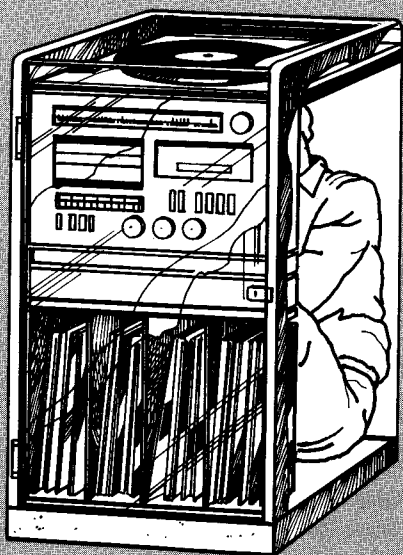


# HOW TO HIDE ANYTHING



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BILL BORDER

## MICHAEL CONNOR

PALADIN PRESS  
BOULDER, COLORADO

# CONTENTS

Introduction .....	vii
Home-Base Hides .....	1
Elaborate Hiding Places .....	23
Secret Safe Spaces for Personnel .....	57
Away-from-Home Hides .....	93
Hints and Tips .....	103

# INTRODUCTION

**AS** GOVERNMENT IMPOSES MORE AND MORE RESTRICTIONS on what we can—or, more importantly, cannot—own; as the number of burglaries soar; as terrorism by aberration or by design escalates; and as the possibility of anarchy seems closer to home than ever, the need for having a safe space for goods and persons becomes pressing. Here are the guidelines to the design, selection, and construction of hidden storage areas small enough to hide cash and jewelry and large enough to conceal armaments and ammunitions or, in the extreme, a family.

Before you begin lifting floorboards and hollowing walls, you must first define what types of goods you will be concealing from whom. How much forewarning will you require to utilize the space—a knock at the door or a news bulletin that the country has gone to war? Do you expect to be searched by authorities possessing the latest in detection training and devices, by roving renegades, or by a team of professional burglars? And how much time and money do you want to spend preparing your safe spaces? All these questions must be considered first. Then you will be able to adapt the designs in this book for almost any budget, structure, and need.

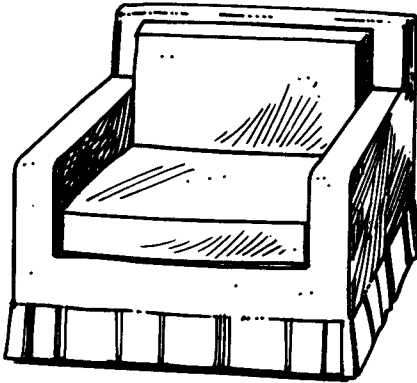
A good friend of mine sums it all up when he says, "If it's not nailed down, it's mine. And if I can pry it loose, it's not nailed down!" To get in the right frame of mind when you're surveying your place for possible stash areas, consider, if you will, where does a burglar first look for valuables? Probably in the safe, which kind of defeats its purpose, doesn't it? Sometimes the most obvious is also the least obvious. Just keep in mind that old adage about not being able to find something "right under your nose."

# 1. HOME-BASE HIDES

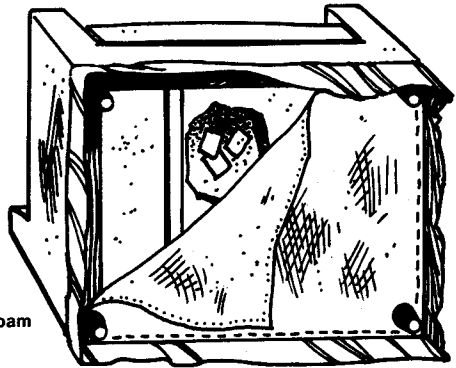
**IT'S LATE AT NIGHT AND YOU AND THE WIFE ARE** watching the evening news when you hear footsteps on the back porch. You're not expecting anyone at that hour and your heart pounds with dread. You've already stashed your really important papers and cash in a place you're certain no one will ever look, but your wallet is stuffed with the proceeds from your just-cashed paycheck, your wife's rings are worth over a thousand dollars (not to mention the sentimental value), and your watch is a keepsake from your dead father. How can you protect them in a hurry from burglars?

The easiest way to find the best locations for quick hiding places for small items such as cash, watches, and jewelry is to sit yourself down in your home, retreat, or office and have a good look around. Unless you are a caveman, chances are there will be dozens of usable areas. Let's start with the most obvious.

Modern, mass-produced covered chairs, sofas, and ottomans disassemble easily and reassemble quickly without showing signs of tampering and can be fitted with easily accessible hidden pockets. The staples, screws, or pins used to secure the upholstery to the underside of the unit's frame can be removed or loosened, depending



If the hide is to be used regularly, press-stud fastenings can be substituted for some of the staples.



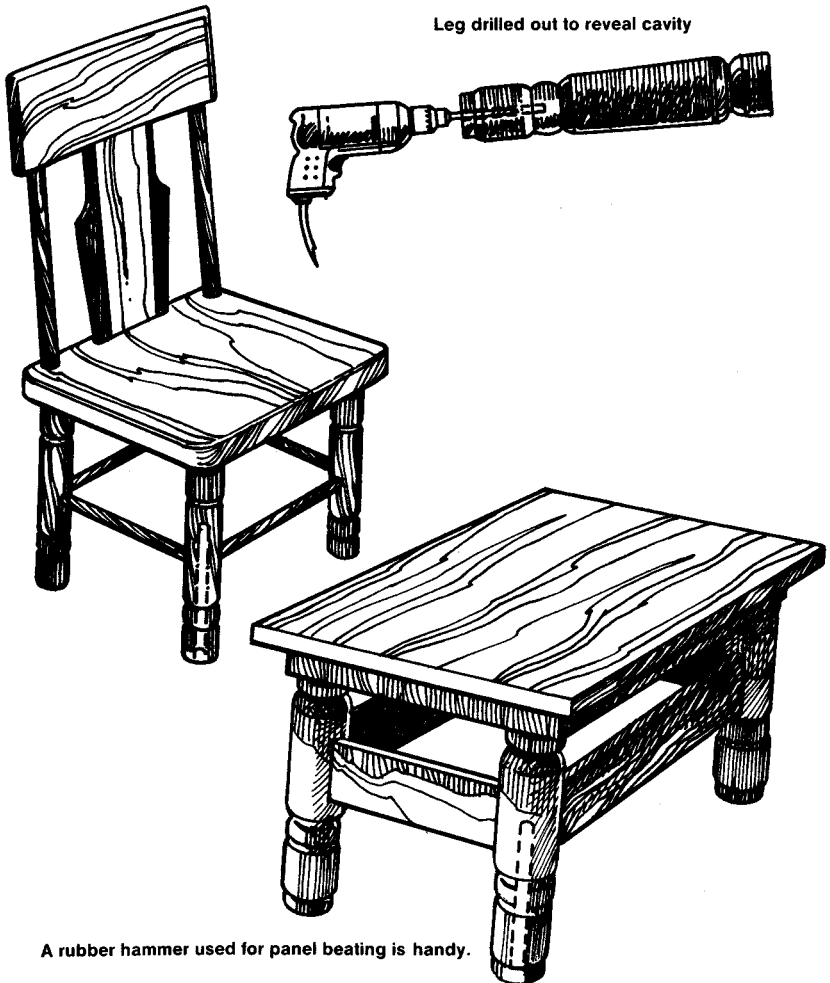
Underside of chair showing material pulled back to reveal stash hidden in foam

on what you want to hide. Most such furniture contains vast amounts of foam rubber, padding, and stuffing. It is a simple matter to cut out cavities, secure with double-sided tape or adhesive, and refit. A cheap staple gun, obtainable from the hardware store, will make your job look professional. Always make sure that enough foam or padding is replaced over the goods to give the correct feel to the chair in case it is poked and prodded during a search.

The design of some such furniture enables objects to be simply pushed down between the framework and the

covering. If you have had loose change drop from a pocket into such a chair, you will know the hassle in trying to retrieve it without disassembling the unit. Thieves may slash the furniture, but it is unlikely that they will thoroughly examine the insides.

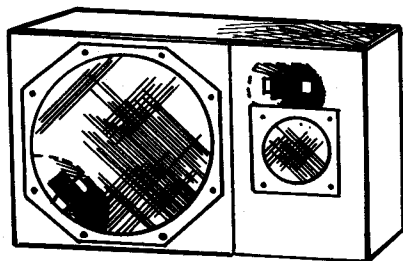
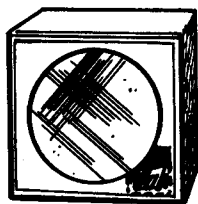
The “antiquey” wooden furniture popular today is also very useful for hide construction. The kind of chair shown below is easily taken down to its component form, and



A rubber hammer used for panel beating is handy.

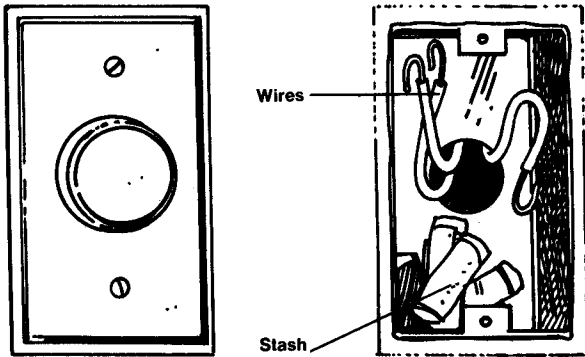
the separate pieces can then be drilled to take goods. Unless the chair or table is of very substantial manufacture, its various parts will probably be held together with powerful glue. If trouble is encountered in removing the legs, uprights, and so on, apply quantities of hot water or, if available, wood glue softener. A combination of the two will do the trick. Bore out adequate space for your items, but do not weaken any pieces that will have to carry considerable weight. Ladderback chairs and gateleg tables are obviously the first choice for such alteration. Using a household drill and bit, the job only takes a few minutes. For long-term concealment, add plenty of adhesive when reassembling. The hide will stand up to all normal checks with ease.

Hi-fi speakers, which come in a number of useful shapes and sizes, are easily opened and stashed with goods in a matter of minutes. Rather than give a list of similar hides, it is sufficient to say that any piece of furniture or home equipment that can be opened can also be used to conceal goods. Remember, however, that if a criminal search takes place, there is a chance that the very articles containing goods will be stolen. A nice surprise for the thief should he decide to open them up!

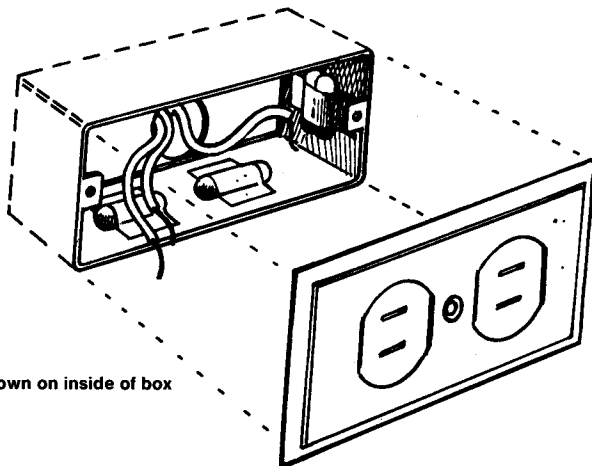




The electric light switch on the wall is easily removed simply by undoing a couple of screws. Always turn the main power off first, of course. The available space at the back of the switch plate will vary from place to place, but you will generally be able to conceal at least a few items. If you are hiding metal objects make sure they are well insulated to avoid the possibility of a short circuit.



The electric outlet, or wall plug, is removed just as simply, and will reveal a surprising amount of space. Apply the same precautions as for the switch. In a lot of instances, it will be found that the socket housing is



Goods shown on inside of box

readily removed from the wall, and you then have access to the space between the plaster and the brickwork.

When reassembling, do a tidy job making sure that no traces of brick dust are left in the area. As an extra measure, add a coat of paint to the unit, making sure that it covers the screw heads. (Most poor decorators do this anyway, and it causes problems when the need to remove the socket cover arises). The plastic type of covers fade after a time, and painting them is not uncommon. A more elaborate method of using the wall socket is given in chapter two.

For small items an electric plug itself can be quickly adapted. Simply open the plug up, and remove the fuse and wire connectors. The internal moldings can be filed down or burnt away with a hot knife.

If more room is required, take the following steps. Remove the legs of the plug—these simply pull out—and, using a hacksaw, cut three parts of their length off, as shown. Replace the legs and secure using a strong adhesive. The plug can be reassembled with the goods inside and plugged into the wall socket as usual. As a safety precaution, it may be better to remove the main fuse that links the power to that particular plug, although if the stash is well insulated with plastic tape there should be no problem.

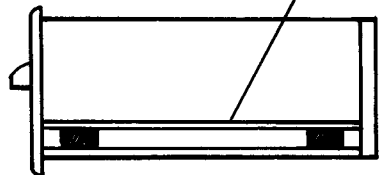
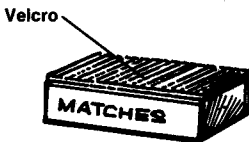
The false-bottom drawer or cupboard is still a useful way of quickly stashing some items. Don't be greedy and try to block off 90 percent of the drawer's total area; err on the side of caution. Use several narrow hides rather than one large, obviously altered one. Drawers and cupboards so converted should contain plenty of junk.

Drawers are likely to be pulled out and tipped up during a search, whether by crooks or the authorities, and a loosely fitted false bottom will just drop out. To fasten the false bottom securely, use velcro strips or magnets. (You can get really useful strip magnets from the plastic

If chests of drawers are used, all the drawers should be adapted, not just one.



False bottom supported by match boxes, etc.



Supports may be magnets or velcro.

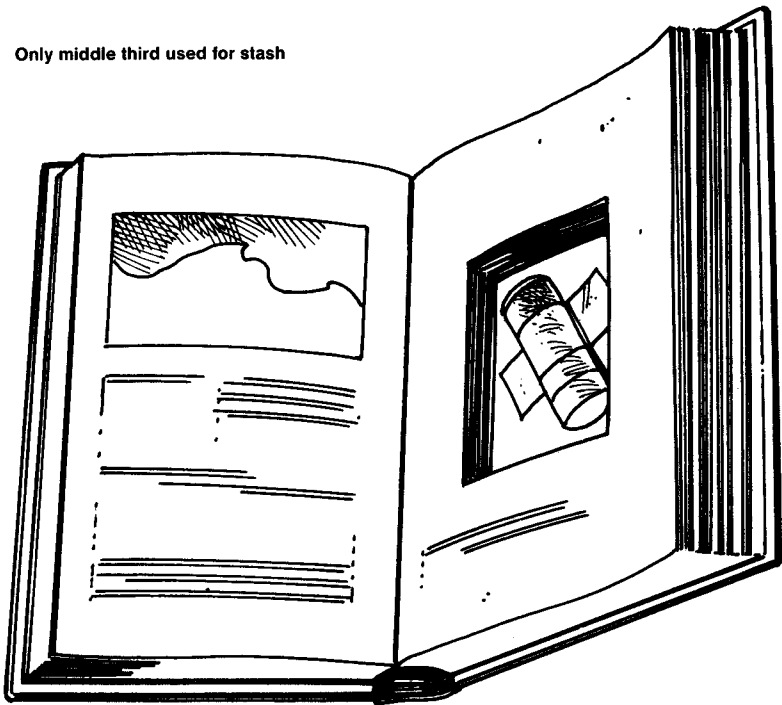
door edges of the refrigerator.) Insert a metallic strip or plate somewhere beneath the base of the false boot so that you can lift out the unit. If you use magnets to retain the false base, make sure you can obtain a stronger magnet to lift the base out again. A magnet often sold as the Sea Search is very powerful and does a great job.

If you are converting a cupboard, you can get away with a less elaborate fixing system.

One of the first hiding places that springs to mind for concealing small objects around the house is the old hollow book. While the hollow book technique is useful for some applications (I would suggest its use in a library full of unconverted books of similar size and color), there are several ways to improve upon the basic idea.

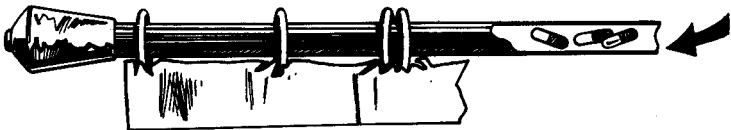
Choose a good-sized book. Forget paperbacks and the like. Books with thin pages are to be favored, as such pages have a natural sticking tendency and add strength to the stash. Never start the hollow within the first few pages. Pick a point at least a third of the way into the book and make sure that the bottom of the hollow does not extend farther than a third of the way in from the end. That means effectively that the middle third of the book is used for the stash. The area of the hollow should

Only middle third used for stash

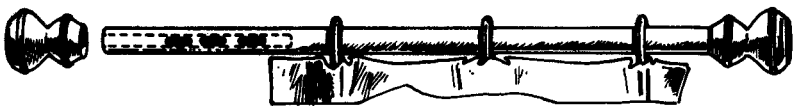


extend no farther than an inch and a half from the edge of the pages. This decreases the likelihood of the stash being found during a quick flip-through. The item itself should be securely fixed to the inside of the hollow, so that if the book is held upside down it will not drop out. The commonest form of book search (when several are to be examined) is to hold the book upside down and shake it.

Fancy curtain poles of the type shown below lend themselves readily to conversion. The metal pole will conceal more for a given length than the wooden one, and has the benefit of being already hollow. Items are just pushed or dropped into the pole, and the end piece is replaced. It is obvious, though, that the pole is hollow, and if a very tough search is anticipated, the wooden pole is a safer bet. Take care not to drill out too much of diameter of the pole; common sense will dictate when enough is enough. Always insert a plug of suitably colored material into the end of the pole before refixing the end piece. This plug, which conceals the cavity, can easily be made from plastic wood, or any similar substance. For added security, glue the end piece securely with adhesive. Use super glue and when the time comes to retrieve the items, apply the appropriate solvent, which is available from the place where the glue was purchased.

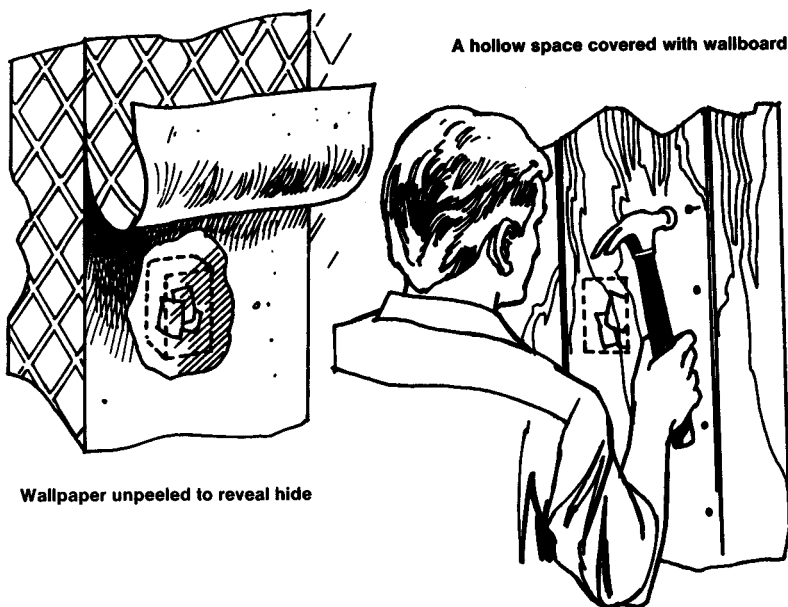


Inside of pole drilled out with large-diameter bit



If you plan to do some redecorating, the next technique is well worth thinking about. It requires the use of a router or other tool that will allow you to dig out a trench from the sheetrock plaster covering on your wall. Cut the trench to the desired depth and shape (backing brickwork can also be chipped away with a chisel), and attach a few clips or velcro pads to secure the goods in place. They will not be so large as to stand proud of the surrounding wall, and neither will the goods.

Once the stash is secured, affix a length of sheetrock, wallboard, or whatever you like. If the wall is of the old-fashioned plaster type, a thin skin of plaster to cover the hide is all that is needed, and probably all that the thickness of the surrounding plaster will allow. Repaper the wall or use veneer boards to complete the hide. If wallpaper is used, then on the section covering the hide apply spray-on artist's glue or rubber cement instead of paste. This will enable you to peel the paper away from



A hollow space covered with wallboard

Wallpaper unpeeled to reveal hide

the hide and then stick it down again. If wallboards (vener boards) are used, then the screw fastenings (to batons on the wall) appear normal, yet allow for rapid access to the hide.

The fridge is very useful for concealing goods. The old favorite hiding place is in the freezer compartment inside a chicken or a pie or whatever. The whole lot freezes, and only a very determined search (or a chicken and pie thief) will uncover the stash.

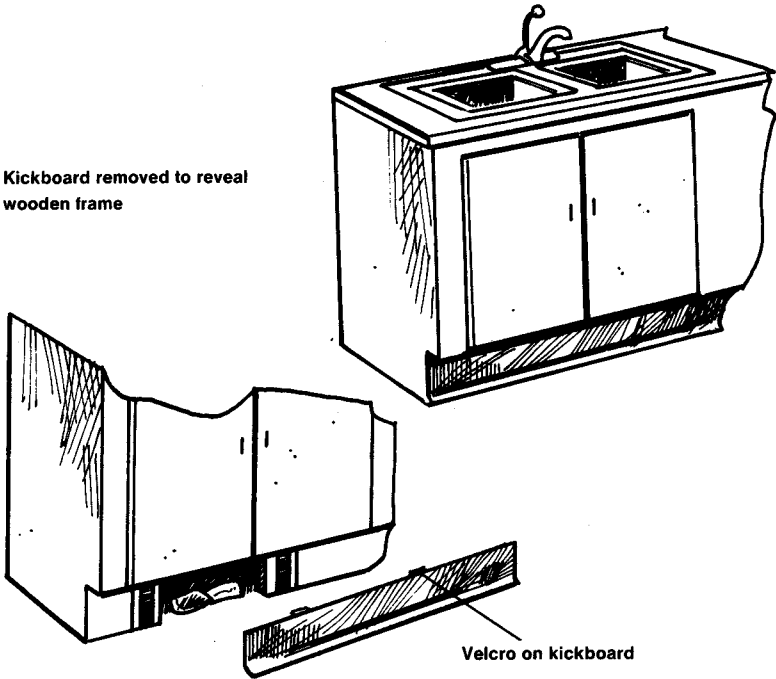


**Goods can be stashed in the freezer.**

Also in the kitchen, the kickboard hide is worth a mention. These kickboards are the pieces of finishing wood or molding at the base of kitchen units, cabinets,

and so on. The kickboard is easily removed for access to considerable space. The board can simply be nailed back into place and levered off when required. After a few times, the wood around the nails becomes worn enough to facilitate “on-offing” of the panel without it becoming noticeably loose. Magnets, velcro, sticky pads, and so on can also be used to secure the panel.

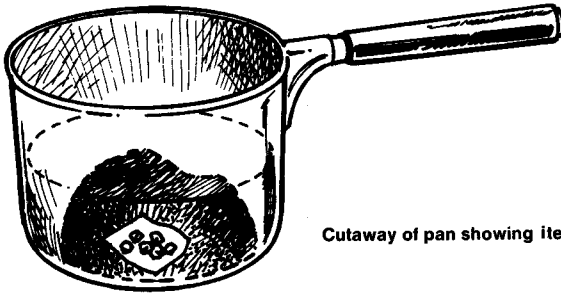
Kickboard removed to reveal wooden frame



Velcro on kickboard

A pan of fat or a half-filled deep-fat fryer is innocent-looking enough, but can conceal a fair amount of jewelry. Simply heat some fat or solid vegetable shortening and, while it is still liquid but not too hot, insert the well-sealed goodies. The surface of the fat will settle into a smooth flat area when cooled and hardened, and the chances of your stash being suspected are remote.





Cutaway of pan showing items hidden in fat

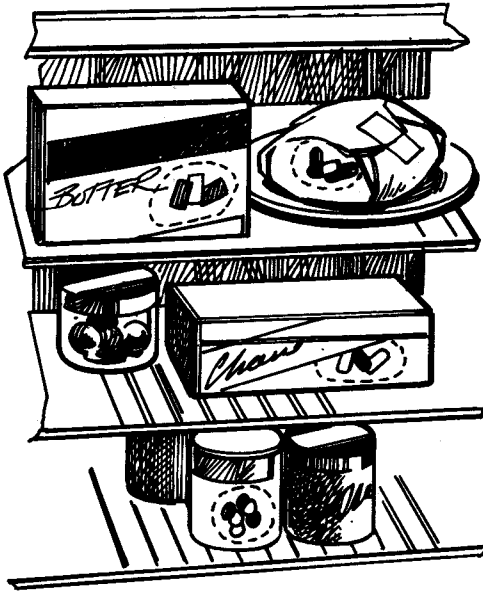
A pot of food cooking on the stove is always a handy thing if you are expecting unwelcome visitors. Anything from an auto pistol to a pouch of uncut diamonds can be dropped in and left until the visit is over.

Other kitchen possibilities are bottles of frozen drink or milk. Place the item in the container, making sure it is well sealed, and simply pop into the fridge. Solid vegetable shortening, butter, or a hundred other foodstuffs will give the required amount of security. When selecting such hides, try to pick foods that are messy, impossible to examine without destroying, or very smelly (garlic

Always wrap or rewrap foodstuffs to add to the effect.

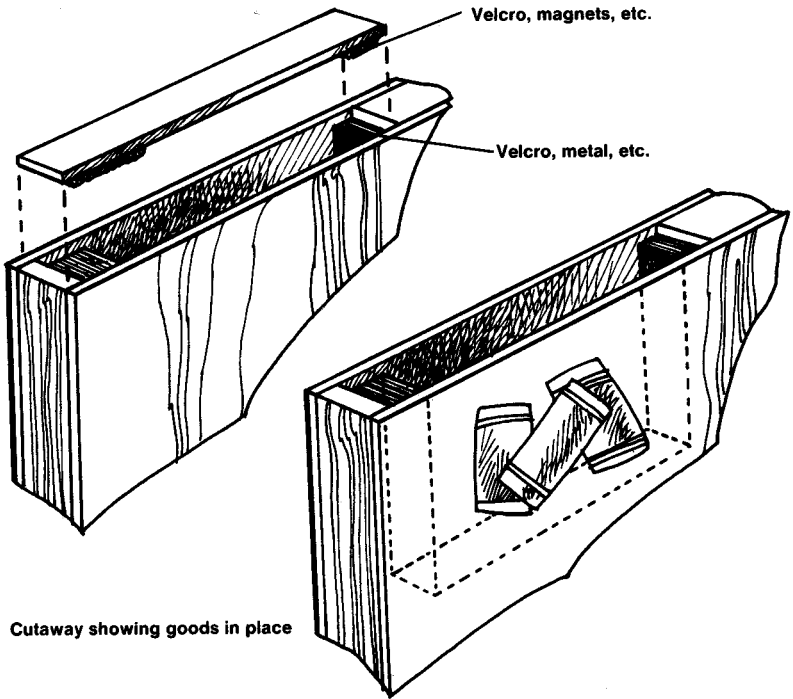


sausage or stilton cheese). Let us say these are just the tip of the iceberg—but they should give you food for thought!



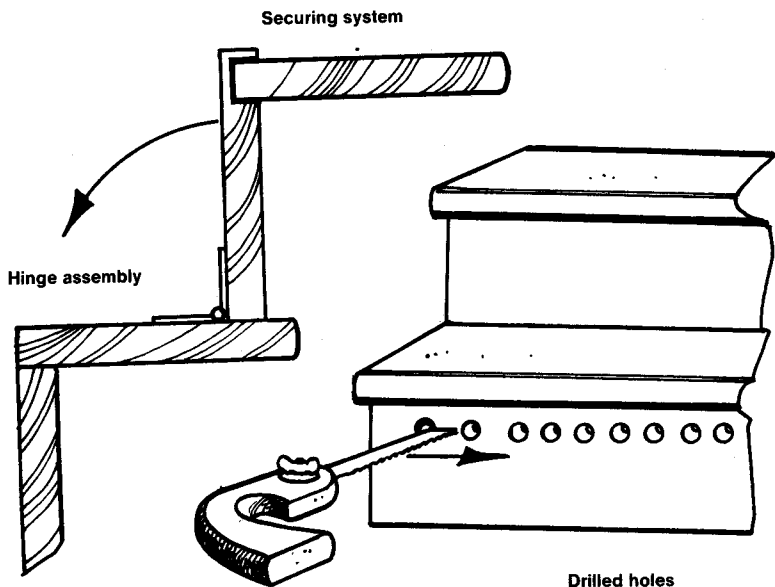
An internal door is usually hollow—a sandwich of hardboard or ply with no filling. Using only the simplest tools, a cavity can be cut into the top, side, or bottom of the door as shown. Some doors may contain a fire retardant material or a woodchip substance. Either way it can still be easily cut out to create useful space. A lid can be made from a slice of wood fixed in place with pins or small magnets. In some cases, removing the lock mechanism will allow access to the inside of the door.

The door frame itself, depending on construction, can be partially removed and the brickwork behind it altered to take a stash. You could chip out part of a brick or chisel away a whole one. In older houses, the securing door nails are easily pried out and then simply pushed



back into place with little or no loss of strength. A complete false frame can be made and secured with any fastening that permits easy access to the hide.

Most staircases can be quite easily adapted to provide room for and ready access to a good-sized hide. Usually the hardest work involved here is removing part of the plasterboard backing that is often affixed to the underside of the staircase. Your selected vertical length is removed, either by cutting or loosening, depending on the design of the staircase, and a hinge assembly attached as shown. Some form of securing system is affixed to the bottom of the vertical length and its corresponding position on the adjoining horizontal length. If it is necessary to cut through the vertical length, the drilling of a row of holes

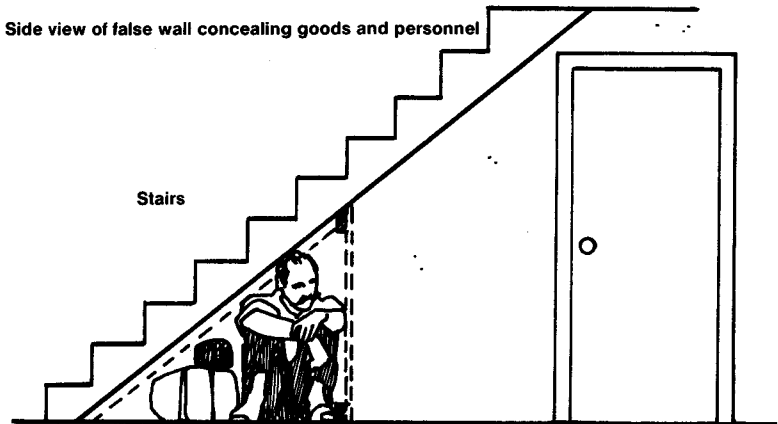


first, as shown, saves a lot of time and trouble. Watch the weight of your cache if the staircase backing is plasterboard, and use stair carpet or whatever to add that extra touch of camouflage.

The undersides of staircases in most buildings are used as storage space. These are obviously one of the first places that any experienced person conducting a search would look, so, if you do construct a hidden area in such a location, pay great attention to detail. The quickest method of “losing” part of the understair cupboard area is to construct a simple frame affair as shown, around the edge of which are hammered in a quantity of broad-headed nails.

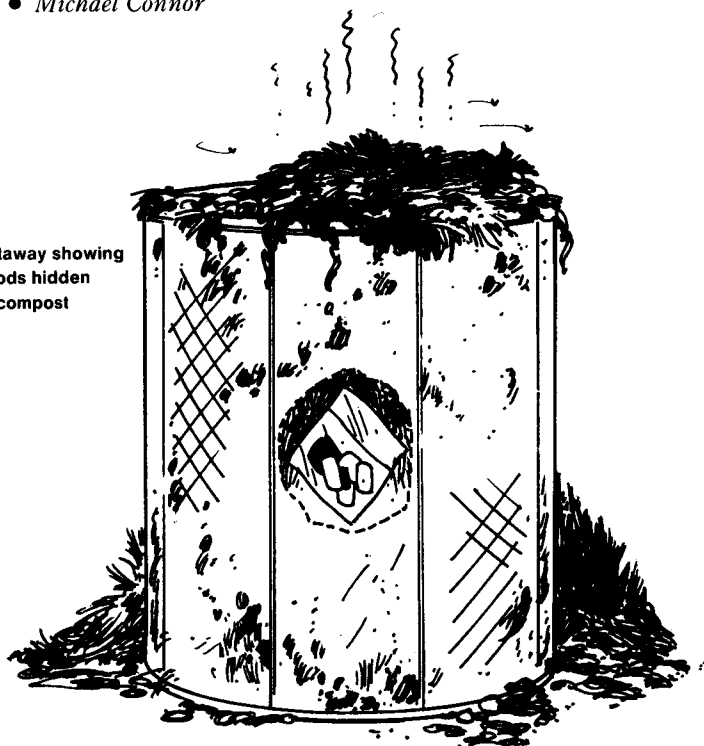
Next, measure up a piece of suitably colored plasterboard or whatever, and affix several small magnets to its outer edge. A coat rack or any similar assembly is fixed to the makeshift wall for a handle to lift the wall into position. Use long screws to hold the coat rack in

place. If the wall has to be secured from the inside, a backing block of the type illustrated can be employed. The long timber overlaps the frame edge by a few inches, and the holes drilled in it allow the coat rack screws to penetrate it. A smaller lock block is then screwed home over the protruding screws as shown, securing the 'wall' etc. rigidly. If longer than required screws are used, and instructions for the "backing block" technique shown in the hidden room section followed, the understair cupboard can also be used for hiding personnel. In this case, make sure it can be locked from the inside.



If you have a garden, the next hide is really great, and if you happen to be a fisherman as well, perfect! All you do is seal the goodies well in water- and rotproof material, a plastic container for example, and place it at the bottom of the garden. Next cover it with rotten vegetables, leaves and so on. A plastic compost bin can be purchased to keep things under control. In next to no time you will have the most valuable compost heap in the city! Few people will willingly poke around in such muck, and retrieval is accomplished simply by raking and tending

Cutaway showing  
goods hidden  
in compost

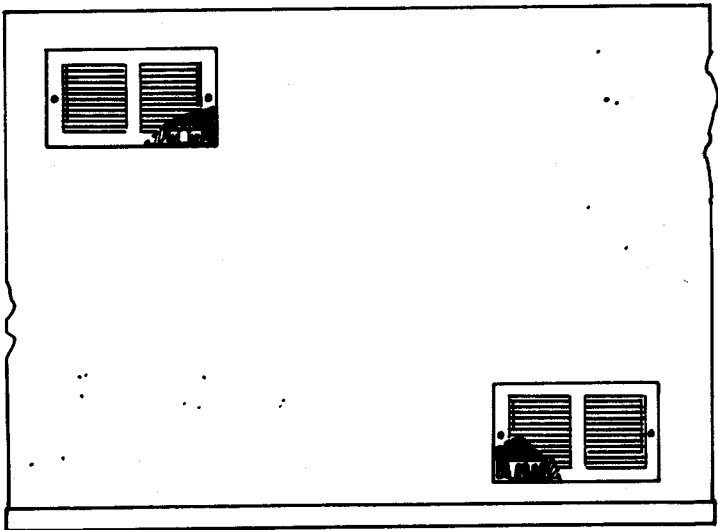


the heap as all good gardeners do and then barrowing away the cache under a spadeful of compost. Anyone watching you will not become as suspicious as if you were simply to bury and dig up items every few days.

Buy two compost bins while you're at it, and put one at the other end of the garden. Into this beauty sling a couple of pounds of rotting meat. Your well-wrapped valuables are placed in the bin as well. Leave the lid off for a few days so that the sun and the flies can do their stuff. In a short time the bin will be crawling with filthy, disgusting maggots (for your fishing of course!). Anyone who is prepared to grovel around up to his elbows in maggots deserves your stash, so hand it over with a smile. Once you have a useful amount of maggots, put a lid on the bin to keep the number of plague deaths in the neighborhood to a minimum.

A variation is to start an insect farm, take up snake collecting, or purchase a tank of pirhana fish! I know a guy who has a pet Portuguese man-of-war, an evil looking jellyfish. He keeps his month's supply of coke (not cola) in the bottom of the tank in a little plastic box covered by colored gravel. He knows where the stash is and can fish it out easily, but who in his right mind would want to tangle with a jellyfish? One day the jellyfish will find the coke, and that really will be something to see! Anyway, I'm sure you get the idea: Unpleasant usually equals unsearched.

The room may contain any one of a variety of air vents, air conditioning units, or heating outlets, and items simply placed inside such openings will usually pass unnoticed. Most of the covers or grilles for these vents are removed easily with a screwdriver. Secure the item with tape or adhesive.

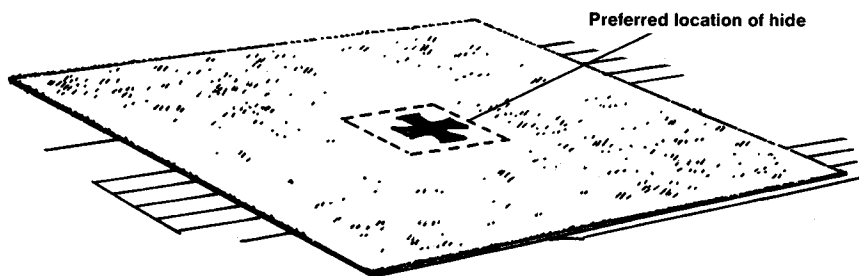


Affix to inside of vent with adhesive, magnet, etc.

A nice variation on this is to affix a hinge to the grille, as shown, and then, in turn, to the wall. The grille can then be opened door-fashion whenever it is needed. Always replace the screws, which can be shortened by cutting if necessary, to give the impression of a tightly fastened cover.

A simple under-floor hide is often used, and while such hiding places are convenient and effective, it is worth paying attention to the following points.

When using such a hide, choose a position that is not at, or close to, the edge of the floor area. Although it is tempting to just roll back the carpet a foot or so before prying up a floor board, anyone searching thoroughly will do the same. It is unlikely, however, that the center of the floor will be examined. It takes a little longer to effect this hiding place, but it is worth it.



Edge of carpet will probably be lifted during a search.

Always have plenty of furniture in the room, and, if possible, over the spot covering the hide. If, however, the furniture looks odd or out of place, leave the area bare.

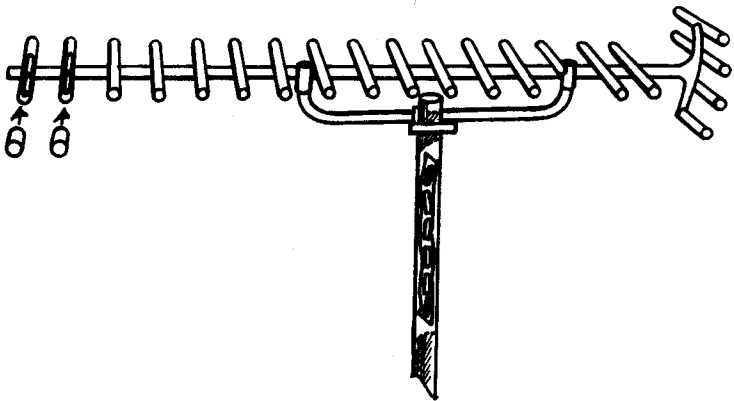
Remember not to overdo the weight of items hidden in this manner if the floor is a ceiling as well—especially if it is someone else's ceiling! As a security measure, affix the goods to the side of a floor beam rather than simply placing them between beams. On the ground floor of most



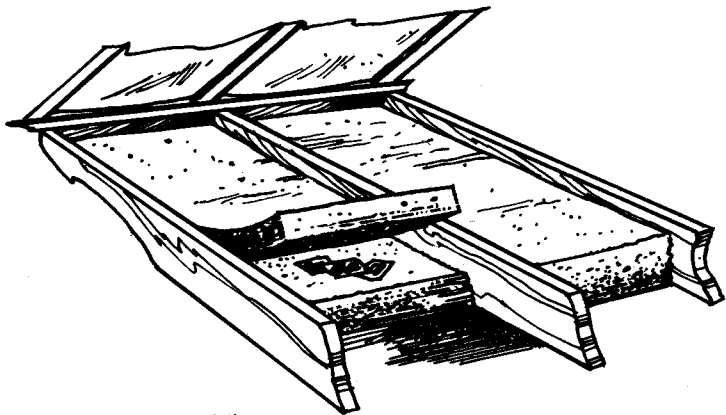
buildings there is usually a surprising amount of space between the floor and the footings. Replace boards carefully and avoid breaking them at all costs, as the resulting fresh wood is a dead giveaway in the event of the carpet being lifted and the floor examined.

Many thick, heavy-pile carpets have a backing that can be readily loosened or split to give a glove effect. Items are simply pushed inside and the opening sewn or glued back together. The stash is suitable for papers, cash, or powders. I have seen a carpet, doctored in the way shown, thrown to one side during a search with no thought for its content. Providing the goods hidden are of a sensible shape and size, I recommend this method.

Most UHF/VHF antennas are of a tubular aluminum construction and have end pieces capped with small plastic plugs. These plugs are easily pried out with a knife or screwdriver, and items can then be inserted. When the antenna is mounted in a loft or on the roof, the mast can also be utilized with great effect. If mounting outside, ensure that adequate weatherproofing precautions are taken; plastic bags do nicely.



When you're in the loft, have a look at the insulation. Thick fiberglass insulation is easily pulled apart and goods can be concealed. In some of the thicker insulation, armaments can be secured providing, of course, that no one lifts up the fiberglass mat. This technique is more effective than just putting the goods under the insulation, but always wear gloves, as the material causes itching and skin irritation among many people. This factor, combined with dust and poor light, effectively deters all but the most determined of examiners from looking for too long or too closely in such an area.



Items shown hidden in insulation