

BY JON VARA

**1.** McIntire's entry-level Model 19 uses a latching safety gate to prevent the unwary from falling through the floor opening. The company's more advanced poles include self-opening trap doors—activated by the user's weight—to provide separation between upper and lower levels.

**2, 3.** This refurbished pole—which predates the steel-mesh safety gate—provides the owner of this artist's studio with a direct route downstairs, not to mention on-the-fly access to the uppermost bookshelves.



## The Fun Way Down

**The McIntire Brass Works** in Somerville, Mass., is the nation's only manufacturer of fireman's poles, and as you would expect, most of its products land in fire stations.

But according to owner Arthur Anthony, the company also sells several poles a month to residential customers who prefer a thrilling slide down a pole to trudging down one or more flights of stairs.

For some buyers—including the man who installed a \$30,000 state-of-the-art system to provide quick access to his garage, midway between his two Ferraris—money is no object.

Being a frugal Yankee, however, Anthony does his

best to steer most residential customers toward company-refurbished poles, which can sometimes be had for as little as \$2,000.

"I advise people not to put a pole in a tree house," he says. "They're not designed for outdoor use, and the kids will get tired of it in a year or two, anyway."

He also suggests a cheap and practical solution for those who want a pole to slide down from the upper level of a set of bunk beds.

"I tell them to go to a dance-supply place and buy a stripper pole," he says. "It works really well for that."

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Photos: 1. McIntire Brass Works; 2. Marco Prozo; 3. Benjamin Benschneider