

Prepper Story: 78-Year-Old Vet Builds \$1,000 Cave Fortress

2016-07-29 07:53:54 By Alec Deacon

Good survival skills come from practicing for years, but age and practice means nothing unless you have a good survival plan, then you have the power to stick to it when needed.

This 78-year-old 'Nam vet could easily prove it right. Meet Bruce, a Survivopedia reader who built his own cave fortress for less than \$1000. Read the following article and discover a great story of survival from a man who definitely deserves our respect!



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"I am what you might call a survivalist but the big drawbacks are my age (78) and my health. I live in a mobile home park and I do have a small garden in which I grow basic vegetables and some herbs.

My health problems cause me take 700 MG of morphine for pain control and there is no way a doctor who prescribes my meds will give me more than 28 days at a time even though I have asked many times. I have about a 90-day reserve that I have put aside just in case, and the only way I was able to do this was by cutting myself short. Instead of three a day I was only taking two. Some days I suffered because of this, but I got through it.

Do you wonder what makes a man like me strong enough to fight for survival despite the age and health issues? I'm going to tell you.

I started building my cabin back in '88 when I was a lot younger and more physically fit. My neighbors jumped into the picture when I found I couldn't do everything myself. He's an EMT and somewhat of a prepper himself.

I told him about the cave I found and the rock cabin I had started to build and asked if he and his wife wanted to join in on the project. The next weekend was the first time they went to see the beginnings of the cabin and they couldn't believe what I had already done. The work parties started.

I do have several fire arms in my home and if it comes down to it I won't be afraid to use them. Fact is, I just assembled my own AR15 pistol in 5.56X44 caliber. I have four 42-round magazines and one 30-round. Three are loaded with armor piercing rounds, and the other holds silver tips.

I built it from scratch and it's considered a pistol because it only has a 10 inch barrel. Because my eyesight isn't all that great, it's equipped with a 4 to 16 power day/night scope with a green laser sight for point and shoot, as well as a red laser sight.

I have practiced with this gun in a few gravel pits and I must say that I have a great group of 15 rounds in a 2-inch circle at 500 yards in a prone position, and a five in circle at 200 yards free-standing. The short barrel length allows me to get around with it in my home or even out in the bush with ease but it doesn't affect the accuracy one damn bit. I also pack a 9mm Beretta fixed with a green laser for point and shoot. Standing, I have a good 3-inch group at 30 yards.

I served 3 tours in 'Nam and spent time in a POW camp, and survived. I was wounded twice but again I survived. I've eaten grubs, common garden snails, and slugs which you can virtually find anywhere. All are high in protein. I've also eaten all sorts of roots and leaves; even moss. I even have a vest that I got from a fellow in the Army. It will stop a .308 round but I don't want to try it out. It's in my bug out bag.

I have that well-hidden, small 8X10 heavily constructed log cabin and only two other people know about it, and they are with me just in case SHTF. The back is open and butted up to a cave, which allows us to grow mushrooms of all kinds. There's an underground water supply and maybe a years' food supply. All items have a 25-year shelf life and will be enough for up to 7 people.

About every three months, the three of us spend a weekend there, keeping it well hidden and just making it more comfortable to live in for a long time; as long as a year or more. Last year it survived a wild fire that destroyed several homes in the neighboring area. The slate roof protected it.

From a quarter-mile away it looks just like the rock slate that it is built of, and it's built at the base of the hill. The walls are 3 feet thick and made of stone and mortar. It only has small windows made of 2-inch Lexan. I salvaged that from an old dismantled bank and cut it down to size.

I feel safe there in case SHTF and the three of us can survive there for a year or more. The only way you can get there is by walking because there are no roads within half a mile. We also have a stash site to hide our vehicles in.

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We do have a quad that we keep in the cave along with two 55-gallon drums of gas treated Stay Bril to preserve it. The only thing that the gas is for is the quad, and that's only for hunting and for providing electricity for lighting in the cave and cabin; all wired for 12 volts.

We don't hunt near our cabin and there is plenty of game in the area: deer, moose, elk, bear, rabbits and all kinds of birds. I could go on and on. If it really gets bad where I live, my neighbors, whom I trust with my life, will bug out with me to the cabin and be comfortable in our surroundings long-term.

Oh, I forgot to add that the only door leading into the cabin/ cave is made of white oak and is 8 inches thick. It took me four weekends to make it and is held together with 6 1/2-inch rebar. I made the hinges myself because you can't buy them. They are made from 3/8 steel plate with 1-inch pins – I think it could protect Fort Knox. LOL.

Heat is provided by three wood stoves and we have 38 cords of stacked wood inside the cave, all nice

and dry, so there won't be much smoke at all. We usually only burn it at night, so no one can see it anyway. Believe it or not, it will usually keep the cabin and the first chamber of the cave warm with just 6 hours of burning using only 2 of the stoves when it's -10 degrees outside.

Here's the good part.

All that I have invested in the whole thing is less than \$1,000, not counting the sealed survival food or the quad which we found in the woods, wrecked and abandoned. However, the parts to repair it is included in the total cost. The slate for covering the roof came from an old quarry about three miles away. We got lucky with the mortar to build the cabin; all we had to buy was the cement and lime because on one side of the rockslide, there is a sand pit from which we collected sand.

We washed it and dried it before using it to make our mortar. Some of the stones in the walls weighed well over 600 lbs. so we made a 30-foot A-frame to place them with and it worked well. When we were done with it, we cut it up for firewood.

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We have a short wave radio, a CB, and yes, we even have a TV. We get 4 stations for news and such. We even have a 2000-watt inverter that will give us 110 volts for a hot plate if needed. Presently, we are working on a digestive septic system because our one toilet is in the cave. The 200-gallon holding tank is made of fiberglass, and the only drawback is that we need to vent the smell but we're working on that.

The Challenges I Took and the Lesson I've Learned

The biggest challenge we faced when building the little cabin was building the A frame. It took three trees 60 feet long and they had to be dragged for nearly a mile and. It was done with just the three of us using cane falls and hand-cable winches. It took nearly two weeks working 12-hour days and a lot of will power to get this done.

You'll find you have a lot of muscles you haven't used before because they will get sore. We did take a few breaks from the dragging just to get healed up a bit, but we never stopped completely. I think if we had, we still wouldn't have it finished.

The biggest survival lesson that I've learned after 3 tours in 'Nam and a fire that took out houses around me?

In 'Nam I wanted to die about 20 times and I refused to smoke weed like about 80% of the guys did, even on patrols.

In the POW camp, about the only protein we got was from the rats we caught and ate, grubs, slugs and a few other unmentionables because all the Charlies fed us was rice and that was a small bowl at that. I learned what you could eat and what you couldn't by trial and error; I got sick so many times because of that.

The cabin survived the fire just because it's got the slate roof laid over 2-inch planks, which we cut with our Alaskan sawmill using a chain saw. The wood was treated with a fire preventive made of Borax and water. We added about 8 coats, letting it soak into the wood for days on end.

When it got dry, we gave it another heavy coat, then the slate was laid over that. We used cement-coated galvanized nails to hold the slate down and every time you wanted to put a nail in you had to drill a hole to start. We went with cement-coated nails because you can't pull them out at all, making it fire-proof. It can withstand the heavy snow-loads in the winter.

Our cabin is on state land so you have to be careful to cover your tracks. Concealment is essential, for if they find it they will probably tear it down. We found out that by placing a claim on the property, we could build a cabin to live in. The catch is that we have to mine a mineral and produce an income of X amount yearly to keep the claim.

Our mineral is lead, which isn't much but it's enough to keep the claim. Study what the laws are in your area. Most can be found in BLM (bureau of land management); they can tell you what you can do and not.

Funny thing is that a lot of the state maps per county (Metsker maps) don't even show the rockslide where my cabin is. That's telling me it is un-surveyed, or at least it hasn't been for a good many years. All the better for me.

If you ask me what is the survival advice for younger preppers and survivalists, I'd say oh, God help me here. I guess the biggest thing is not to try and do everything at once, for nothing will get done. Make up a flow chart and keep with it. Take it one step at a time and when you get that done, move onto the next phase and stay with it. Even though you may be tempted to skip a step, don't. We were tempted to change things several times but didn't and it paid off in the long run. It took us two years to build the little cabin and in the meantime we lived in the cave.

In the meantime, learn many skills which you can use: herbal remedies for ailments is essential, hunting techniques and trapping, what game is available during the different times of the year and how to preserve it. Water bath canning is by far the best method. You can salt it down, but then you have to soak it to get rid of the salt.

One thing that's really important: don't do any shooting around where you live. The one thing you don't want is to attract attention to you because gun shots can carry a long way in the mountains. Also, you don't want to scare the game away from you until the time comes when you really need it.

Knowledge is essential for survival and in the event SHTF, knowledge can be a tool to barter with. 2 miles away someone else is now building a cabin maybe 300 square feet in size. I haven't met them yet and I don't even know if they know we're there and have been for 28 years.

They're building a log cabin and it is gonna be something if they don't fire proof it. I started out with a log cabin but added 3 feet of stone walls on the outside to blend it into the rockslide. Mine is hidden, stocked, and fireproofed. If they're smart, they'll do the same."

Could you build your own bug out shelter the way Bruce did? Do you have the knowledge and skills to do it? Do what he did and share your thoughts with other Survivopedia readers!

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