

Build Yourself A Silo House

The farm of Jim Elifritz is right beside Interstate I-94 near DeForest, Wis.

Being that close to fast traffic, it's somewhat surprising that no one to date has sued him for whiplash. It's likely passers-by take one casual look at his farm, then snap back fast for a second look!

After all, how often has anyone seen an old silo converted into a modern home? And, as though that

wasn't enough of an attention-getter, the unique structure is adjacent to a bright red barn adorned with a smiling face that seems to imply everyone else is taking life a little too seriously.

"I'd been thinking about doing this for over 25 years," Elifritz says of his "silo home". But he had no idea how much interest the project would generate — passers-by get so curious they sometimes turn around at the next exit to investigate.

Some have wondered whether the structure was a misplaced airport control tower ... some jokingly wondered whether a flying saucer had landed on top of his silo ... but all have agreed it's highly unusual.

Elifritz was sitting in a University of Wisconsin architectural drawing class 25 years ago when he first thought about turning a silo into a home. "Having grown up on a Wisconsin farm, I knew how well silos were built," he explains.

"I knew they had to be substantial in order to withstand the pressures and weight of silage, plus the severe weather here. So, I figured a silo home would be easy to heat ... it would be durable ... it would be the coolest place around during the summer months ... and the top floor would offer a terrific view."

Now that he's nearly finished with the structure, the top floor *does* offer a terrific view. Jim and his wife, Nan, often sit up there evenings just looking back at all those passers-by who are looking at them and their strange structure.

Has Five Floors

"When we're done, this will make an ideal home," Jim says. "In the event of severe winds, this silo will be the last thing standing."

Elifritz has done much of the construction himself. The canopy top was assembled on the ground, then hoisted in place with a crane.

The silo home has a total of five levels inside — three poured concrete floors separate the ground floor from the top floor, and a winding stairway along the inside wall of the silo connects the floors.

"The floors and even the walls will be covered with shag carpeting," says Jim. "The carpeting will act as additional insulation and help reduce any possible echoes."

The ground floor of the home will

function as a "grand entryway", featuring a fashionable foyer decorated with trees, a waterfall and a fish pond.

The second floor will serve as a combination sitting room or guest room, and will be furnished with lounge chairs and a hideaway bed.

A bathroom and laundry room, including washer and dryer, will be located on the third floor, and the kitchen and dining area will be located on the fourth floor.

The fifth floor "tower room" will

WHOOPS!

Just before we were heading to press with this issue, we received word that the construction of Jim Elifritz's "silo home" has been put on "hold", due to local building restrictions.

The area zoning administrator put a stop to construction due to a zoning ordinance which prohibits single family homes from exceeding 35 ft. in height.

"For now, the project has stopped," says Elifritz. "I'm not going to buck city hall. I guess those zoning guys just don't want me to have any fun."

serve as the living room and master bedroom. "It's our gathering place," says Jim. "We especially like to sit up there even now in its unfinished state and listen to music late in the evening. It's relaxing and the view of the stars and countryside is terrific."

The silo chute came in handy during construction. "We found that all sewer, water, electric and telephone lines, heat pipes plus a central vacuum cleaning system and intercom system could be fed conveniently up the chute," Jim says. "Also, the chute could be used as an emergency exit."

Elifritz, his wife and two of their children will continue to live in the house on the farm until the project is finished. He expects the whole silo house project, including furniture and decorating, will cost around \$8,000. "That's not bad for a house with this kind of view," he says.

Jim feels many other farmers could consider his unique type of home — if they have an old concrete silo not being used, he says, it makes use of an existing vacant structure without disturbing the picturesque atmosphere of the farm.

Already, many curious visitors have asked for plans on his "silo home". But Elifritz hasn't decided whether he'll reproduce the drawings and sell them — first he wants to finish his own place.

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Winding stairway connects five levels of the silo home. The "tower room" serves as a living room and master bedroom.