



# This 'Barnwood Builder' left the coal mine and chased his dream

## Mark Bowe will talk about logs, beams and being a TV star at the Pittsburgh Home & Garden Show

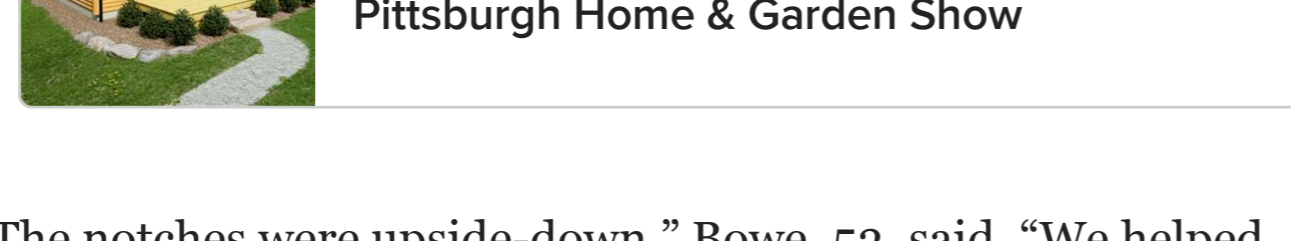
By **KEVIN KIRKLAND** Pittsburgh Post-Gazette  
kkirkland@post-gazette.com

This weekend will be the first time Mark Bowe, host of the TV show “Barnwood Builders,” has appeared at the Pittsburgh Home & Garden Show, which ends Sunday at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Downtown.

But it's hardly his first time in Pittsburgh.

Bowe, who appears Friday, Saturday and Sunday, has made the trip from White Sulfur Springs, West Virginia, many times for work and play.

Six years ago, he and his crew came to Oakdale to help Boy Scout Troop 248 reassemble a wonky 1930s log cabin on Clinton Avenue that they use for meetings..



Kevin Kirkland Look for modular log cabin and much more at Pittsburgh Home & Garden Show

“The notches were upside-down,” Bowe, 53, said. “We helped them take it down and rebuild it. The parents were all over it. They were there step by step.”

The cabin is now known as Killbuck Lodge.

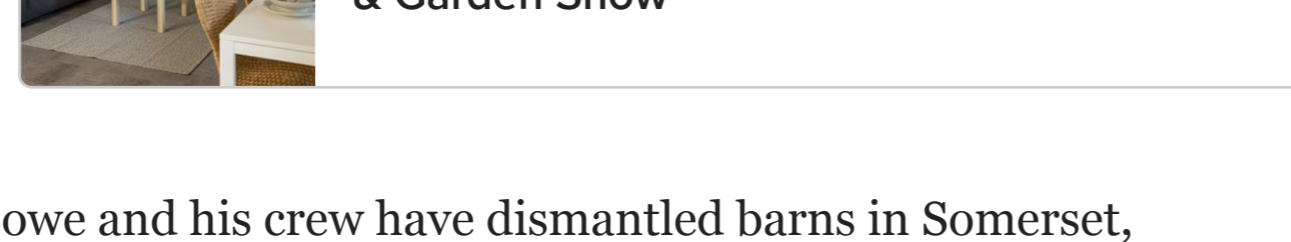
Bowe, a West Virginia University alumnus, said he feels like a wide-eyed kid every time his car exits the Fort Pitt Tunnel and he catches a glimpse of the city skyline.

“There’s Pittsburgh!’ I say. I love Pittsburgh!”

Growing up in tiny Glasgow, West Virginia (population: 1,200), Bowe recalls visiting for Pirates games, Primanti’s sandwiches and shopping in Robinson. But these days he mostly comes to scout, sometimes buy and repurpose old barns and log structures as bars, breweries and luxury homes for his business, [Barnwood Living](#).

The work of Bowe and his five-man crew is featured on “Barnwood Builders,” which airs at 9 p.m. Thursdays on the Magnolia Network,

“There is nothing better than a Pennsylvania bank barn,” he said.



Kevin Kirkland Lots to see and hear at the Pittsburgh Home & Garden Show

Bowe and his crew have dismantled barns in Somerset, Westmoreland and Washington counties. Most are large – 30 by 50 feet or 40 by 60 feet – but it's not the size of the barn that matters. It's the wood.

He prefers oak and hemlock posts and beams, hand-hewn and used in artistic yet functional ways. Bowe tries to match their dimensions to those of the project.

While working on one log structure, he was fascinated to learn his practiced eye and skill set run in his family. Seven generations ago, in the late 1700s, his ancestor helped build the first hand-hewn church in Union, West Virginia. It still stands, and Bowe featured it on one of the first seasons of his TV show.

By the time he was growing up, the family business was coal mining. His father worked in a mine and Bowe joined him there as a teenager. He continued working as a miner to pay for college and earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration and a master’s degree in safety management at WVU.

He was a human resources manager for Massey Energy when he discovered his true calling.

“A guy asked me to help him tear down a barn made of wormy chestnut. We sold the wood and I got the fever,” Bowe said.

He started his company in 1996 and began by wholesaling barnwood to flooring companies. Then he realized he’d rather take down old buildings and put them to a new use. Since then, he and his crew have reclaimed 500 pioneer-era buildings.

In 2004, a prospective customer made a documentary about Bowe and his work. That led to discussions of a TV series, but the reality television execs wanted drama.

“They wanted me and the guys to argue and fight and we refused. We get along really sell,” Bowe recalled.

“I said, ‘There’s enough drama in construction without that.... If you film this right, it could be a good show.’”

They disagreed, and the idea sat on a shelf for 12 years. In 2014, the DIY Network picked up the show and found there was a growing audience for “Barnwood Building” without fake drama. In 2020, DIY became part of Chip and Joanna Gaines’ Magnolia Network, a perfect fit.

“We’ve made more episodes than “The Andy Griffith Show,” Bowe said, laughing.

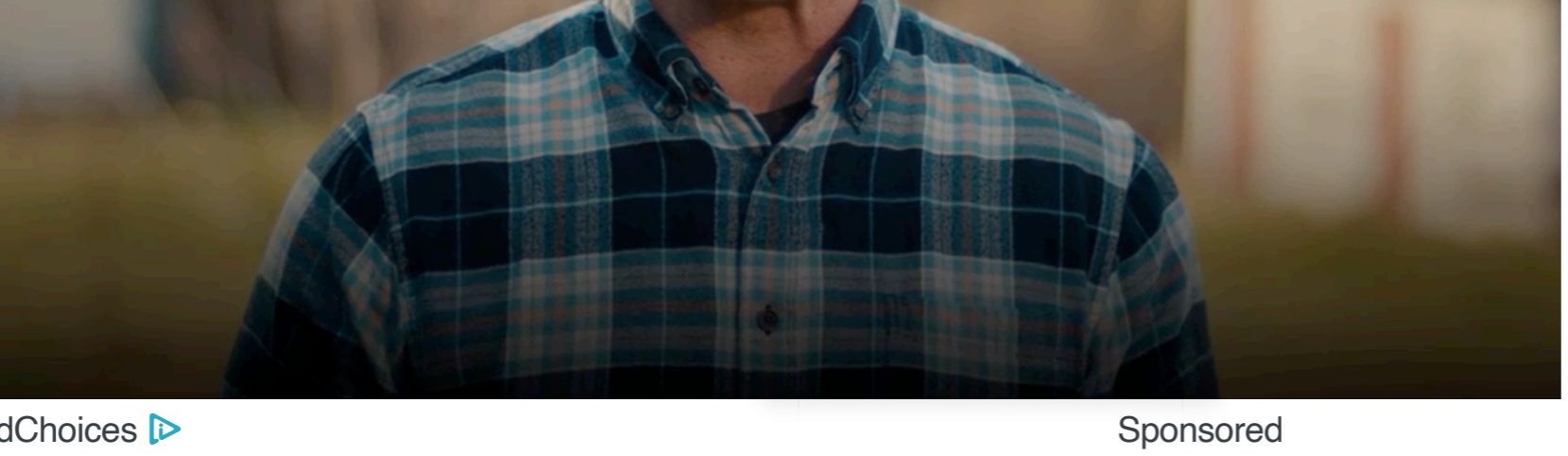
“I get letters from Australia and New Zealand. We’re being dubbed in Arabic. This is surreal.”

Bowe will speak and answer questions at the home show at noon, 3 and 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday and noon and 3 p.m. Sunday.

Home show hours are 4-9 p.m. Thursday, 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$11 in advance, \$12 at the door for adults, \$4 for ages 6-12, and free for those under 6 at the convention center box office or [PghHome.com](#).

Kevin Kirkland: [kkirkland@post-gazette.com](mailto:kkirkland@post-gazette.com)

First Published March 14, 2024, 5:30am



AdChoices | Sponsored

SHOW COMMENTS (0)

### MUST READ

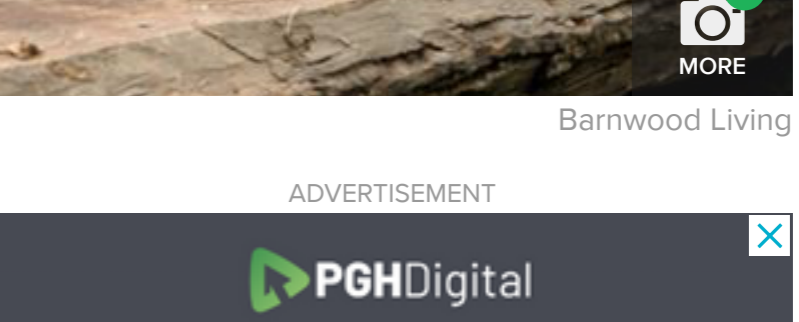
- Taking the mystery out of pairing wine and cheese**
- What to know about Pittsburgh's St. Patrick's Day Parade**
- SEEN: American Heart Association's Heart Ball raises \$1 million**

### FROM OUR SPONSORS

- Staying Relevant Amidst the Political Buzz: The...** by PGH Digital
- Here Is the Real Cost Of Full Mouth Dental Implants In...** by Branded Links
- Diabetes Is Not From Sweets! Meet The Number One Enemy.** by Blood Sugar

### TRENDING

- Brian Batko's Steelers mailbag: What to make of Patrick Peterson going out and Donte Jackson coming in?**  
© Thu, Mar 14, 2024, 5:30am | Brian Batko
- Ray Fittipaldo: It's time for the Steelers to change their approach with receivers**  
© Wed, Mar 13, 2024, 11:27am | Ray Fittipaldo
- Highmark Stadium owner seeks to triple capacity to 15,000 in massive expansion plan**  
© Thu, Mar 14, 2024, 5:30am | Mark Belko
- Former Steelers quarterback Mason Rudolph signing with Tennessee Titans**  
© Wed, Mar 13, 2024, 5:38pm | Ray Fittipaldo and Gerry Dulac
- Bracketologists agree: Pitt needs to make ACC championship for a real chance at March Madness**  
© Thu, Mar 14, 2024, 5:30am | Christopher Carter



ADVERTISEMENT

PGH Digital

PITTSBURGH'S DIGITAL MARKETING SOLUTION

LEARN MORE

### LATEST LIFE

- Upper St. Clair teen and his mom bake to make birthdays special
- This 'Barnwood Builder' left the coal mine and chased his dream
- To help cats this Easter, please Egg My Yard!
- Trinity High's 'WALL-E' robot wins lunar rover competition
- How Pittsburgh public safety officials plan for St. Patrick's Day and other large, citywide events

Trending Recipes

By Amy F. in Avon Park, FL

Sittin on a Sandbar Key Lime Pie

Peanut Butterfingers Pie

ADVERTISEMENT

WHOLEY Treat Yourself to the Best!

FREE PARKING IN OUR LOT WHILE SHOPPING AT WHOLEY'S

FREE ICE WITH PURCHASE

Customize your free Newsletter Preferences

Email Preferences

- Archives
  - Advertising
  - Email Newsletter
  - Products & Services
  - Contact Us
  - Subscribe
  - Subscriber Services
  - PG
  - RSS Feeds
  - Corrections
  - Help
  - Terms of Use
  - Privacy Policy
  - About Us
- Copyright © 1997-2024 PG Publishing Co. All rights reserved.