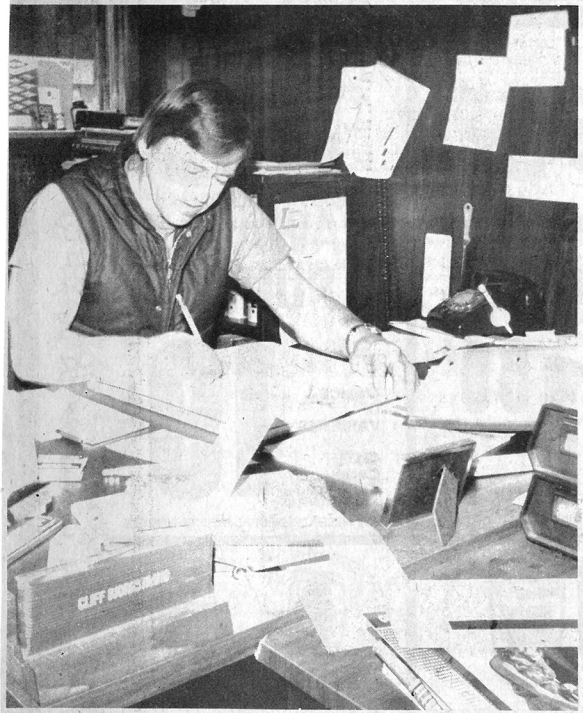
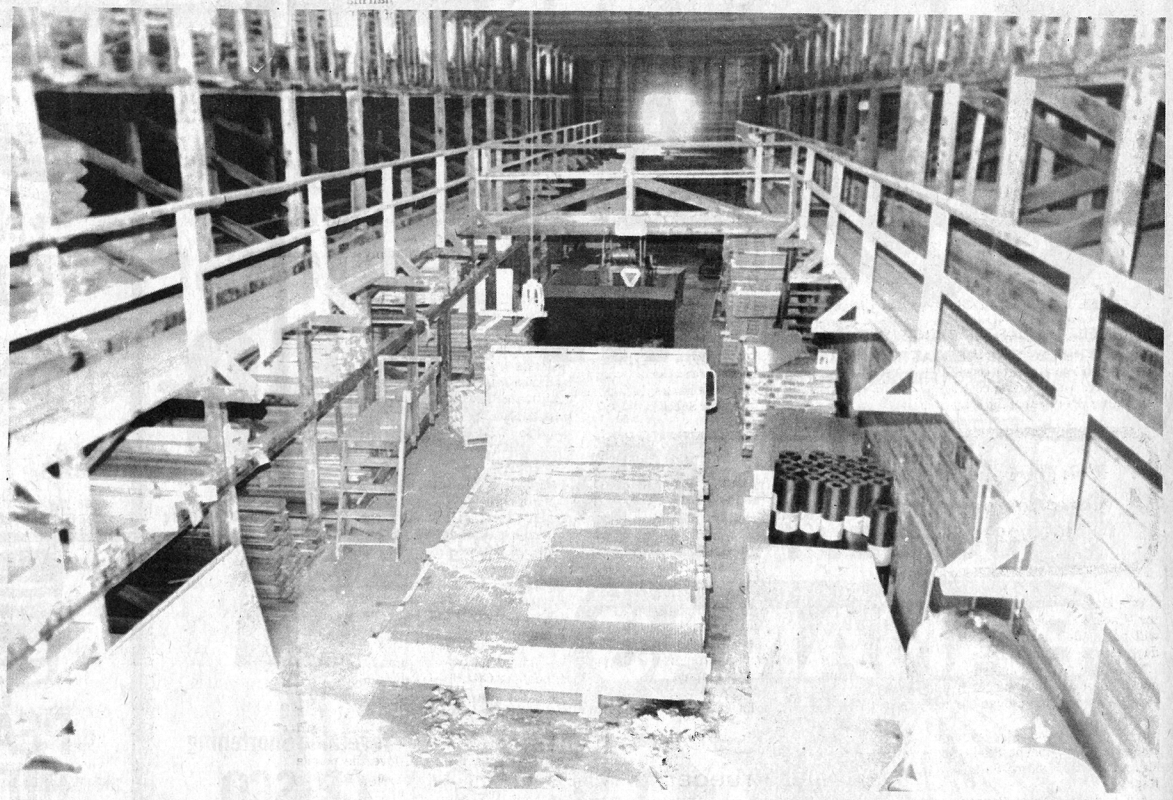


Ottertail Builders Supply, Inc: Materials for home and other buildings



CLIFF BJORKSTRAND has owned Ottertail Builders Supply, Inc. for nearly three years now. He spent 15 1/2 years as a carpenter in Minneapolis before buying the company.



WAREHOUSE - This shot from inside the warehouse shows the lumber, insulation, studs and sheet rock on hand for customers.



ACCESSORIES - This inside view of Ottertail Builders Supply, Inc. shows some of the paint and accessories people have to choose from.

By CHUCK JOHNSON

Ottertail Builders Supply, Inc. can supply the builder with information and materials to build homes, pole barns, hay sheds, machine sheds, or just about any other type of project he might have in mind.

Owner Cliff Bjorkstrand has owned the company since coming from Minneapolis nearly three years ago. After 15 1/2 years as a carpenter in Minneapolis, he heard about the business from his brother-in-law and decided to buy it. His wife Kathryn is originally from this territory.

"It was a challenge," says Cliff, as he explains his reason for leaving the Twin Cities and coming to the rural part of the country. "You can only go so far in anything, then you're ready for a change. Just about everything I do, I do because I enjoy it."

He purchased the company from Jim Ahlfs and Craig Anderson. Before then the company was owned by Peavey Lumber, and was started by Wilcox Lumber. Cliff isn't sure how old the company actually is, but points out that the current building was constructed in 1927 or 28 after having been in another location in town.

Home building doesn't necessarily have to be limited to contractors and other experts, Jim explains. The blueprints he keeps on hand have 'how to do' instructions on the back to help out the less experienced carpenter. And his 'Home Planning Library' contains booklets explaining methods of construction for different houses.

Ottertail Builders Supply carries a full line of accessories for construction, including Colony paints, Stanley, Rockwell, Skill and Black and Decker tools and power equipment, Georgia Pacific building materials, GAF roofing, and Anderson windows.

"And if I don't have something I have

the access to getting it quickly," he adds. He notes that he doesn't stock plumbing and electrical supplies heavily, because of the number of plumbers and electricians in the area. "You've got to give them a break, too," he says.

One of the most controversial issues in the building trade is the new Minnesota Building Code which went into effect Jan. 1 of this year. It has been met with a great deal of resistance statewide, and Otter Tail County has decided not to enforce the law. Bills to change the law have been introduced in this current legislative session, and Sen. Collin Peterson of Detroit Lakes has been one more of the most vocal people against the code.

Bjorkstrand says he can see some good and some bad points in the code. "I can see it for energy standards," he says, as he points out one recent job he had in which a house was gone over. It had only three ins. of insulation in the walls for all of its 20 years. After added insulation, the homeowner was very happy with the warmth of the house, and the cost of heating bills.

"No wonder we wasted fuel for so many years," says Bjorkstrand.

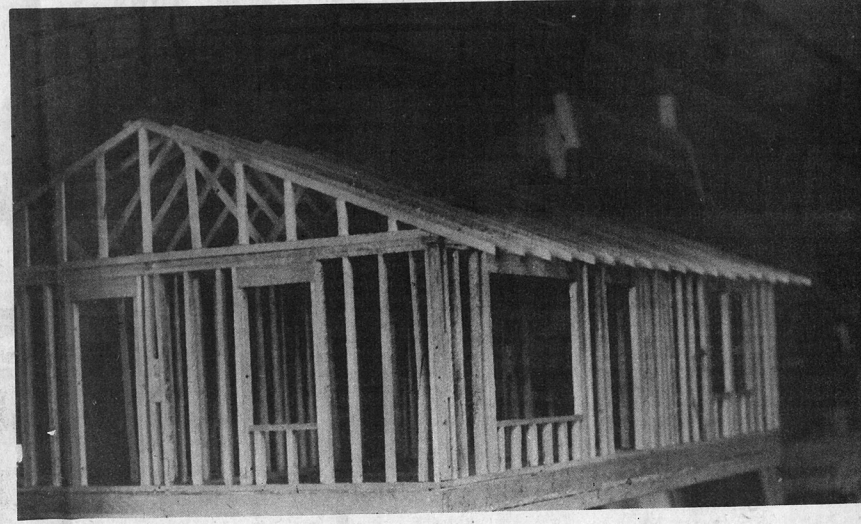
The building code also requires a certain grade of lumber be used. Surprisingly, Bjorkstrand disagrees with it, although he qualified his thoughts. "If a homeowner wants to build a house with rough lumber, he should be able to. But when he goes to sell it, he should tell the next person. I suppose I'm cutting my own throat when I say that."

He says he can "See a code on seeing that a building is built properly. What they're trying to do is get rid of the fly-by-night operators, from carpentry on up."

One suggestion he has is to put a time limitation on when an inspector would have to get to a home after he is called by the builder. That would avoid possible long time delays in waiting for the inspector.



OTTERTAIL BUILDERS SUPPLY is located in the downtown section of Ottertail, next to the Wiebe Garage.



SAMPLE - This miniature home shows the structure of the studs. This home is about 1 1/2 X 3 feet.