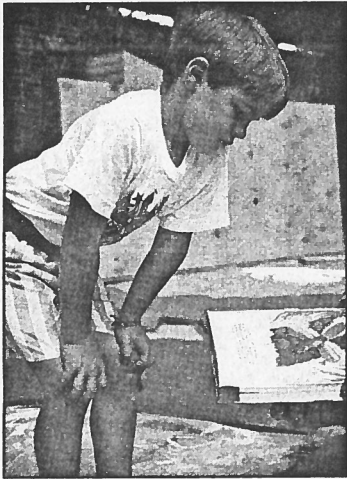


TREEHOUSE

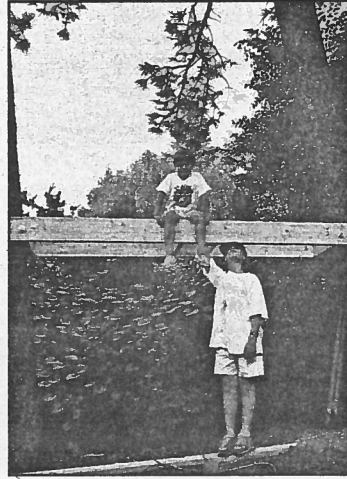
Dinosaurs inhabit Mark Beenham's custom-made playroom



1. Mark's vision of a perfect treehouse was sparked by his love of dinosaurs.



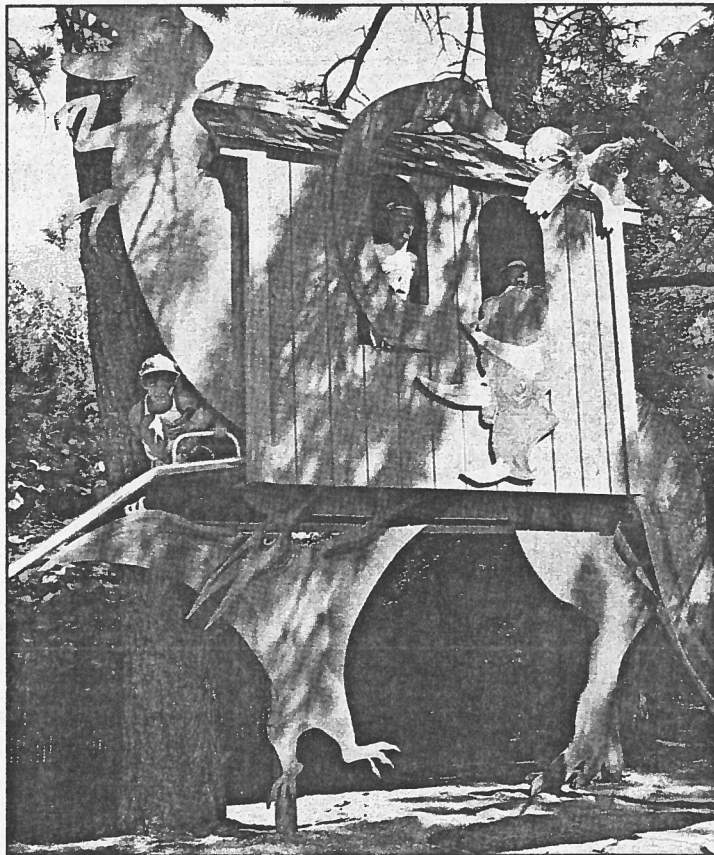
2. Six-year-old Mark helps dig the first hole for his dinosaur zoo treehouse.



3. Mark and Ewan examines the view after the first beams were installed.



4. Architect Doug Walter helps Mark give life to the treehouse inhabitants.



5. From left, Mark, Ewan Beenham, 13, and James Schuepbach, 8, enjoy the finished product.

By Carol Kreck

Mark Beenham, boy paleontologist, knew precisely the kind of treehouse that should go between the two pines in his backyard.

A dinosaur zoo treehouse, the 6-year-old told Denver architect Doug Walter — not a treehouse in the shape of a dinosaur, but a treehouse with dinosaurs coming out the window.

"He was about ready for lunch — it was a very short interview," Walter recalled.

Walter had offered the treehouse design in the Graland Country Day School auction, along with construction costs to be borne by Collins Construction Management of Denver. (Michael and Kevin Collins are Graland alums so Walter "figured we'd be a soft touch for free labor," Kevin said). Kellogg Lumber Co. donated materials.

"Award-winning architect Doug Walter will custom-design a treehouse or playhouse for your child," the auction catalog said. "It can resemble your home, a castle, Mile Hi Stadium, or whatever fantasy the young client has in mind. Approximately 4-by-8 feet in size, it will be built of plywood siding with a weather-tight roof and treated floor structure for durability."

Such a project ordinarily would cost about \$2,000 for materials alone, said Walter, who specializes in residential architecture and is a columnist for the national magazine, *Remodeling*. Putting him and the Collins brothers to work on

and Donald Beenham of Denver won out with a \$1,500 offer. They told Mark the next day and "he was so excited," Bernadette said.

The treehouse is a "microcosm of what we do," Walter said. "We interview the client, brainstorm, run some concepts by the client for approval, rework them, bid it, negotiate a contract, locate the right contractor."

Mark took one look at Walter's preliminary drawing and said, "Fine. That's it." The Beenhams also requested that it have a big slide and wiring so it could be lit at night. "It's going to be the kind of treehouse we can take with us," Bernadette said. She is English; her Scottish husband is in the natural gas business, which has taken the family from the British Isles to Calgary, Toronto and now Denver.

On the day his treehouse was to be installed, Mark sat under an umbrella in the backyard, paging through "Dinosaurs of the Land, Sea and Air," which would be used by 16-year-old Mark Prasad, who was hired to paint the plywood.

Dinosaurs have figured in Mark's short life. He has dinosaur bed sheets and a dinosaur calendar. "I have a plastic toy (dinosaur). It just stands there. I used to have a blow-up dinosaur but it popped."

Already he can foresee a time when his treehouse, which will be used for playing and sleeping, may not have a dinosaur theme.

"I'm beginning to collect Batman . . ." Walter smiled: "You'll be calling me back for a remodel." ♦

a treehouse is like "using a MacIntosh kids' lunch box notes." Bidding was spirited, but Bernadette

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