

Outhouse Expert Builds New, Restores Old

George Papp Sr. is a man of letters. Not the usual letters like MBA or PhD. The letters after his name are OBPA, and they stand for "Outhouse, Backhouse and Privy Authority".

Papp says he became an OBPA when his daughter bought a 100-year-old home in New Hampshire. She wanted an authentic outhouse to go with the home, and dad felt obligated to help. That first project turned into a small one-person business as family and friends started placing orders. The fact that Papp lives in a 300-year-old Connecticut town filled with many colonial buildings helped move the business along. Many of Papp's customers live in the area and want restorations or replacement outhouses. However, his work can also be found throughout New York and New England. Papp says his outhouses are popular for cabins or simply to keep the kids from messing up the house with their frequent trips from backyard to bathroom.

Papp builds three styles of outhouses: the Guardhouse, the Shed, and the Euro-French. The Guardhouse is best suited for a single hole, but often two are built back to back, one for the ladies and one for the gents. He

says that his iconic Shed style, with a roof sloping from front to back, is a good design for standing or sitting. It's also easy to expand if more holes are needed. The third style, Euro-French, is a modification of the Guardhouse, and a tribute to the French for their role in the Revolutionary War.

Papp is an accomplished woodworker who provides custom seating to fit each client's needs. Seats are generally 18 to 19 in. from the floor. Papp's outhouses are built to last. He uses hard woods for the seats because they're easier to keep clean. He sands them smooth and applies "the finest oil".

Depending on style and size, Papp's outhouses sell for \$650 to \$1,400. Because of the custom nature of his work, he doesn't sell kits or plans. Customers must drive to his workshop to get a new privy and, no, basements aren't included.

Maxwell houses have very important details in common. Proper basement venting keeps the experience more pleasant and prevents methane gas from accumulating.

Papp says that in colonial days some outhouses were located inside a house. Instead of a pit, they used trays. Businesses

sprung up to empty the trays and the urine was sold to tanneries, gunpowder manufacturers and the textile industry. Papp will construct one of these "indoor houses", if requested.

Always a historian, Papp says old abandoned outhouses are a treasure trove for those who love history and digging. Muskets, knives, coins and wallets are among the valuable items found in colonial pits, but the most common items are whiskey bottles.

Papp markets his products through his website and his book, "The Authority". He also makes appearances on regional television and radio and gives speaking engagements. His 30-minute history lectures, given in libraries and schools, often end up lasting a few hours because people find the topic so interesting. He says the most commonly asked question is "what's the meaning of the crescent moon?" He answers by telling people "It would be nice to have some exciting story or some secret meaning, but the crescent moon is just a carryover from early colonial days when hardware was expensive and scarce, and a crescent moon cut-out makes a perfect door handle."



George Papp builds 3 styles of outhouses. This one measures 42 in. sq. and has a front vent and asphalt shingle roof. It sells for \$1,200.

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New Type Of Charcoal Produces More Heat

The California company that produces Soilok, a product that's sprayed onto gravel and dirt roads to harden them (Vol. 35, No.3), is now using the product to make charcoal. The idea is important for developing countries because charcoal is often used as an inexpensive fuel for cooking and heating.

Using Soilok to make charcoal saves trees because organic waste materials are used to produce the product. The result is a charcoal that's inexpensive to manufacture, burns cleaner, and saves valuable vegetation.

Kent Rush of Pacific Enzymes says the new technology produces Soilok Charcoal in a cost efficient way so the product is less expensive than traditional charcoal. The Soilok process uses organic matter such as

coconut husk, leaves, twigs and discarded charcoal dust. Material is dried, ground into a uniform size, then mixed with Soilok and water before being compressed into briquettes. Within a day the briquettes are dry enough for packing and shipping.

Rush says using discarded coconut husk is especially beneficial in the Philippines because garbage collectors don't want to pick up the material. It's bulky and they can't make money hauling it.

The cost for a kilo of Soilok Charcoal is about 50 cents compared to about \$1 for conventional charcoal. Rush says another added benefit of Soilok Charcoal is that 1 kilo will cook about 2.5 kilos of rice. One kilo of conventional charcoal will only



Kent Rush of Pacific Enzymes holds charcoal briquettes made using Soilok, a product his company produces. The charcoal is inexpensive to manufacture and burns cleaner, making it ideal for developing countries.

cook about 1.5 kilos of rice. Rush says the company producing and marketing Soilok Charcoal in the Philippines is marketing it to homeowners and they hope to soon be able to produce it in quantity to sell to businesses.

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Family Holds Annual Chicken "Bee"

For the past 5 years, the Cable family of Melvin, Iowa, has held a chicken plucking bee when their broilers were ready. Three generations of the family make a special day out of processing 60 birds.

"I remember going with my mother to her parents to process chickens every summer," says Lori Schiernbeck. "Now the children in our family will remember this."

Schiernbeck and her husband Troy raise the broilers and host the event, which includes her parents as well as her brother and his children.

Everybody has a role to play, bleeding the birds out, plucking the feathers, removing heads and feet, and finally cutting them up and vacuum packing them for freezing.

Backs, ribs and other bony parts are collected to be cooked later and canned as chicken broth. Schiernbeck also keeps layer hens for local egg sales off the farm. When they are finished as layers, they too will be processed, cooked and canned.

"It's easy to make chicken noodle soup when all you have to do is open a jar," says Schiernbeck.

Schiernbeck's mother Connie Cable brings years of expertise to the event. She recalls her parents and siblings butchering from 25 to 50 chickens every Saturday for sale to a



Photo courtesy Karen Schwallier

Every year 3 generations of the Cable family hold a chicken plucking bee, processing 60 birds at a time.

local restaurant.

"There are now 4 families involved, and we each take home 15 chickens," says Schiernbeck. "It's a lot of work, but knowing what goes into your food makes it taste better."



Bruce Carter cut the seat and rear end off a second MTD garden tractor to make this 2-seat, 6-wheel model.

Little 6-Wheeler Turns Heads

When Bruce Carter takes a grandchild to town on his 6-wheel MTD garden tractor, people notice. The seat and rear end of a second MTD are attached to the rear.

"They enjoy it, and anyone who sees it wants to know where I got it," says Carter. The concept is simple and was born when a shaft on the MTD's mower deck failed. Carter had taken it to his son Shawn, a troubleshooting mechanic, for an evaluation. "He told me the mower deck was shot and not worth fixing," said Carter.

The 14 1/2 hp motor had plenty of power, and the 7-speed transmission worked fine. Carter decided to keep it for his grandkids

to ride. However, his son had a better idea.

"He had an old MTD that no longer worked," explains Carter. "He cut it off just ahead of the driver's seat and welded a steel plate between the 2 frames to make a 2-seat, 6-wheel garden tractor."

Carter acknowledges that the solid connection makes the 6-wheeler ride rough. "I have a seat belt on it, and the grandkids don't mind the ride," he says. "They just have fun driving each other around our 2 acres."

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