

## Martin Rude - Treehouse

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

The decision to stay at this bed and breakfast left me up a tree...and I mean that literally. Today we will meet an innovative couple in rural Kansas whose bed and breakfast now includes a treehouse for lodging. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Martin and Cheryl Rude are the owners of this special b and b called the Barns at Timber Creek, which we have previously profiled. Martin and Cheryl are faculty members at Southwestern College in Winfield.

Martin grew up at Wichita and spent time at his grandparent's farm near the rural community of Rose Hill, population 3,525 people. Now, that's rural.

Martin played in a Christian band which toured for ten years. He met and married Cheryl who was serving as youth director of a church in Wichita. After more work for the church in Texas, they moved to Winfield to take faculty positions at Southwestern College.

Cheryl worked in leadership education and Martin worked in student services, but his interest in music again came to the forefront. He started working on the musical elements of church life and today is Director of Worship Outreach at the college. "Our students study worship, leadership, music theory, and their individual emphasis," Martin said. "All of our projects are linked to community."

For example, teams of students will go out each month to local churches or youth groups to perform music and lead services. At the college studio, they will produce original music videos. With support from the college's Institute for Discipleship, they also put on a youth praise band camp and more.

Meanwhile, Martin and Cheryl purchased a rural property along Timber Creek near Winfield in 1995. A few years later, they found an old post and beam barn on a place nine miles west. Hail had taken the roof. A flood had taken half the foundation. "If you can save this 1890s barn frame, you can have it," the landowner told Martin. "I didn't know any better," Martin said with a smile. He mapped the barn design on a computer grid, salvaged the components of the barn, and rebuilt it as a residential bed and breakfast at their place near Winfield.

As the building was being completed, the Rude family moved into the basement and eventually remodelled the upper floors. During the big annual Walnut Valley bluegrass festival, which attracts thousands of people, the chamber of commerce called looking for places for people to stay. That was the beginning of the bed and breakfast known as the Barns @ Timber Creek.

Martin went on to renovate the original stone barn which stands on the place. It is now a modern venue for wedding receptions and special events. The old stone quarry on the place has now been made into a beautiful wedding venue.

The place is located in a pretty, wooded setting. When Martin and Cheryl's kids were little, they wanted a treehouse so Martin dutifully built them one. Over time as the kids got bigger, the wood began to weather and Martin was concerned about safety so he tore it down. Then he heard from customers. "Oh, we're sorry you tore that down," he was told. "We were hoping you'd turn that into a guest room."

The seed of an idea was planted. Martin decided to build just that. He designed and built a climate controlled cabin with fully equipped bathroom and kitchenette to go on the spreading branches of a large, nearby hedge tree. In addition to the rooms in the main residence, the Barns @ Timber Creek now offers lodging in the Treehouse – what is believed to be the only b and b guest room in a tree in the state of Kansas.

The bottom platform of the treehouse is 12 feet up. The second story of the treehouse is a loft with a queen bed. The Treehouse has rustic cedar décor, decorated in a barn owl theme. For more information, go to [www.timbercreekbarns.com](http://www.timbercreekbarns.com).

So that is how I came to spend the night up a tree. We salute Martin and Cheryl Rude for making a difference with their innovation and creativity in lodging. I'm glad they chose to branch out.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.