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Hut Occupants Enthusiastic Over Their New, 'Modern,' 'Roomy' Living Quarters

By Helen Bishop

"We certainly are comfortable here, all by ourselves and in our own homes," chortle the veterans and their families now settled in the Cranbrook Quonset huts.

Most of the veterans and their wives have been looking for a place of their own for many months while living under crowded conditions in parents' homes, with relatives, or in almost unbearable quarters. Two veterans brought their wives and new-born babies from the hospital to a real Quonset home.

"This is practically heaven," said Mrs. John Hammond, newly arrived in Birmingham from South Dakota where she had been living in a tiny tourist cabin with her two children, Beverly, 5, and Elizabeth, aged 14 months.

"A Real Home"

"It's the largest place we've lived in since we were married and I'm pleased with the room the children have to play and sleep in and that I have to work in. With a little more time for finishing touches—we've scarcely been here a month—this will become a real home."

This is Mrs. Hammond's first glimpse of Birmingham, but as yet she has had little time for anything but unpacking and settling. Each of the 36 hut units has three closets in addition to a linen closet and she remarked on how much room could be made available by good planning in a 20 x 24 foot space.

The overall Quonset units measure 20 x 48 feet and house two families, with a wall partition between them that is so thick neither family can hear the other.

"Once you are inside, you don't even notice that the walls are not straight," said Mrs. Jack Burket, and with only 7-month-old Carol, and who is not crowded at all. As each of the Quonsets is divided into four rooms—two bedrooms, kitchen, living room, plus bath, we have ample room."

The Burkets, who were living with her family and two other families, even have their well-trained cocker spaniel, Cokie, with them to live things up.

The windows at the Burket home—all of the units are light and airy by virtue of 20 windows in each—were hung with dainty white Priscillas inside decorative cornice boards. The bedroom half-windows displayed sprayed chintz drapes with full ruffles. Other occupants used various window treatments—driving the whole area a homey atmosphere.

Easy to Keep Clean
The Quonset now occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Earl Moody and their only daughter, 4-week-old Janet Marie, was bustling with activity when they were questioned.

"The Quonsets are so easy to keep clean and we seem to have so much room," Mrs. Moody marvelled. "When we first thought

of a Quonset, it was a last-ditch proposition, but once we moved in and I saw how clean with the new baby, we discovered what real life is—they are turning out to be."

In the kitchen, outfitted as all the Quonset units are with an electric stove, sink and refrigerator, Mrs. Moody finds enough working space for storing all the baby's utensils and doing all of her washing, except for diapers which she has to wash in a tub.

Enjoy Modern Conveniences
"Right now," Mrs. Moody said, "we're just getting used to it, but we don't mind it at all. Everyone's cooperative about removing overhose so no one comes inside."

Mrs. George Scott, wife of Birmingham's fire marshal, also recently brought her second baby, two-week-old Stephanie, home from the hospital and is now enjoying a home with modern conveniences again.

Most enthusiastic resident in the whole block, she mentioned that she had been living in an attic-like apartment which had almost no modern conveniences and was far away from the hospital.

"After living in that place which was so old that dirt actually settled in daily, it's being tickled at the ease with which I can keep this house clean," she smiled. "It's positive air tight, and the kitchen is so conveniently arranged that I can even wash out most of the baby's clothes and hang them inside the room—no need for a heater with which every Quonset is equipped, keeps an even temperature in the summer when they'll have the rolling countryside as the backyard."

Thankful for 'Open Roof'
She mentioned, along with the many other residents, that the mud didn't dampen their spirits a bit, especially since they had that this spring and summer the whole lot will be landscaped and lawns will soon spring up where mud now is.

The Scott's other child, two-and-a-half-year-old Billy, shares one of the bedrooms with his new brother, Scotty, and the baby's bath efficiently and easily by using the closet alcove in the children's room for their low chest of drawers and covering that with a sponge matting and towel, removing when bathing is over.

Also banking their two children in one room—and glad to have their own roof over their heads—Mr. and Mrs. Robert Quail. While they plan to stay in a Quonset only until they can find a place to live, they may take quite a little while and have spent time and effort on organizing the Quonset.

Bobbie and Johnnie, their four year and 20-month old sons, were reported to be enjoying the outdoors, and space to play in, and the Quails are looking forward to the summer when they will have the rolling countryside as the backyard.

Playards Are Planned
Among the many other residents who have been doubling-up with relatives are Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Joyal, residents of a Quonset one month with their six-month-old son, James Allen. While they still have many ideas about "fixing up" their new quarters, a real home of a Quonset. They have been looking for, almost a year for a place to live and in the interim had been living with his family and then here.

Twenty-six veterans and their families, altogether, are occupying the 18 huts on the Cranbrook site, and the city has certainly provided a picturesque location for them.

All inhabitants look forward eagerly to the summer when lawns will be started, clotheslines strung up and gardens planted. Some residents have even planned outdoor benches, swings for the children, and tiny picket fences to keep the littler ones from straying too far from home.

So many of them commented on the extreme "worthwhileness" of the project and none mentioned the delay in finally moving in.

Looking Since November, 1945
In the words of Mrs. Richard Furlong, who had been living in one room with her 16-month-old daughter Karen and her husband, "No one can say how wonderful it is to be by yourself with four rooms to work in and every convenience a home can offer. We've been looking for a place to live comfortably in since a year last November, and to finally have one seems marvelous."

Mr. and Mrs. Frederick J. Giles also outshone over their Quonset and Mrs. Giles found a unit provided ample room for a family of four. They wondered why other communities hadn't completed similar projects since they felt the housing shortage hadn't eased a bit.

Feels Job Not Done Yet
Augustus Carrier, Birmingham's housing manager, was as happy as the veterans themselves over getting them finally moved into the huts. As all the difficulties have not yet been ironed out regarding landscaping and other details of finishing up the project, he could not relax and call it a job done.

"The seven units at Hunter and Maple are almost ready for occupancy and will probably house their 14 families by the end of the week, but the same problem of landscaping and planting has to be faced there, too."

Mrs. Blanche Breaker, Birmingham Veterans' Counselor and member of the committee for selection of the occupants in the huts, was extremely happy to see the many veterans settled at last.

"It's been one setback from first to last," she said, "and for me to see them settled, I never wanted to hear of a Quonset again. But now that we can see the veterans living in them and enjoying them, we know that it has been worthwhile."

Dept. of Commerce reports the average civilian consumes 104 sticks of chewing gum a year. G.I.'s chewed an average of 630 sticks each yearly during the war.

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