's the story behind the gates as she tells it.

"For years Don cowboied around the Verde valley where he collected a variety of old items. Finally he decided to put them all together and created the first gate which opens into his front yard. Most of his life he shod horses so he included many of his own used horseshoes as well as a variety of shop tools. He can tell you when and where he found each item.

"Don made two more gates for his daughter, Connie, and grand daughters Holly and Sara. On one of these gates he used horseshoes to spell out names. All three gates get a lot of attention from passersby who often slow down to get a better look, but no one appreciates them more than his own family.



Godard's gates include horseshoes and a variety of shop tools.

We all know that in each piece of each gate there's a little of grandpa.

"Don's small farm has many more unique sculptures - some of old farm equipment and some of men made from old chains using old rusted plows. All of them can be found in what I lovingly call 'Grandpa's Graveyard'."

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