

Flying Saucer Redux: Futuro Owner Tells the Story

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By [CATHERINE IDZERDA](#) ([Contact](#)) Monday, Nov. 2, 2009

JANESVILLE — Larry J. Tracy left a curious mark on Janesville history.

The businessman was one of two men who brought the Futuro to Janesville.

Most folks remember the Futuro as the flying saucer-shaped home that floated around Janesville in the early 1970s.

Now, decades after both Futuro and Tracy left Janesville, Tracy has self-published a book with Peppertree Publishing, "A Letter to Annabelle."

The book, which is in the form of a letter to his grandchild, tells the story of Tracy's life and offers grandfatherly advice on everything from lawyers to education.

It's the brief chapter on Futuro that will capture Janesville's attention.

In 1970, Tracy and friend, Norm Sauey, went to Philadelphia to buy a Futuro house.

The homes were designed by Finnish architect Matti Suuronen. The circular homes were 11 feet high without their supporting legs and 26 feet in diameter. Oval windows ringed the outside, and a hatch door—straight out of a science fiction movie—provided the home's only entrance.

"Photographs from the time make the house look like a place where the Teletubbies might live with Barbarella as a frequent houseguest," the New York Times wrote in 2005.

Tracy was enchanted by its possibilities.

"We kind of got wrapped up in it," Tracy said in an interview from his home in Sarasota, Fla.

Tracy instantly began to market the homes, and one his first stops was at Playboy headquarters in Chicago.

Playboy had recently opened a resort near Lake Geneva, and Tracy thought a UFO-shaped home would be just the thing for the place.

"We went down to see this guy, Morton, he was like the president of the Playboy Clubs," Tracy said. "And he was going on and on about how they put \$17 million into the club and why would they want to put in a UFO."

Tracy convinced Morton the UFO would draw visitors and sell Playboy Club "Keys."

Keys allowed people into the clubs and were status symbols in their own right.

"I remember being down there once, and there were two little old ladies in the parking lot, and one of them thought it was Hugh Hefner's plane," Tracy said, starting to laugh.

Tracy told them it was, in fact, Hefner's plane and offered to fly them around the grounds.

"They thought it was so neat that his plane had a fireplace," Tracy said.

They caught on pretty quickly, once they were inside—and Tracy used the shower nozzle as a microphone and began to announce flight plans.

Tracy eventually moved the Futuro to a piece of land he owned south of Janesville. Later, a Ford Dealership used it for a promotion, and it eventually was moved north of Interstate 90/39 near what is now the Best Western.

"I don't know what happened to it," Tracy said. "I think a farmer bought it."

For more Futuro information:

-- Read Larry Tracy's book "A Letter Annabelle." It is available on Amazon.com, www.peppertreepublishing.com and a variety of other booksellers for \$9.95.

-- Go online to www.futurohouse.com. Wikipedia also has an entry about Futuro homes.

-- Take a look at the file about Futuro in the Janesville Room at the Hedberg Public Library.

-- Vacation in a Futuro home near Arbor Vitae, about 2 miles from Minocqua in Vilas County. The pod is on Sumach Lake, a private-access, 60-acre lake filled with a variety of fish. More information is at the Web site www.podupnorth.com.

Photo 



Photo by Submitted photo



Janesville resident Sue Campbell models outside of the Futuro home after it was moved to a spot near Janesville in the early 1970s. The structure was designed by Finnish architect Matti Suuronen for use as a holiday home or ski lodge.

Photo



Photo by Submitted photo



Larry Tracy and Sue Campbell pose in the Futuro Home. The home was a fixture around Janesville in the 1970s. Campbell and her husband owned a tavern on Milton Avenue during that time.