STATE OF OREGON
DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGY & MINERAL INDUSTRIES
329 S.W. OAK ST.
PORTLAND, OREGON

THE ORE.-BIN

VOL. 2 NO. 2 PORTLAND, OREGON February 1940

MY DREAM HOUSE

by

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When I was in the 7th grade - that is, during the summer vacations - I got my first real job. I mean my first REAL job, not selling papers or running errands or any of those things kids usually do. I got a job in a brick plant in our neighborhood. The consideration was four bits a day of ten hours each. Folks, that was money in those days! Do you remember what happened in 1907? They call it "depression" nowadays; the word was "panic" in 1907. Well, Dad raised Hell and put a stull under it and Mother doubled and redoubled, but I won. They both said I was too small (which I wasn't) and too young (which was irrelevant). I had already worked ten days at the plant "for love" before mentioning the fiscal angle to the manager or the job to my folks. They thought an overgrown kid must blow off steam; it wouldn't last more than a few days. It did, though. I stuck 'til school began in the fall.

I certainly learned the brick-making business from clay pit to kiln, -"as she was did" in our town. It was like this: The plant was an old one. It had produced bricks for most of the streets and half the business blocks in town, but brick pavements and buildings were going out-of-style - along with the owner of the yard. The personnel of the entire enterprise consisted of three: the owner of the works, a fine old man of about eighty; a lop-eared, mangy, gray, torpescent old jackass of about forty; and myself. When the old man would call "Jack", the rest of the force would rally round and he would take his pick. I've always suspected there wasn't much to choose between the jackass and myself, except perhaps for age.

When we needed "mud", I would take a muckstick, the jackass, and a big two-wheeled cart, trundle off down across the river to the pit, and bring back a half ton of clay. Then I'd muck the clay out of the cart into the "mill" which was no more nor less than a hopper containing a big mixing screw or paddle arrangement. Reminded me of our old-fashioned hand coffee-mill - the kind in which we used to grind Arbuckle's and Lion Head Coffee. Remember when we smart men folks would sometimes try to help the women by offering to grind the coffee? And we'd take the little brown box affair between our knees and start turning the crank . . only we'd forget which side the little drawer was on, and the cockeyed thing would come out and spill coffee all over the floor! Well, the clay mill had a crank just like that, too, only we called it a sweep. We always hitched the jackass to the sweep and he turned the mill. I turned the jackass; and the old man turned both of us. At least, that was the general idea. At the southeast edge of the sixty-foot circle-path was a spot of shade that old Jack loved, and in which he usually stopped in passing. I called it Profanity Corner and it justified its name.

Most of the time, of course, I was "off-bearing" bricks - carrying them three at a time in their mold from the molding table to the "yard". They had to be turned over out of their mold just so onto the smooth, prepared ground, otherwise they would buckle a little or go out of shape. The old man tended to the "grinding" of the clay and the molding of the bricks, cutting off the tops neatly with a wire-strung

"bow" after each mold was properly filled. Sometimes the old man would get too much moisture into the "mix", and it would go sticky and hang in the molds; sometimes I would get some rotten wood or waste into the clay when at the pit, and it would raise heck; and often the jackass would "go democrat", and no amount of tanning his ramparts would budge him. But somehow, day after day, we managed usually to turn out about our regular number of bricks. And they were good bricks. They were hand-made and each received individual attention. If one had a flaw, it was never burned.

After a brief drying in the yard, the bricks went to the sheds; and when the sheds were full, they went into the kilns. But let's skip that part of it.

Anyway, during those hundreds and hundreds of trips with a mold or tray or little truck - each trip just like the last - I came to approve of those little earthen men, rather than detest them as many workers might. They took on entities. They had a right to. They were things of substance. Each had a future, each a definite part to play in the creation of some building or object of assured utility. I came to admire them, even to respect them. I determined someday to build a house of brick, a sound, substantial house. I would have a house that I could be proud of, knowing that it contained solid, indestructible, honest materials, - materials that would not burn or crack or deteriorate rapidly with age. I'd have a house as good and substantial as those in England and France that have stood one and two and three hundred years and are as sound as ever.

I'll build that dream house someday, too, although from time to time in the last thirty years I've changed the design and the bill of materials. . . quite drastically, in fact, of late. And this is the kind of a house I envision:-

It will have a flat roof, because the base of a triangle is shorter than the sum of the other two sides: it's cheaper. Someone started building "A" roofs because he didn't know how to build one that wouldn't sag or leak or pass heat through. We've been building "A" roofs ever since. My flat roof won't sag or leak or transmit heat (or cold) through to the rooms below. In fact, most of my roof will be paved with an asbestos tile composition, and will be virtually a "boat deck" littered with colored lawn umbrellas and porch furniture in season. Of course, part of the roof, containing the stairway from below, will be glassed in like a pilot house and will be used for a sleeping porch or recreation room in bad weather. Put a house on a fifty-foot lot (which is criminal but true) and how much yard do you have left? I'm going to get back the rest of my yard - my "Juliet" yard. You Romeos can stay below. I'll take the high yard and you take the . . . well, hell, you can have the rest of the yard!

The walls of my house will be about three inches thick (not 6 or 8), and sheathed with thin sheet metal, perhaps copper - with diatomite or some other eqally good (if possible) insulating material between. These three-inch walls of the right modern material will have about the same insulating properties as a brick wall <u>two feet</u> thick (and cost a lot less to put up). For stiffening there will be studs of light, stiff steel or alloy channel-iron at intervals and properly located to accommodate windows. Very likely I'll have a few tiers of translucent glass brick most of the way around just below ceiling height. Might as well use more daylight: we're not taxed for it, yet.

And windows! Wait 'til I tell you. Of course they will be of fused quartz glass to transmit the health-giving ultra-violet rays of the sun. They will be

essentially two big parallel panes of heavy glass set into the walls with a 3-inch air space between. There will be no casings, no locks and no sash weights; the outer pane will be practically flush with the outside wall of the house, and the inner pane will be almost flush with the inside wall of each room. You can't open my windows to let in dust or drafts or germs or burglars. You won't need to open them as the house will be ventilated automatically. There will be no roller blinds to put up and take down a few times each year and thereby increase the accident rate: I'll use Venetian-type (light metal) blinds between the panes of glass in the almost hermetically-sealed air space. A little crank in the room will operate them. Then I'll have a law passed preventing the hanging of drapes, lace curtains or any similar dirt-catching, room-darkening sort of contraption in a human habitation. You don't sleep in a dust-catching, lace-canopied four-poster bed any more, do you? Your great grandmother thought she couldn't sleep in any other kind.

And furthermore, - why are our windows almost always built with their long dimensions up and down, instead of horizontal? Easy. It's so one can lower the top sash or raise the lower one to let in air in the desired way. I won't be opening my windows so it won't matter. My windows will have their long way horizontal, so that if I want to watch old lady Scraggs mince along the icy pavement, I can do it without walking clear across the room to keep the window between her and me. And mark this: the bottom of my windows will all be 36 inches above the floor; then I can locate a table, chair, divan - or bed - in front of a window and nobody outside will be the wiser. Ever watch the Object of your Affection trying to spot a davenport, dresser, or bed where it won't be in front of a window, or where a swinging door can't hit it?

Floors? Oh, what I'm going to do with them! My floor joists will be steel channel or "I" beams of not more than 4-inch section, covered with metal sheeting (shaped for stiffness, you know), then by a layer of sound-deadening (and insulating) material - like compacted mineral wool - then by composition flooring. If the pooch sneaks in from the muddy flower bed and rolls on the kitchen floor, just get the garden hose and sluice out. How much head room I'm going to save in the basement, or rather, how much excavating and foundation concrete I'll save.

The partitions in my house will be about 3 inches thick - not six. And there will be no swinging doors in the house to bump into and to take up room, each with its swinging arc. The doors will slide quietly on ballbearings, back into the partitions at a finger's touch . . and I mean SLIDE, not stick. Did you ever stop to think how much room space is taken out of your house by thick partitions, and door casings, and how much floor space you virtually lose because the doors have to swing one way or another? I did, and was I surprised! The inside partitions in my present house (8 rooms) occupy 102.8 square feet - figured at 6 inches thick; and the swing of the doors (figuring a 1/4 swing of each 32-inch door) covers 120 square feet. That makes 222.8 square feet, or about the area of an extra 14 x 16 room. With 3-inch partitions, and doors that don't swing, I'll save a lot of that space. The outside doors, of course, will be either revolving or double in entry-ways, to maintain temperature and inside ventilation. They should be anyway. Of course, the partitions will be of light steel panel with light metal channel studding for stiffness.

There will be no dangling light fixtures to catch cobwebs in my new house. (There won't be many cobwebs, either). The fixtures will be set flush, or nearly so, around the edge of the ceiling, and with a couple around the walls at appropriate places for reading. There'll be no more (or not so many) bridge lamps to

fall over and crown Junior when someone catches his toe under the cord. Naturally, the lights will be the new mercury vapor, or fluorescent, diffused type, about three times more efficient and much easier on the eyes, than the old kind.

The house will be automatically ventilated and heated (or cooled) by forced draft or exhaust fan. All air coming from the outside will pass through a dirt and germ filter, and vitiated air will be returned to the outside - just as we ventilate and filter the air in deep coal and metal mines. I'm not sure whether the warm air will come into the room through camouflaged vents near the ceiling and be exhausted from vents near the baseboard (reversing nature), or the other way round; but there will certainly be no steam or hot water radiators, and no floor registers through which kids and grown-ups can drop fountain pens and money. Whether electricity or gas or oil will be used for house heating and cooking, I'm uncertain, but it will probably be gas for it is apt to be cheapest in the future.

My bathroom facilities, toilet, lavatory, and tub will be of stainless steel or aluminum alloy - easier to clean, lighter in weight, and probably cheaper. And I shan't have to use a half tub of hot water to heat up the heavy old cold tub itself. All kitchen fixtures, of course, will be of "stainless" or monel metal.

The fireplace? Oh yes, the fireplace. (I hate the darn things, but if we have to have one just to please the family on winter evenings . . .) It will not cost several hundred dollars and will not be built into the side of the house where, as usual, it will make a bad wall joint from cellar to roof, and where only two or three people can sit in front of it; it will be a beautifully decorated, tile job set in the middle of the living room, where the family can get on four sides of it. It will be virtually a low, insulated table, six inches thick with railing and screen around, and legs bringing it a foot above the carpet. It will have a decorated hood above, connecting with an exhaust suction vent in the ceiling; and it will not smoke. You can put fuel in without getting down on all fours or cracking your head on the mantel piece. In summer, you remove the fancy hood, cover the vent with a medallion plate, take away the little railing and screen, and cover the "fireplace" with an auxiliary top and a vase of flowers. (Or move the whole thing - it will weigh only half as much as a davenport - to the storage room until next season. Sounds funny, does it? Did you ever sit around this kind of a fireplace in the lobby of the Drake Hotel in Chicago? You may if you wish.

There will be no "Fire caused by defective wiring", because there won't be anything in my walls or partitions that will burn. I'll carry fire insurance only on my household goods. Remember the roof and floors won't burn either. And the plaster won't crack because there won't be any. Upkeep on my house will be almost negligible because there will be littled used in its construction that will deteriorate. Its sills won't rot or sag and its outside walls won't warp and go haywire in fifteen years. Birds won't build nests in the gables, 'cause there won't be any gables.

Much of my new furniture will have its frame or chassis of aluminum or tubular "stainless" that won't scratch and get creaky at the joints. 'Cause the "jints" will be welded.

Yes, you've guessed it. My dream house will be built almost entirely of MINERAL materials, both metallic and non-metallic. We are coming to it slowly and

there are perfectly logical and practical reasons. Wood is becoming ever more expensive because it is becoming more and more scarce. Finished mineral products are becoming increasingly cheaper as they find wider use. We are putting better and better engineering into our houses, because it pays. By proper insulation we can practically cut our heating bills in two. That has been officially demonstrated. By using mineral materials that don't deteriorate, we can cut upkeep down a great deal; and by building with incombustible materials we can cut our insurance, and increase the safety of our families.

I have not discussed my ideas with an architect. I've just let my imagination run a little; but I nevertheless predict a trend in the general direction I have indicated with some of the seemingly unorthodox suggestions. Anyway, here's a toast to our future home: May it be burnless and noiseless, and germless and mouseless, and spotless and bugless, and rotless and ageless, and dustless and wearless, and rustless and cozy! - And may it be made of Mineral Materials.

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Stainless steel with 0.25 to 0.30% silver is one of the newest alloys. It possesses exceptional salt-water corrosion-resisting properties, greatly improved machining qualities, increased heat conductivity, ability to take a higher polish, and diminished work hardening.

No longer will non-ferrous metals hold the field in coinage use. Italy has just issued a new series of coins made of stainless steel containing 22% chromium, 12% nickel, and a trace of molybdenum. About 16½ million pounds of stainless steel were used.

Aluminum wire for delicate instruments is drawn so fine that one pound will produce 20,000 miles. Although the metal sells for 20¢ per pound, the pound of wire will cost about $200,000,000.

Aluminum metal in sheets 0.003 inch thick is being used for motion picture film. Projection of images will be by reflected light, but the reflectivity factor of the metal is higher than the transmission factor of celluloid. It offers not only a fireproof and non-deteriorating means of recording copies of valuable books, drawings, pictures, etc., but a more brilliant film for motion-picture projection.

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We have a communication from the Var-Lac-Oid Chemical Company, 116 South Broad St., New York, N.Y., stating that they buy ores, minerals and concentrates and are interested in the purchase of cobalt, tungsten, vanadium, molybdenum, zirconium, thorium, titanium, antimony, elements which can be classified as scarce or rare, and that they are also interested in such ores or minerals as asbestos, monazite, mica, chromite, etc. The corporation does not indicate that they are interested in purchasing properties but only in purchasing the products or ores from the properties. We presume that this company would give proper attention to communications from individuals who have ores alleged to contain any of the elements mentioned above.

Attention is drawn to the following property for acquisition:

12-1 Placer property, western Josephine county. Reported by owner to contain 400,000 yards of 40-cent gravel. Water available. Will consider financial aid.
A. E. Miller, Wolf Creek, Oregon.