

# Underground homes hidden across U.S.

BY MICHELLE DEARMOND  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Avon founder Gerry Henderson was like many Americans in the 1960s who went underground.

But unlike those who built cramped nuclear fallout shelters in their back yards, the multimillionaire moved 30 feet down, into a 16,500-square-foot luxury space designed to withstand virtually any disaster and protect almost any intruder.

Henderson and his wife Mary, who are both dead now, lacked no amenity.

The home remains in impeccable condition just a few miles east of the Las Vegas Strip on the edge of a residential neighborhood. Because it was built beneath a caretaker's house on gated property, few people know where it is.

Retired businessman Tex Edmundson, who owns the home now and was related to Mrs. Henderson, put it on the market for \$8 million. It was recently profiled in the Robb Report, a magazine for the affluent.

The biggest advantage of the home now is not protection from nuclear fallout, but protection, period, said Chris Henderson, a friend of Edmundson's who is helping market the home.

(Microsoft Chairman) Bill Gates for

instance — just think of the security that he has to have. If he had this, once he was downstairs he could send everybody home," said Henderson, no relation to the original owners.

A handful of ornate underground homes were built around the country, although the location of many of them remains a secret.

The Las Vegas home has its own underground generator and fuel tank and is designed to sustain life for about a year — assuming the pantry is fully stocked.

The home remains as it looked when the Hendersons built it. Mrs. Henderson had an all-pink bedroom and there are crystal and gold fixtures in the bathrooms. There is a swimming pool, a hot tub and hand-painted murals of outdoor scenery on the perimeter of the home.

The main two-bedroom structure spreads over 5,200 square feet and is surrounded by an AstroTurf lawn, fake trees and an "outdoor" grill designed to send smoke and fumes up a fake tree trunk. A guest cabana is located next to the pool.

There once was a tunnel connecting Henderson's bedroom with his office across the street, but it has been filled in.

Because the interior has not been

exposed to sunlight or outside air, there is no dust or sun damage on the furniture and wallpaper.

A computerized lighting system simulates night and day, and a protective shell — the ship-in-a-bottle concept — encases the entire structure keeping it dry and at a constant 74 degrees.

All of the utilities work and look just like they do in traditional homes. The street address for mail delivery is the same as the caretaker's home.

Gene Kilroy, boxer Muhammed Ali's ex-trainer, lives in the three-bedroom, two-story caretaker's home above ground. That home is nothing like the underground house — its layout or its modern Southwest decor.

Kilroy looks after the property for Edmundson and occasionally gives tours. An elevator in the caretaker's home leads to the underground house.

The house was modeled after others built by the late Jay Swayze, a Plainview, Texas, building contractor who developed the ship-in-a-bottle concept after being commissioned by Plainview officials to build a demonstration fallout shelter.

Henderson, who had long wanted an underground home, contacted Swayze when he read about the Plainview home, Kenneth Swayze said recently from his home in Wylie, Texas,

where he lives in an above-ground house.

Kenneth Swayze and his brother Jay built an underground home in Colorado for Henderson and went into business with the wealthy businessman.

"Despite President Kennedy's assurance that the threat of war was only temporary, one thing was clear," Swayze wrote in his book "Underground Gardens and Homes," published in 1980. "The nuclear age was upon us, and long-range planning was necessary to protect humanity from possible ill effects."

The Swayze brothers formed a company called Underground World Homes and designed several full-sized underground homes, including the one Jay Swayze lived in with his wife and two daughters. People from around the world visited that Plainview, Texas, home and it remains there today with new owners.

Kenneth Swayze built an underground house for Henderson in Colorado, and Henderson bought a 51 percent share of Underground World Homes. Henderson's hefty pocketbook financed an underground house built for an exhibit at the 1984 World's Fair in New York, attracting the interest of innumerable fairgoers.

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