

Bruce Beach, known for Ark Two, passes at 87

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With steel doors and a concrete exterior protruding from a hill as an entrance, Ark Two, an underground nuclear war bunker, is an image straight out of a post-apocalyptic movie complete with perimeter fencing.

Bruce Beach, a resident of Horning's Mills, worked more than 40 years constructing and maintaining the notorious fallout shelter located 12 kilometers outside of Shelburne ? all in preparation for an impending nuclear war.

On May 10, Beach died at the age of 87.

Documentary filmmaker Paul Marc Kell first met Bruce Beach in 2011, while working on a pilot documentary series about preppers.

?Bruce being Bruce didn't see eye-to-eye with the producer I was working with, they couldn't agree on anything,? recalls Kell in a phone interview with the Free Press. ?That being said, Bruce and I hit it off immediately, even back then I was really well versed in Bruce's worlds, which for lack of better description is conspiracy theory.?

Approaching Beach about returning on his own to create a different documentary, Kell would spend almost a decade filming the day-to-day lives of Bruce and his wife Jean, often staying with the couple in their home for weeks on end.

?Whereas other film crews would come?they all wanted to just tell this, in my opinion, unfair story of Bruce as being this crazy old man with a bomb shelter. I think I was one of the few people who took the time to actually sit and listen to them and hear a lot of their stories that initially I thought were not true because they were so unbelievable and fantastic,? said Kell.

Bruce Beach was born in Winfield, Kansas on April 14, 1934 and as a teenager dropped out of high school to join the Air Force underage. After being discharged and completing a triple major Bachelor of Arts degree, Beach in the late 1950s would obtain a general contractors license and build 22 bomb shelters in Kansas.

Beach was notorious as the founder of Ark Two, a bomb shelter started in 1979, consisting of 42 interconnected buses buried under 14 feet of soil and concrete on a 12.5 acre parcel of land.

Kell said that during the many years of filming for the documentary, he found that Beach's story was much bigger and more unbelievable than just building the largest privately constructed bunker.

?Bruce's story was so unbelievable and covered many continents. From deep sea treasure hunting, \$50 million awarded to him by the Canadian government for scientific research, to a partnership with Robert Ballard, the guy who discovered the Titanic and having invented the world's first portable computer,? said Kell.

Beach also worked on the blueprints for a Universal Auxiliary Language (UAL), meant to be used between people who don't share a common first language.

Despite Beach's involvement with historic Canadian projects, Kell notes that most never really worked out.

?This was a guy who [would] routinely bite off way more than he could chew, everything he did was grandiose. He's not trying to save one or two lives, he's trying to save all of humanity,? said Kell. ?He was still driven up until the week he passed away, he was still determined and driven to see his vision through.?

While from the outside, Bruce Beach's projects appeared as the work of a "crazy old man" or "kook", Beach's family regard them as part of his humanitarian efforts.

Sitting in the small living room of the family home in Horning's Mills surrounded by family photos Brenda Stewart, Bahia Eldner, and Jean - the daughters and wife of Bruce Beach - recall the start of Ark Two.

"We kind of just thought this is another one of Dad's crazy ideas," explains Stewart looking at her sister.

Adding on, Eldner said, "You just kind of went with it."

When construction on the bunker started in 1979, Eldner was a high school student while Stewart was living in the U.S and already married.

Although the underground bunker was Beach's vision from the start, the project was very much a family affair. Jean over the years, supported Beach with organizing the bunker's food storage as well as gardening supplies to "build humanity back up" after the nuclear war.

"I didn't want it in the first place," said Jean about Ark Two.

"But I helped all the time, with cleaning and this and that."

"You got pulled into his projects," said Brenda. "That's the quote 'I have a little project I need your help with'."

Eldner said it was all a stepping stone for bigger plans.

"Universal Auxiliary Language (UAL), that's what he really wanted to be doing," said Bahia.

With Beach's passing, his family is looking to continue the work he spent more than 40 years doing, through a volunteer group. Kell, who documented Beach's work for a decade, will be releasing the documentary titled The Dawnsayer.

It is anticipated that the documentary will be released later this year.

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