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in the Mid-Atlantic

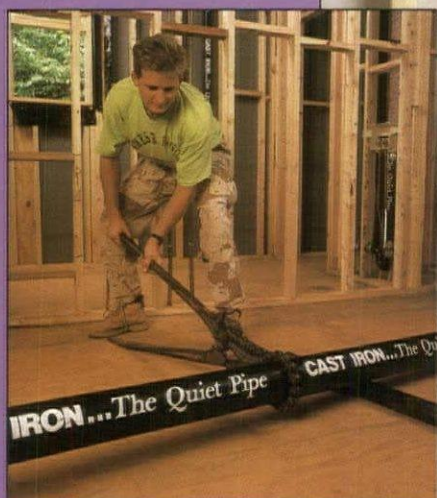
1998: number two

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Built for the Ages in West Virginia ■ Virginia Design Forum: The American House ■ Rediscovering a Neutra Original ■ Orbiting the Giant Hairball

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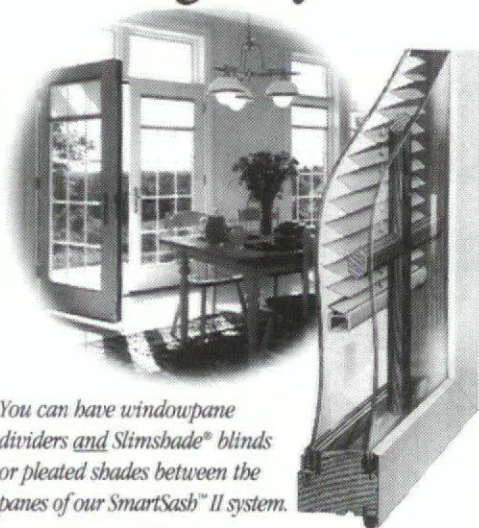
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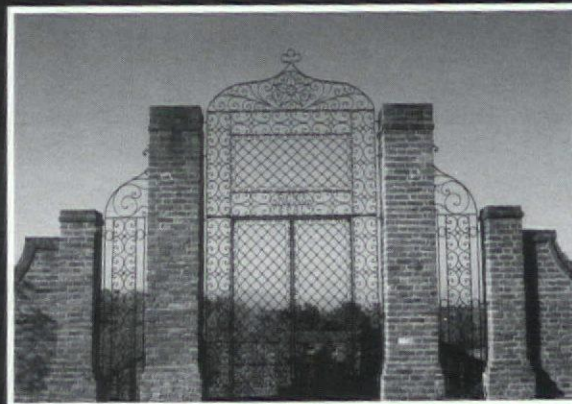
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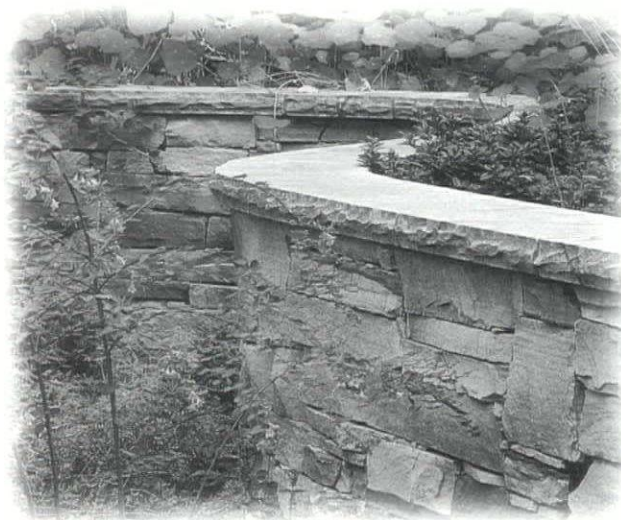
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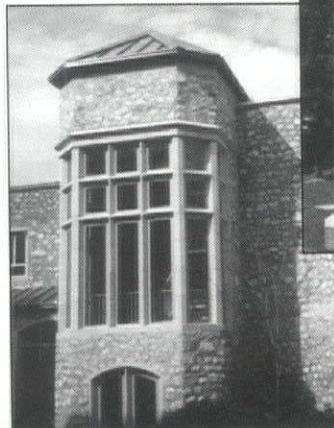
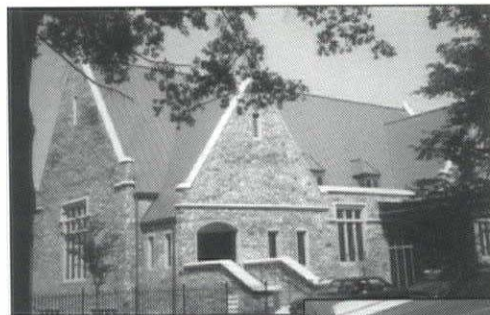
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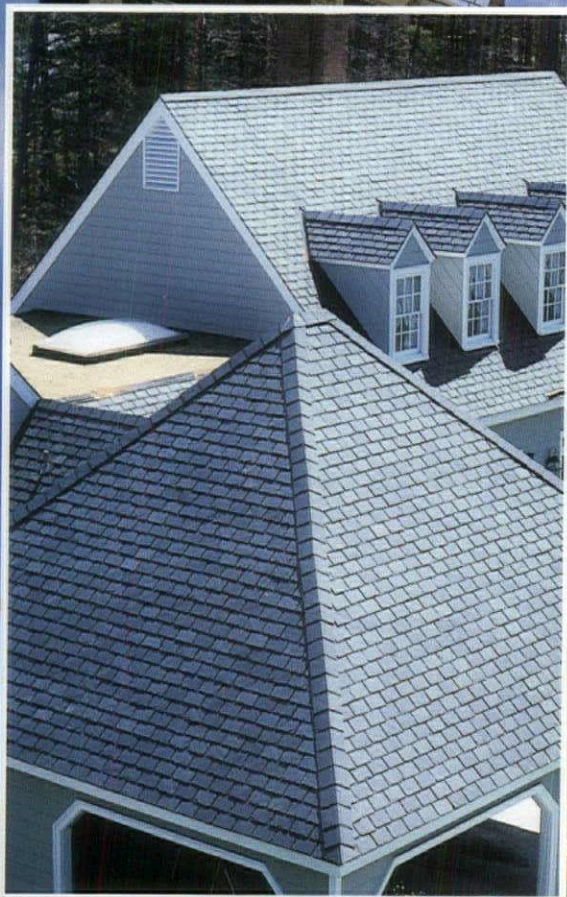
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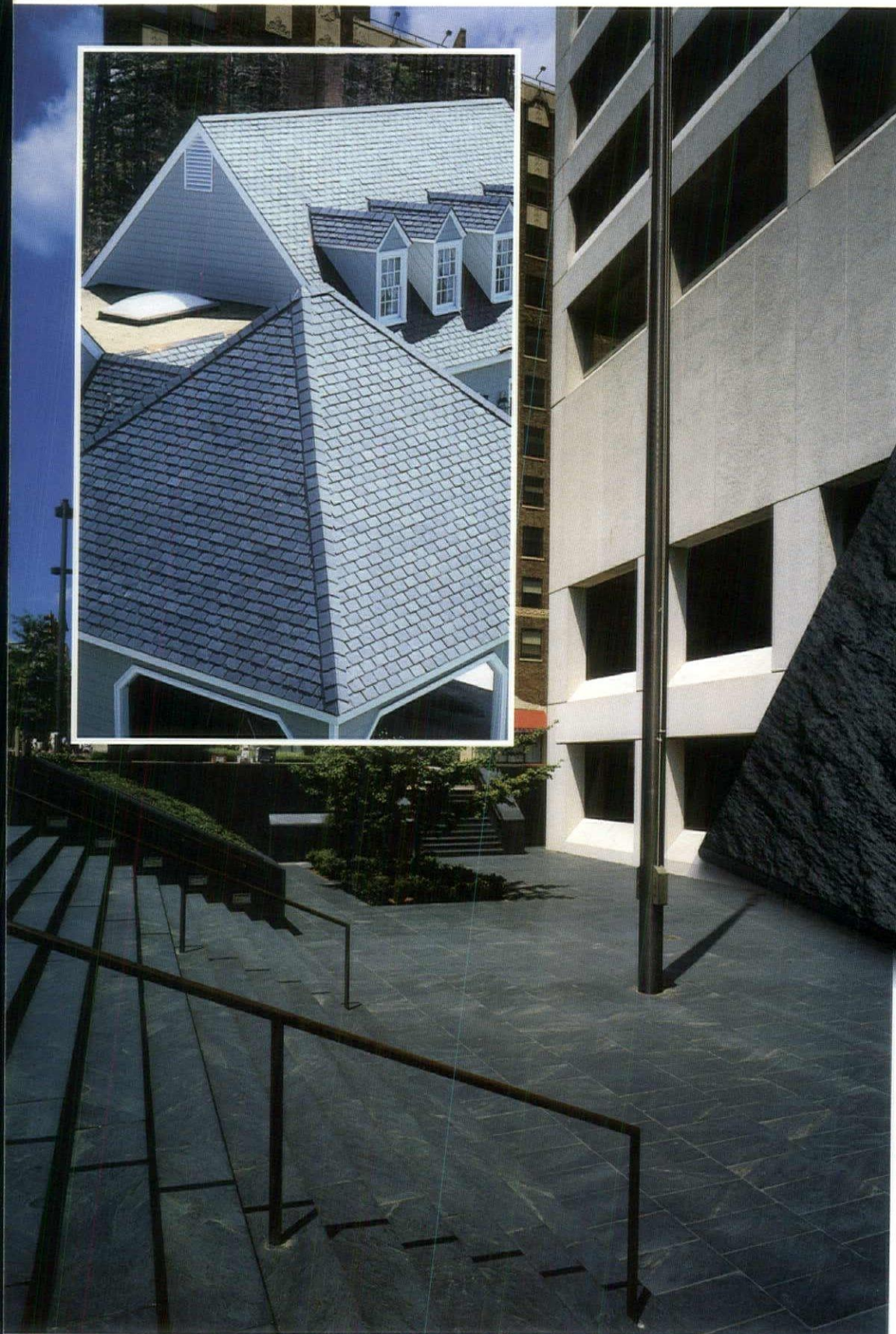
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(Inset) Robert E. Payne, Architect, Richmond, VA
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volume nine number two

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Built for the Ages

Train & Spencer Architects of Charlottesville achieves a sense of permanence in a rambling stone house knitted to a rocky ridge in Randolph County, West Virginia. *By Vernon Mays*

The American House

The third edition of the Virginia Design Forum brought together a distinguished panel to discuss the universal problem of designing the American house. In an eight-page special supplement, Inform excerpts the conference highlights.

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Portfolio: Residential Architecture

Houses are the most personal of buildings an architect can design – each one tailored to suit the unique needs and personalities of the people who will occupy it. In this issue on houses, Inform looks at three case studies. *By Sue Robinson*

28

Rediscovering a Neutra Original

Walter and Inger Rice were daring, by Richmond standards, to commission a house by California architect Richard Neutra. Now they have ensured its perpetual care by giving the property to the Science Museum of Virginia. *By Vernon Mays*



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Design Lines

new developments in design



Books

staying creative in a world bound by rules



Taking Note

doing the small thing well

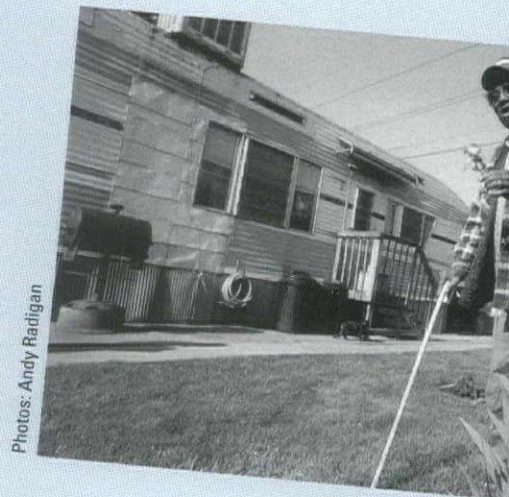
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On the cover:
House in Randolph County, West Virginia.
Photo by Robert Lautman.

In our next issue:
Inform Awards



Vista Trailer Park, Aurora, Colorado



Photos: Andy Radigan

Go

Where You Wanna Go

Exhibit Traces the Lives of "Wheel People"

By Frimmel Smith

"... And then I discovered the greatest selling appeal of all one that crawls through nearly all American life. Improvements are made on these mobile homes every year. If you are doing well you turn yours in on a new model just as you do with an automobile if you can possibly afford to. There's status to that."

— John Steinbeck, *Travels With Charley*

"You don't need a mansion on the hill to be somebody. It's not the house, but the people inside it," states Stephen Lee Duncan of Aurora, Colorado, who like 18 million other Americans chooses to live in a house on wheels. From Maine to California, occupants include people of all ages and incomes, from college students to senior citizens, America's wealthy and her poor. White- and blue-collar workers, artists, entrepreneurs, farmers, health care professionals, and students live in trailers, mobile homes, and manufactured houses. Step into their realm.

Wheeled homes began to roll in the late 1920s. The camping chic traded their tents for the new compact, transportable dwellings. Car and house moved as one down highways and byways. Outdoor-bound Americans set up temporary housekeeping in fields and forests.

During the 1930s, people afflicted by bad weather and economics plucked these contemporary Conestoga wagons from their campsites. Westward ho! Self-proclaimed as "gypsies" or "tramps," the new wave of itinerant families trailed their homes to available construction and farm work.

In 1938, Buckminster Fuller patented his six-sided, portable bathroom that

merged "dynamism and efficiency." About his factory-built dwellings he described a "synthesis between skyscraper and pagoda with an ingenious hexagonal containing necessary services."

In 1946, a million GIs returned from the war zones, got married, and scrambled for one of only 100,000 available homes. With a severe housing shortage, demand for "trailers" swelled. A billion-dollar industry spawned. Speed ruled in construction and delivery.

By the late 1950s, the Interstate Highway Act spurred mobile Americans. Road and trailer widths swelled. The larger homes housed multiple generations in rural America. In town, a new business boomed for developers — "parks." By the end of the decade, sales and speed raged. Like roadside architecture, the units traded their teardrop form for a windswept appearance. Mobile homes evolved.

Americans entered the 1960s with a dream to put man on the moon. As Mama Cass wailed "Go where you wanna go," Americans answered the call. Post-war Baby Boomers reached maturity with wanderlust. Mobile homes became economic solutions for the dawning portable lifestyles.

By 1969, college campuses faced a multitude of protests ranging from esca-

"I want people to walk down the street and say 'That's Mr. Duncan's house.'"

Stephen Lee Duncan, Handyman

The Home: 1960 Detroit
12' wide x 60' long
3 bedroom, 1 bath

The Site: Lot L-11, Trailer Haven
Aurora, Colorado
Established in 1946

The Occupant: Stephen Lee Duncan bought his wife's childhood home from his father-in-law 13 years ago when son Jeremiah was a baby. The first thing I noticed was the quiet and with that came peace of mind. Inside the wood fence he fashioned from recycled packing crates, Stephen cultivates a weed-free lawn, raises show-quality irises, and propagates his own breed of peppers – real flame-throwers – among the 15 varieties of fruits and vegetables he harvests.

Kunstler Weighs In on Designing the Regional Village

Author James Howard Kunstler, author of the critique of suburbanization *Home From Nowhere*, appeared last spring on "Hearsay," a public affairs radio show on WHRV-FM in Norfolk. The following comments are excerpted from that conversation with host Cathy Lewis. Joining the panel were writer Alex Marshall and Hampton University architecture professor Ron Kloster.

Lewis: In our community, transportation is such a tough issue. I guess that's true everywhere.

Kunstler: All over the United States, which is universally afflicted by the same disease. We're paying a lot of attention to transportation problems, and incrementally every day we have fewer places that are worth living in. We have this wonderful ability to get around, but the human ecology of America has become a terrible mess. Our communities are in bad shape. And we have done such a poor job of creating neighborhoods, towns, and cities that the structures we now have simply won't support the existence of a community.

Lewis: Alex Marshall, do you share the same observations?

Marshall: I agree with many things Jim has said. In the book I am writing about the contemporary city, one central theme is that how we get around – transportation – determines how we live. If we choose only to get around by car, if we choose only to build highways, then by their nature we have very fragmented physical places. If we choose to build fewer highways and more rail lines, then we will have more coherent places.

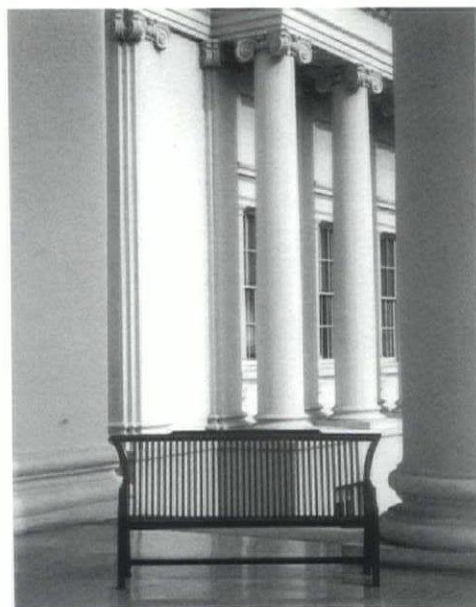
Lewis: So you think this community hasn't paid enough attention to those connections?

Marshall: Very much so. If I had to summarize the central question facing Hampton Roads, it would be: in the next 20 years should we grow out or should we grow in? Should we spread outward over Suffolk and Chesapeake or should we bring into Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach? If we bring it inward, we will be able to

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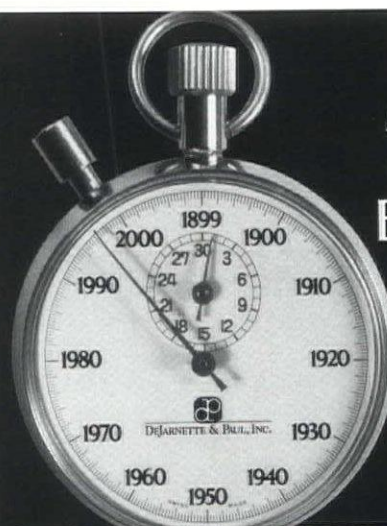
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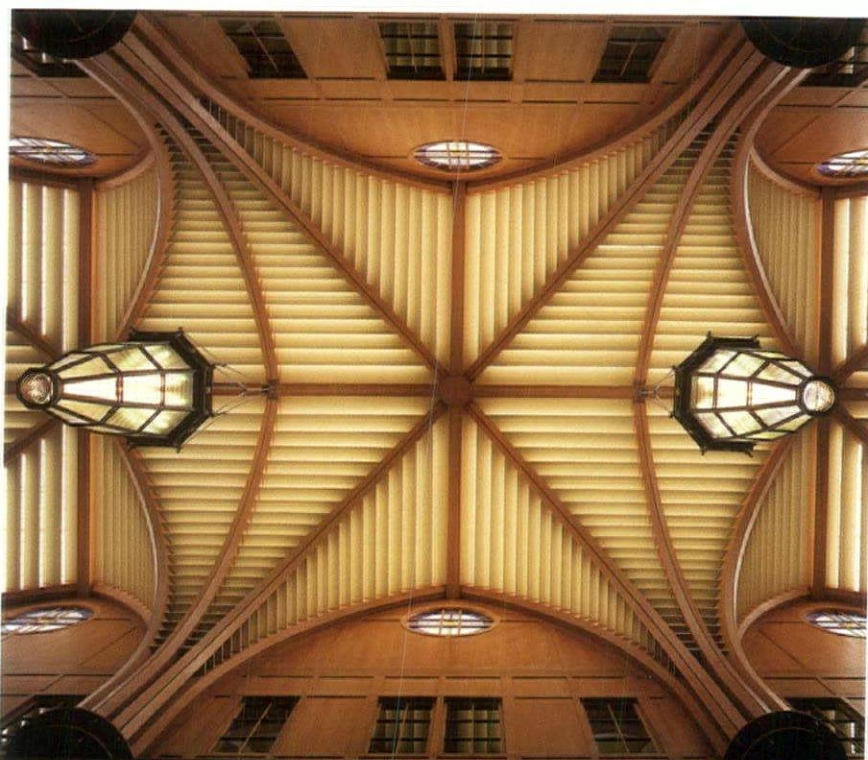
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Continued from Page 8

lating tuition costs to the Vietnam War and draft. At the University of California at Irvine, four agitators demanded the right to "squat" and install trailers on campus. The administration conceded and today accommodates 80 on-campus units for full-time student homeowners.

July 1969 – man landed on the moon and launched Americans on the go. By 1973, mobile home sales peaked, increasing to 35 percent of all single-family homes sold that year. With the rapid expansion in the factory-built housing industry, concern grew for health and safety standards. During the early 1970s, the federal government replaced rudimentary structures on American Indian reservations with mobile homes. In 1974 the Oneidas received their government-issued shipment. Immediately, one caught fire and two burned down, igniting a second billion-dollar industry – Indian gaming casinos. The Oneidas turned a vacant double-wide into a Bingo parlor. While building a firehouse, they inspired their nation.

In 1976, the government mandated the Department of Housing and Urban Development code of manufacturing – the so-called HUD Code. The mobile home era waned, giving rise to manufactured homes. With the new house designs sprouted a nesting instinct. Baby Boomer families grew, and so did their roots. Saddlebag room additions, porches, pitched roofs, carports, sheds, and fences wrapped the older rectangular forms. Once attracted by a notion of mobility, the new manufactured home owners parked and locked.

Unlike early designs of trailers and mobile homes, the new generation of manufactured homes shed their ancestral symbols of mobility. Tail lights and license plates no longer adorn the houses. Once they have been transported to a site, the new homes cast off their wheels, discard the "tongue" (hitch), and trail no more.

Having completed her full-time studies at UC-Irvine, Lee Rogers must move on and leave her 1969 Concord bolted to its foundation. She observes, "So many communities today are moving towards standardization where every house is the same. Here we can fashion our lifestyles as we desire, and that is tremendously important that it not be lost in America."

Frimmel Smith is the project director of "Wheel People," an exhibit which appeared recently at the ALA Headquarters in Washington, D.C., and moves to The Barret House in Richmond from August 5 to September 4. For hours, call 804-644-3041.

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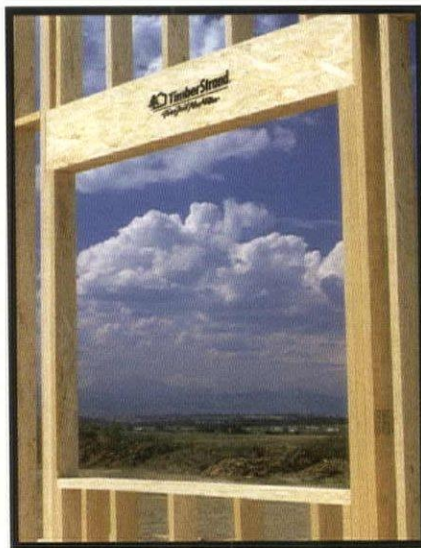
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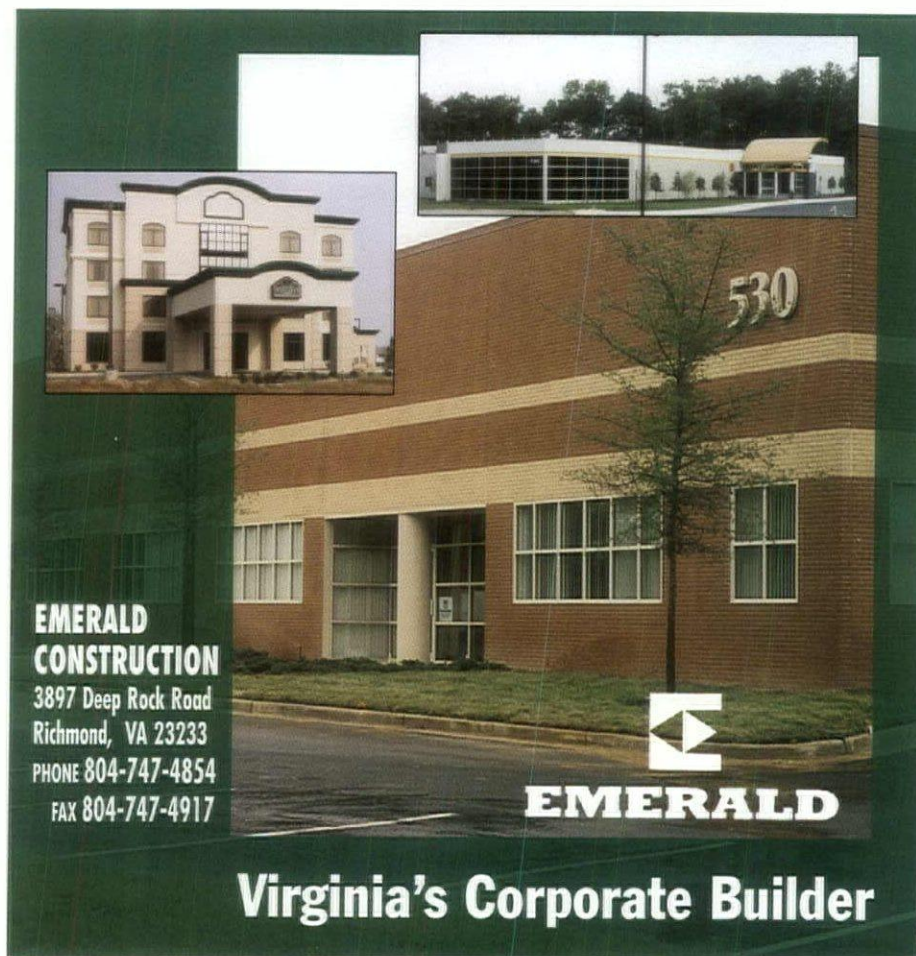
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Continued from Page 7

support mass transportation and our older neighborhoods will start to revive — places like Norview and Portsmouth.

Lewis: Ron Kloster, do you agree that we have the cart before the horse when it comes to these issues?

Kloster: Absolutely. One problem is we look at the alternatives *within* transportation, rather than the alternatives *to* transportation. One of the justifications for light rail is for people working at the Navy base. If you look at the zip codes of base employees, the highest percentage of them live out in Kempsville and Virginia Beach. So light rail makes sense for them. But there are options. There are neighborhoods adjacent to the base that we could make better places to live.

Lewis: Jim Kunstler, if most American cities are dead, how would you revive them?

Kunstler: We have to get people living back in cities. To accomplish that, we have to create places worth living in. Obviously the condition of most American cities is so bleak that no rational person could really be expected to live there. But we have taken the entire culture of civic design, which once existed, and thrown it in the dumpster of history. It has all been relinquished and we have to get it back. There's the assumption that we can continue to sprawl. I don't accept that. I think people will be shocked to see how quickly the automobile-dependent society fails them and what a slum suburbia will become.

Lewis: How did we used to have a "culture of civic design"?

Kunstler: We understood that the making of place was synonymous with the use of buildings to define space. For example, you had a marvelous downtown area called Commercial Place — a large square that led to the water, surrounded on three sides by buildings. It had the character of a wonderful outside room, a public room. You know, there's this place in our everyday world called the public realm that belongs to everybody. And if you start to degrade it by turning it into nothing but an automobile slum, sooner or later you will not have civic life. All these things depend on a public realm that is honored and embellished with design and architecture.

Lewis: How did we get away from that?

Kunstler: We decided we wanted to live in a drive-in world, and we didn't reckon the consequences of that. So in a place like Norfolk, you go down the street and you see buildings that Satan himself, in all his ingenuity, could not have composed to be more degrading to the human spirit. This is a common experience in America.

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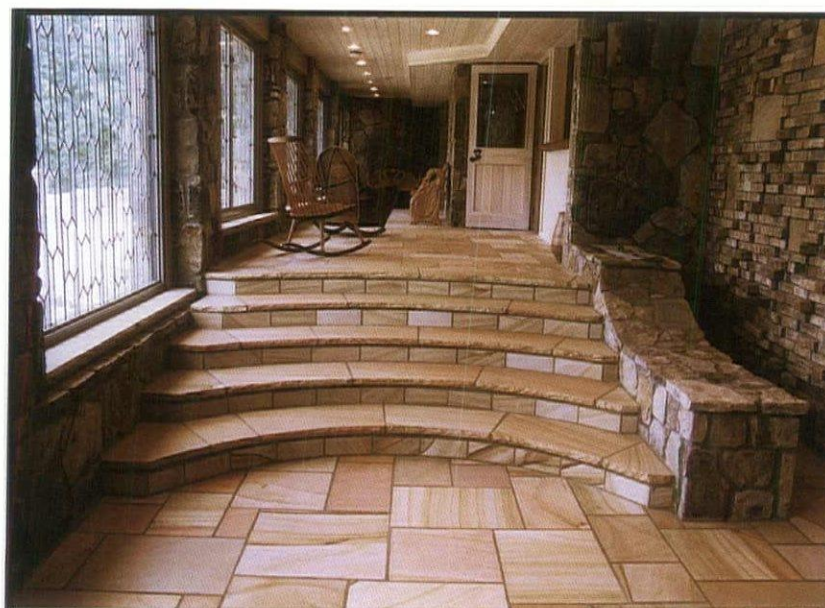
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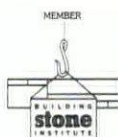
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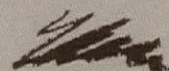


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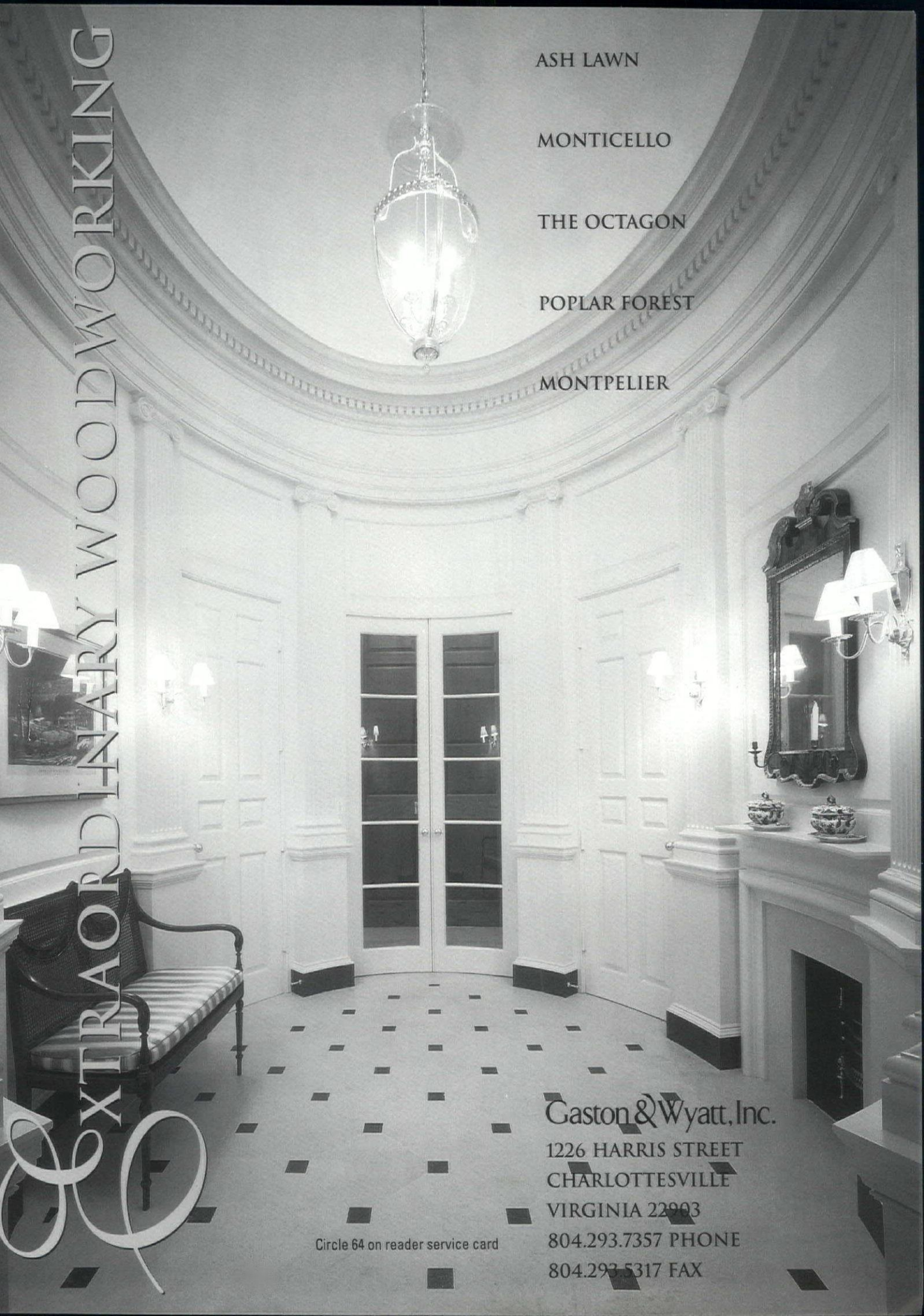
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Built for the Ages



Train & Spencer Architects achieves a sense of permanence in a rambling stone house knitted to a rocky ridge in West Virginia.

By Vernon Mays

The architects angled the wing containing the master suite to enclose the terrace visually. Paving is Pennsylvania bluestone.

15

After winning the commission for a house in Randolph County, West Virginia, it didn't take long for Madison Spencer to glean a fundamental lesson about his client, an engineer who builds roads across the state's rugged landscape. "From everything I heard, it was clear he had a lifelong attitude about how he did things. And that is – build with pride, build with some sense that it be done in a manner you can be proud of, that will stand beyond your time." In other words, strive for permanence.

The adoption of that fundamental direction led Spencer to entertain initial thoughts of building the house out of concrete and concrete block. But the severity of those materials somehow seemed at odds with the rich natural character of the land, Spencer recalls. "And that's what we kept going back to. We'd go out and walk the property and that was something he always focused on. He wanted something that would embody the character of the landscape, that would

The commanding residence befits its rugged landscape (facing page).

Aerial view shows courtyard arrangement of house (right).





View from the dining pavilion looks toward the main house, which has balcony outside of dining room. Two-story section of guest wing is seen to right.

Robert Lautman

have a certain sensitivity that neither overwhelmed nor was subjugated by the landscape."

Considering that his client is a man of great precision and business acumen, Spencer says it was astonishing there was so little specificity in the original building program. "You would have imagined lists upon lists of absolutely precise requirements down to the square foot," he says. "But that was not the case at all."

Three architects were interviewed for the job and invited to submit proposals for the type of house they might build and – more critically – where they would build it. A large clearing in the middle of the wooded 700-acre estate suggested the general vicinity of the house, but there

were ample opportunities for interpretation. "In that regard, we were stymied. We didn't have a specific site, other than somewhere on this farm."

That pressed Spencer and his partner Kirk Train, of the Charlottesville firm Train & Spencer Architects, to rely on their instincts. Fortunately, their instincts were good. They drew inferences from their conversations with the client and, beyond that, "desperately grasped at opportunities to anchor the house to the landscape." Their analytical approach combined the best aspects of lessons learned from their mentors and former employers, New York architects Jaquelin Robertson and Peter Eisenman. Robertson's approach to house design is

grounded in the fundamentals of how people live and work, says Spencer. Eisenman's is more radical, cerebral, and artistic. "But at the same time Peter would try to find some stitch in the fabric – primarily of a site-specific sort – that would dictate the design solution."

Train and Spencer forced themselves to pick a site and, by doing so, gave direction to a process dictated by the topography. That thinking set them apart from the other two seekers, both of whom proposed to put the house on top of a nearby hill where the views were more spectacular, but the weather more severe.

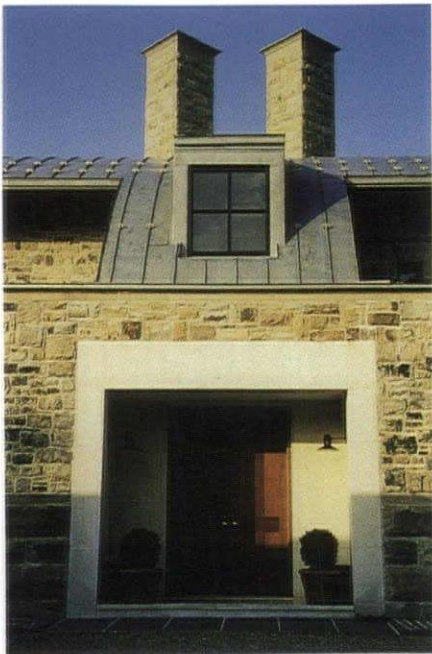
Spencer instead focused his attention on a piece of ground that once held an old homestead. The house was long gone, save for some of the old foundation stones. Straddling a low ridge, sheltered by the taller hill, the old home site had a surviving line of chestnut trees on one side and overlooked a small pond. "We quickly imagined a courtyard arrangement, just for protection from the elements."

The concept of a house enclosing a central courtyard survived intact as the details of the 12,000-square-foot residence began taking shape. The main volume, which contains the living room, kitchen, billiards room, bar, and study, parallels the ridge and forms one side of the courtyard. A large guest wing encloses another side of the court and a four-bay garage yet another. A retaining wall defines the fourth edge of the gravel courtyard, which stops just short of a towering spruce tree.

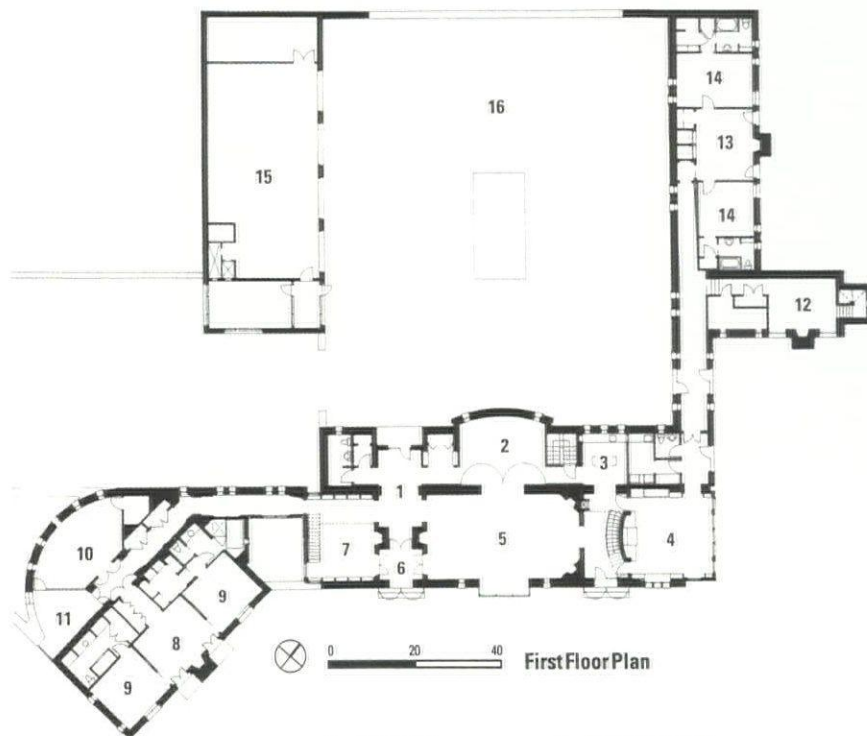
As the design evolved, Spencer placed a large stone terrace north of the house and, on the west, a swimming pool, dining pavilion, pergola, and formal garden. A passageway on the east end of the main block leads to a private master suite that is skewed at an angle upon a rock outcropping. "That large outcrop forms a kind of cup. So the gesture of twisting or turning the structure made perfect sense, in that it made the house embrace the pond and the landscape."

The very stone that buttresses this house against brutal winters also marries the house to the site. Substantial sandstone blocks that make up the lower courses of the exterior walls were recovered from the abutments of an old railroad bridge built in nearby Elkins at the turn of the century. Smaller fieldstones that comprise the rest of the walls were gathered right off the house site. Yet the two are a remarkable match.

Guests park in the courtyard and approach a masculine stone facade, only



Entry vestibule is sheathed in Portuguese limestone; roof is terne-coated steel.



- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Entry Hall | 9 Master Bedroom |
| 2 Billiards | 10 Exercise Room |
| 3 Bar | 11 Exercise Terrace |
| 4 Kitchen | 12 Sitting Room |
| 5 Great Hall | 13 Guest Sitting Room |
| 6 Vestibule | 14 Guest Bedroom |
| 7 Library | 15 Garage |
| 8 Master Sitting Room | 16 Courtyard/Drive |

17

to come into the entrance hall which tunnels their view like a lens onto the flourishing landscape outside. Cream-colored limestone that wraps the front and rear vestibules was quarried in Portugal under the direct supervision of the client's son, who often acted as the daily decision-maker. To achieve the right color match in the quarry, he toted a suitcase full of rocks across the Atlantic.

Inside the house, all the functions radiate from the main room, a soaring vaulted space with small clerestory windows, a pair of fireplaces, forged steel chandeliers, and breathtaking views. Everything gravitates to this room, which was never envisioned as a place set aside for occasional formal visits or dinners, but a place to be used frequently.

The interiors are still being embellished with the involvement of New York interior designer John Saladino. "We got it to a point where it was livable, but now we want to turn it into the core of the house," says Spencer, who raves about Saladino's sense of theater. "I know many architects bridle at the thought of an interior designer being involved in a project. I only wish the opportunity had been made available sooner."

The center of everyday life in the house is the kitchen, which overlooks the swimming pool and the mountain views beyond. Because of its placement at the intersection of the guest wing and the main house, it's also the natural first stop when entering from the courtyard through the family entrance. Above the

Bay window in the great hall frames views of the pond below and mountain ridges beyond.



Robert Lautman





The centerpiece of the house is the great hall (above), whose vaulted ceiling mirrors the exterior roof form. Fireplace is Virginia bluestone.

kitchen, up a flight of stairs that hugs a curved wall, is a more intimate dining space, with better opportunities to survey the Allegheny highlands. Nothing overscaled, nothing grandiose, it's the sort of room you feel comfortable using.

In retrospect, Spencer says the opportunity to have worked with master stone masons and top-notch metalworkers was an education for him – one he is thankful to have received. "We walked into it with a preconceived notion of how you do architecture," he muses. "That all went out the window very quickly. We found ourselves in a realm that there is no information about today. We were learning from master craftsmen. And the results reflect a true collaboration of craft and conception that could not have occurred without all the participants involved."

Library (facing page) is a double-height space paneled in mahogany; stairs lead up to private office. Curved stair with custom railing (right) makes way to dining room.

Project: House in Randolph County, W.Va.

Architect: Train & Spencer Architects, Charlottesville (R. Madison Spencer, AIA, principal-in-charge; M. Kirk Train, AIA, principal; Adams Sutphin, AIA, Robert Troxell, project architects; Tom Keogh, Enoch Snyder, Kimberlee Bragg, Peter Lorenzoni, Heidi Worcester, project team)

Contractor: G.A. Brown & Son, Inc.

Consultants: Elfi Frankfurt, ASID, interior design; Charles J. Stick, ASLA, landscape architecture; Moler Associates, engineering; Ian Cramb, consulting mason)



The Self-Made Solution

It all started with the sconces. Architect Madison Spencer was frustrated in his search for just the right lighting fixtures to complement the house he was in the process of designing for his West Virginia clients. It didn't take long for him to wonder: Why not design them himself?

He approached Fred Crist and David Munn of Metalsmiths, the Waynesboro-based producers of hand-forged metal works. Sitting in their shop, Spencer sketched an idea of what he wanted to achieve. The next thing he knew, he was coming to them with ideas for other pieces to complement the house – all based on the same design as the sconces. A longtime admirer of Philadelphia master artisan Samuel Yellin, Spencer had enough familiarity with the artistic potential of hand-forged metal to make the leap of faith. "It was an incredible throwback to more classical sensibilities of design and construction. It changed my view of architecture."

Crist and Munn took more responsibility for design once the scale shifted to objects such as the large chandeliers. "They knew the material," says Spencer. Eventually, the family of objects grew to include not only the double-arm wall sconces but three different chandeliers, a fire screen and tools, boot scrapes, a hall table, and a hanging alabaster fixture.

In the process, Spencer discovered there is more to designing fire tools than simply making them look good. Balance is a critical concern, and the

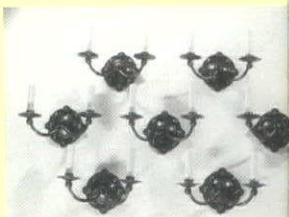
design/fabrication team tested several mock-ups before hitting on the right solution. So what was wrong with the off-the-shelf tools? Quite simply, observes Spencer: "They are ill-conceived and poorly crafted." –Vernon Mays



Hall table.

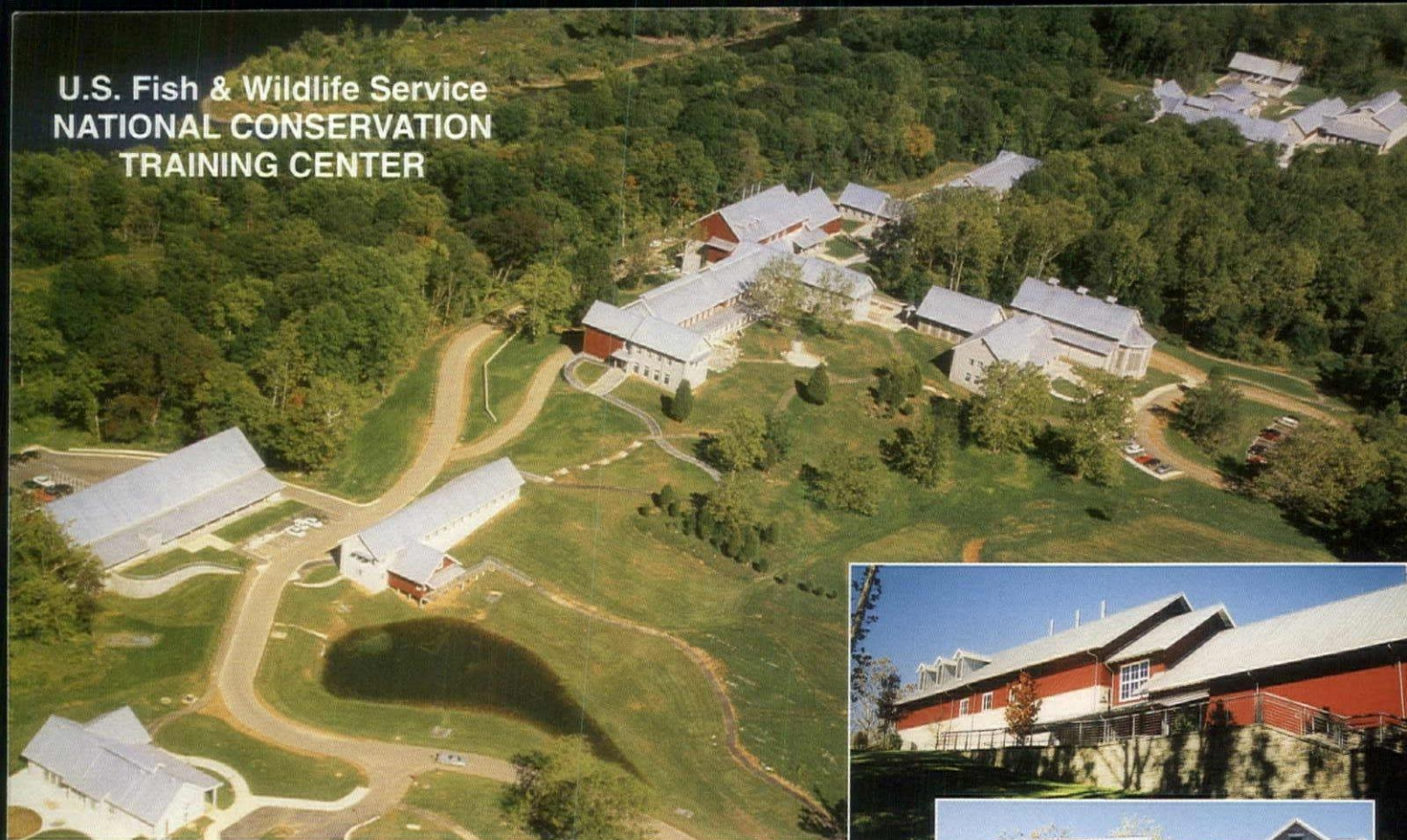


Detail of chandelier.



Double-arm wall sconces.

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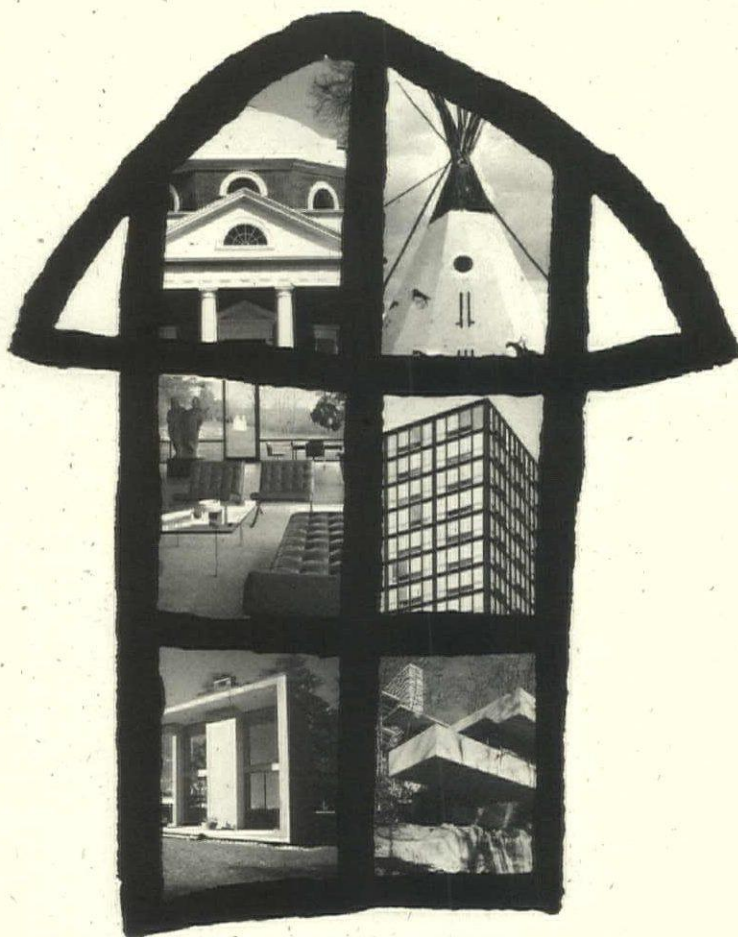
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The American House

March 27-28, 1998 • Charlottesville, Virginia

They came from faraway places, these half-dozen architects who assembled at the third Virginia Design Forum to examine The American House. A seemingly narrow theme – the house – was more than ample fodder to generate widely diverse opinions and interpretations. Through a series of excerpted remarks by the speakers, this special supplement of Inform magazine seeks to capture the essence of the animated weekend conference.

–Vernon Mays, Editor

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Twentieth Century Canons

Kenneth Frampton is Ware Professor of Architecture at Columbia University. He is the author of the acclaimed *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* and, more recently, the American Masterworks series book *The Twentieth Century House*.

In selecting the houses to include in my book, *American Masterworks*—basically an anthology of the American houses of this century—I allowed a vague concept of “canonical” guide my decisions. My definition of canonical had three points: One, programmatically precise in terms of proxemics, heirarchization, and finishing of the interior space; two, formally articulated in terms of rhythmic mass and the modeling of exterior form; three, topographically integrated in terms of land, landscape, orientation, site—the nature/culture interface. I suppose there should be a fourth that wasn’t really a definition of the term canonical, but was there as a kind of butterfly in my head, that being the representation of a certain intense moment in the evolution of the 20th-century American house.

On Frank Lloyd Wright:

“I think Wright’s Usonian houses remain some of the most remarkable, really democratic, American contributions to world architecture. Sadly, they are not used referentially by architects today. But look how they distinguish between the private and the public, the L-shaped house as an almost quasi-courtyard house enclosing a garden. The continuity of the living space and the continuity of vertical doors in relation to the terrace, embedding the pipe in the concrete floors, the staining of the floor in Cherokee red, the use of built-in storage, the centralization of the services. All of this is Wright at his most brilliant.”

On Philip Johnson:

“This, of course, will get me into a lot of trouble, but I feel that Philip Johnson—who’s a brilliant person, without doubt—but Johnson’s Glass House, in my opinion, remains the master work of his life. In many ways, given all of the stuff Philip has built since, he might as well have stopped right there and never built another thing. And it is not just Miesianism, it is a different rendition. It is particularly New England and very American—and Johnson will never equal it.”

On Sea Ranch:

“I don’t personally feel that there’s a single Charles Moore building that equals Sea Ranch. From the point of view of accessibility and the point of view of a belief in collective life—Sea Ranch is it. And in terms of the nature/culture relationship, it seems to me that Sea Ranch is impeccable.”

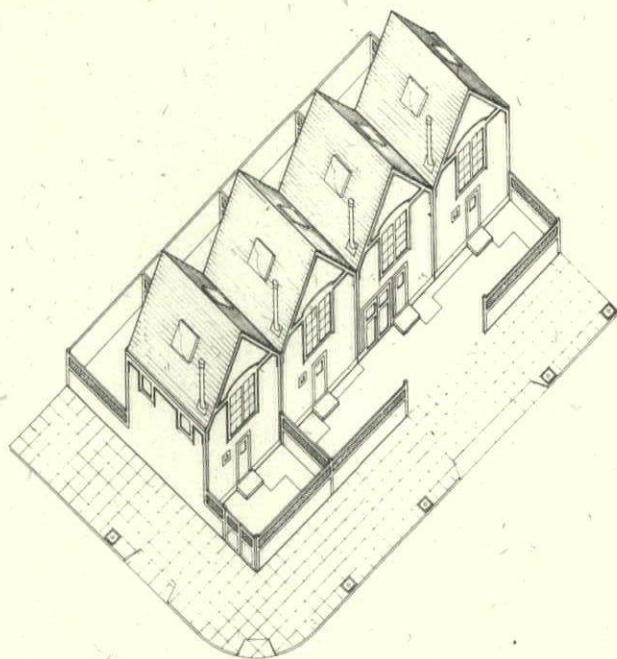
On Charles Gwathmey:

“Charles Gwathmey’s house for his parents, completed in 1967, exploits the interplay between the house and studio. This is, of course, neo-Corbusian, but it is filtered through Edward Larabee Barnes and through a kind of American minimalism, a kind of American barn construction. The play of the geometries between the two volumes and the kind of space they create is among the best—Gwathmey’s most sublime house.”

On Ricardo Legoretta:

“One of the sad things is that North America doesn’t look to Latin America. Given the production of Latin America, we know nothing of the last 25 or 30 years, and we seem to be indifferent about whether we know any more. Ricardo Legoretta is an exception. Legoretta is an incredibly important architect because he has somehow been able to do three things. One, to make modern work that is unequivocally of its own time. Two, to make this work in such a way that it can be read at many levels and is accessible to the society at large. And third, to be able to do it rather economically.”





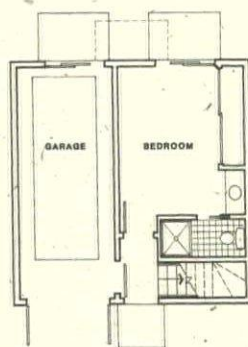
On a Mission: Affordable Housing

Donald MacDonald, FAIA, principal of MacDonald Architects in San Francisco, believes passionately in the concept of every human's right to a home – not just a shelter.

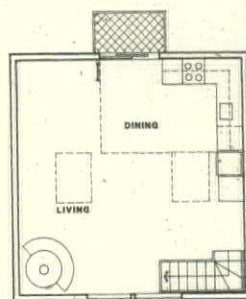
America's middle class has been the real glue of our society. But making the climb up to the middle class is very difficult today and there is an architectural piece to that puzzle. It is what I call affordable housing, which goes back to the basics of building a house and doing it simply. That's where I come from: What really makes a home? It's a place that is safe and secure, a place that has privacy – privacy in the interior of the home and on the exterior with its relationship to other homes.

Flexibility is very important because it's a multigenerational thing, as well as a matter of customizing your own home. The idea is to build a house that can change so you don't have to leave the community as you get older. You can stay in that house and you can rent part of it or use the whole space. It can be bought by one person, subdivided into two pieces, or sold off. It would have a long-term life to it.

You also need a stable neighborhood, so I'm interested in community. Then we go



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan



even further: You have to have a city that has a clear boundary. By clear boundary I mean you can't allow the city to continually grow and let the middle of it decay. My work focuses on these issues.

There are about 100 million Americans that can hardly pay their rent or mortgage. Or they're homeless or in some different stage of living with two families to a unit. So we as architects have a tremendous job ahead of us. In our society, at least in western culture, the 45-degree roof with plants in front of it and windows and two stories high is really an icon that says, "I am a home." I have used that icon in most of my buildings, especially in communities that aren't affluent and are missing a real sense of community.

I approach affordable housing by asking, "How do I build housing that is inexpensive at high density?" I try to stick with the square. Fundamental elements such as that help make housing affordable. What I call my Rubik's Cube House is one where the floor plan can work in any direction. You can blind some of the walls and the roof itself can be turned if you want solar. So it can be changed at each level.

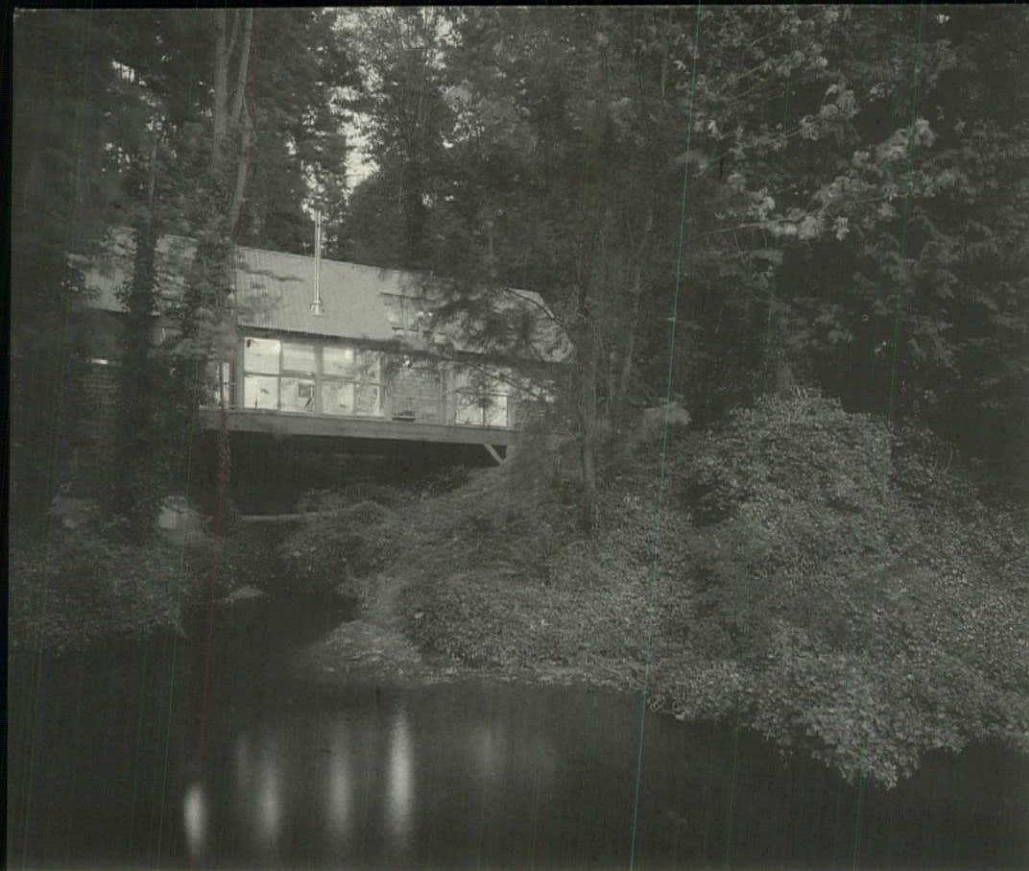
The idea here is to maintain the mentality of a detached house. Survey after survey proves that 85 percent of Americans want to live in a detached house. The trick is to achieve that in high density. I do it by using a 2-inch air space between each of the houses. This maintains the house as a symbol of detached home: yard, front door, not attached to anybody else. To do it, we got condominium laws rewritten so they describe the space people are buying: to the outside of the house, the top of the building envelope, and the underside of the foundation. It's an unusual twist, but it makes it so you can sell it fee simple and the person can make changes without going through a homeowners' association.

To give the houses individuality, we made a kit of parts. The idea is to change the elements on the house. They are small units and all have a garden. In providing this variety, giving individuality, changing the shape, and using vertical space instead of horizontal, it gives an opportunity to play with very tight spaces. In these houses, the living room is 12 feet wide and 16 feet high. You get views of the street scenes and vignettes beyond because you're up on the second and third levels and not living on the first floor.

The future – particularly in urban spaces – will be more and more complicated. Architects have to take a different role. They have to be much more aggressive. They have to solve problems creatively. We are the only profession with the ability to take the bull by the horns. We have to go beyond architecture. We can't just wait for someone to walk in the door and say "We need you." We have to lead by example.



MacDonald's "Rubik's Cube House" (above) relies on a square plan to achieve variety in an economical way.



Bridge House

Soft-Spoken Steward of the Earth



James Cutler, FAIA, principal of James Cutler Architects in Bainbridge Island, Washington, has shown an equal dedication to design excellence and reverence for the environment.

I grew up in a coal town in northeastern Pennsylvania. I actually grew up in a place where I thought, and didn't find out differently until much later, that snow automatically turned black after two hours of being on the ground. I had slag heaps in my backyard. The hills and the mountains on either side of me had been on fire underground, they smoke. It's a totally devastated environment — totally. Then in 1974 I moved to Bainbridge Island in the state of Washington, and it was paradise.

Eight-thousand people lived on the island then. It's about the size of Manhattan. It was just wonderful, beautiful beaches, great vistas to the mountains. And although it rains a lot, I've learned to love

rain. So I started a practice, and I biked from my house to the office most every day. And it started to happen, after a while, that I'd go down a road and some area would be clear cut and some architectural masterpiece would be placed on it — and the land would be insulted. It would be devastated. Every year I'd end up changing my route because there was some new insult.

It all came to a head about 1983, when I received my first big commission. It was on a 200-foot-wide, about 2,000-foot-deep waterfront property, and I used to go out with a transit and spot trees and survey. I just liked being outside. I did it intuitively, there wasn't any logic to it, but I'd go out there and shoot grades and spot trees.

This particular piece of land had never been cut. It was a tiny old-growth forest with six-foot diameter trees everywhere. It was like being in a cathedral, it was so beautiful. And I went out there and spotted the trees, came back to the office, and did a design where I fit the building into these massive trees.

Then the owners came in for the first presentation and they said, "You've got all of these trees still here. Why are you doing that?" And I said, "Well, I'm going to fit it in. I'll make the building feel like it's always been there. It'll be flawlessly fit." And they said, "It's going to be dark! You've got all these trees." And I said, "No, you're on the water. And on the water you always get double light quality, because the light comes up off the water almost as strongly as it comes down from the sky. I've never done a dark building. It'll be fine." And then they said, "Well, we were talking to the logger, and we can get \$4,000 for those trees, and we can get better draperies." And I said, "No, really. I'm going to make this work, please. This is going to be terrific."

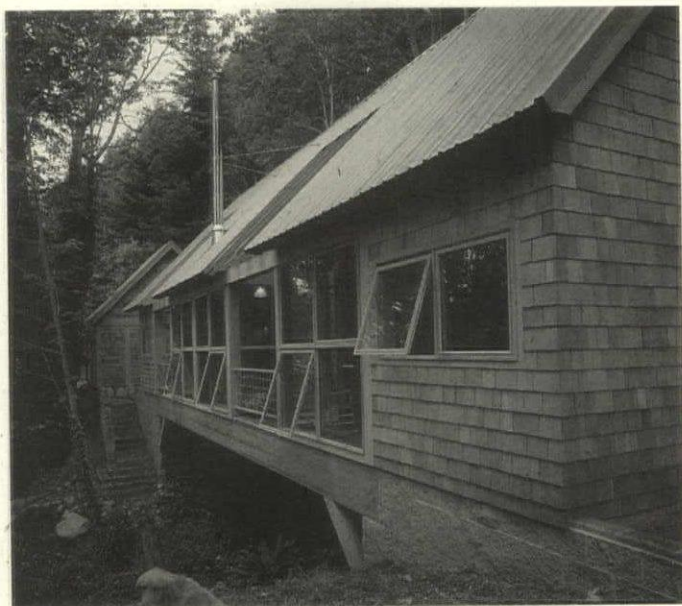
And I bickered with them, particularly with the wife. I really was making the case for saving the trees, because I thought they'd be good for the design, and I just couldn't imagine cutting them. So she called me up about two weeks later, and said, "Jim, could you come and meet me out at the site?" I immediately started to smell something, so I borrowed one of the cars in the office and drove out

to this place. I came around the corner and here was a gap 2,000 feet long by 200 feet wide of dirt sloping down to the water with about four smoldering burn piles from the roots of these trees and the logging trucks just leaving. I'm being truthful in saying I was stunned. I got out of the car. I was vaguely aware of the owner's wife yelling at me, wagging her finger. But I couldn't catch my breath. It was like watching a murder or a holocaust. So finally, I started listening to the owner and she was saying, "Jim, this just shows you shouldn't argue with us. We're going to do what we want to do."

I turned to her and said, "You know, you've just made me recognize that I am part of this rapacious system that is killing the planet, and I can't do this anymore." Of course, she turned to me and said, "Jim, I'm not into anything as cosmic as that, I just wanted to impress my friends with my draperies." At that point, we parted company. For about two weeks I put another person on the project, but in the end we fired them. I do that on occasion; I fire my clients. They fire me too.

For about two years after that we didn't do any work. It was like waking up one morning and finding out that you're the enemy, that you're part of the system killing everything you love. Then one day some people came in who had some land on a little stream running into the next harbor south of my office. South-facing, real beautiful land. They came in and said they'd been working for a year and they'd gotten a permit to fill the little stream and clear cut the property. Could I design a really nice little colonial for them? They had only heard that I was kind of a good designer, so I explained to them I couldn't do that. I told them why, nicely, and they left.

About a month later, they called up and said, "You know, we found a nicer place. What do we do this land? You've made us feel really bad about getting this permit to fill the stream." I went out and got a developer. I had this idea. Have any of you read Barry Lopez? He's a naturalist writer, and I had just finished reading *Arctic Dreams*, it's a Pulitzer Prize-winning book, a great book. It's about the food chain of the high Arctic, including the people in that food chain. And the one thing you get out of that book is that people treat land the way they perceive it. That sounds sort of silly and circular, but the fact is if you perceive a place as beautiful, pristine, full of life, or full of food, you treat it that way. You respond to it. If you perceive it as a junkyard, you treat it like a junkyard.



The project's primary goal was to disturb nature as little as possible.



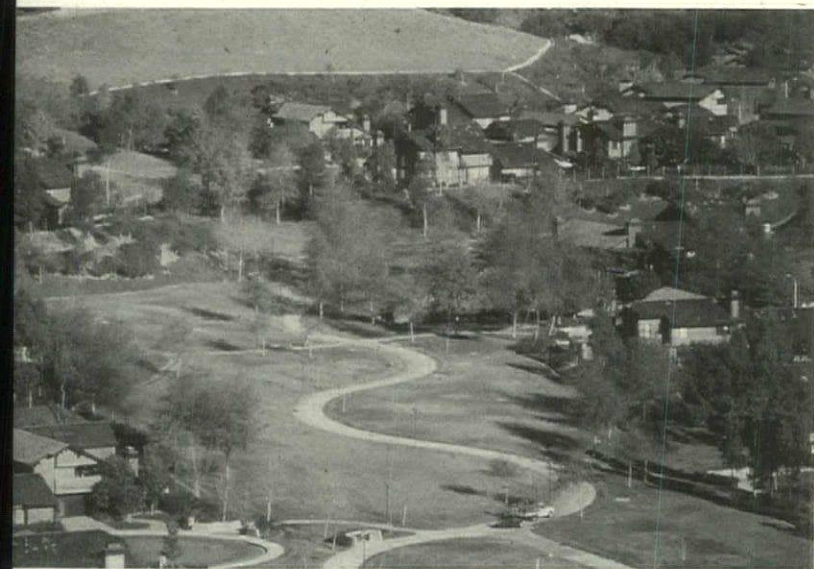
Glass block hearth hovers above stream, where spirits dwell.

And we thought, here's what we're going to do. We're going to design a building with so little impact on the land, that kills so little it's going to be a great example for the next person who comes and buys the next lot over, from California or Texas or wherever they come from. And we'll teach them how buildings are built here, how it should feel. So the developer and I bought the property. And we designed this little speculative house as a bridge over the stream, knowing we would kill the least by bridging over the stream.

The other thing that I had learned at that point was what happens on construction sites. That is, that you dig a hole, and when you dig the hole you put the spoils somewhere. And that kills everything around it. And then you've got to get around the spoils, so you kill all that. And then you've got this other killed ground, so you put lumber and materials down on that and then you've got to walk around that pile. I found that our construction areas were growing at the rate of maybe one, two feet a day. So by the time we were done, we were getting these wonderful architectural monuments in the middle of small nuclear blasts. We decided that we would design the staging of the materials: how they came in. We sat down with the contractor and then we talked to the workmen. We just talked to every single one of them and said, "Hey, this is a really beautiful place, it's sort of sacred to us. Can you just help us and try and keep it alive?"

And they wanted to; they took it as their job. It wasn't a burden on them, and we find that on all of our construction projects now people willingly want to do this. They want to help. It probably costs \$500 to stage this sort of just-in-time delivery of materials.

As an aside, the developer felt that he had saved the stream and that there were spirits in the stream. He had us do a glass block hearth, so the spirits could rise up into the building. Since doing this building, he became an "undeveloper," where he buys crippled land and restores it and gets the government to pay him to do it as mitigation for other damage elsewhere in Puget Sound. He just did a 20-acre wetland that had been filled in the 1920s, restored it as mitigation for some racetrack in south Seattle. So this experience was helpful for him, too.



Neotraditionalism: "It's a facade – a stage set."



Barry A. Berkus, AIA, is founder and president of Berkus Design Studio and B³ Architects + Planners of Santa Barbara, California. His teams have long been recognized for innovative approaches to urban planning.

Let's talk about subdivision America, about the place that we debate a tremendous amount and why neotraditionalism has gained a foothold. The neotraditionalist zealots are speaking to ears that are open, because universities are sending students out into planning departments all over the United States with the idea that there's only one answer – and that's to recreate a turn-of-the-century town fabric.

I have gone to visit most of these places, because I wanted to know why they're good and why they're bad. I went to the Kentlands, to Celebration, and to

Harbortown. I looked at the street, then went to the alley and I tried to figure out: Is that where I want to live? Why does it work? Why doesn't it work?

It's a facade. It really is a stage set. It really does talk about a place that existed before, but it doesn't have a hand of contemporary society on it at all, and that bothers me. If anybody could have created a city that brought the contemporary visions of architects forward into a community, Disney could have. One thing that disappointed me about Celebration was that the backs of the houses don't fit the site. You end up with garages that are fifteen feet lower than the house. There are stairways down to platforms that are not places to be. There are places where the doors in the back of the houses don't reach the yard, except by using very tall stairs. It's because this place was plotted in a way that the grid looked great on paper, but never was thought about on topography. So land will tell you what the buildings should be, even in subdivisions.

I love to go back to the images of Olmsted, who as you know was a landscape architect in the mid-1800s. He did Central Park in New York. He did Riverside in Chicago. Remember, as we were becoming an industrialized society, the cities were becoming places where we couldn't live any longer because of disease, because of odor, because we were living next to the smoke stack. The place to go was the suburbs. Olmsted believed that we had to have a romantic street, that we had to have landscape. We should live in a park. I still think that's very important today – for people in a community to understand that they live in a park.

In the mid-1970s, we did a project in Irvine, California, called The Highlands. The streets were laid out as cul-de-sacs, the ends of small neighborhoods. There are about twenty houses on each one of the streets. The neotraditionalists and the New Urbanists say that's a leap, that they want cross traffic. They want multiple choices for how you enter to a community and how you leave it. They say that the grid works for you by offering a variety of ingress-egress opportunities.

But I believe that most people really want to live in a quiet area, that they've had the noise all during the day and want to come home to a place that's quiet. If you can live in a neighborhood where you can entertain on the street, where the kids play street hockey, where there are barbecues, where the street itself ends up in the greenbelt system that takes you to the school or to the parks – this is something that modern communities began to explore and then wasted because the streetscapes became so redundant. The cookie-cutter patterns of house took away from some of the great ideas and the land planning done in the '60s and '70s.

The organic edge to me is very important, because in a subdivision, or in any development, it's important to have a sense of density in the center that comes apart on the edge. Predictability is something we get bored with. When I travel with my wife, if she gets to Paris and finds the river, she can get anywhere. If she gets to Venice and finds St. Mark's, she can get anywhere. She needs a point of reference. And I think in our design we've lost that point of reference in new community planning.

In his design for The Highlands (above), Berkus was inspired by Olmsted's idea of people living in a park.



Ruminations on House and Home

Hugh Newell Jacobsen, FAIA, established his architecture practice in Washington, D.C., in 1958. Since then, his buildings have won 110 awards for design excellence, including six national AIA Honor Awards.

First I'd like to clear up a few terms, ones that are batted about a lot. There's a difference between "housing" and "houses." Housing to me is masses of tract housing, repetitive, built to the market — housing. That's opposed to houses, which are one of a kind. Architects design houses. Mom makes "home."

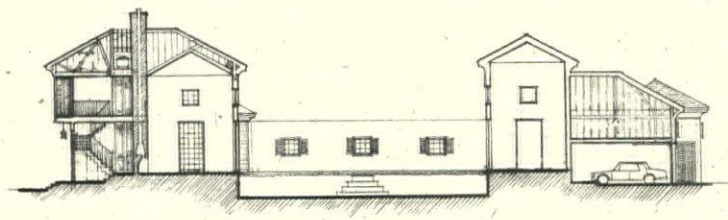
There are so many things to know about houses. Everybody is born, lives, and dies in houses — and therefore they know all about them. Then in come the professionals, like ourselves, who spent our entire career, our entire education, our absolute dedication trying to solve and improve that trinity of the w.c., the sink, and the tub in order to make a better bathroom. And in comes Mrs. America and tells you how it should be done. Then you're right back to where the plumber was years ago. I've always believed if the plumber can do a better job, let him do it. Our job is to design something that, hopefully, will be an improvement, a contribution. Houses must

survive mumps, measles, chicken pox, and the onslaught of popular tastes. Good houses are still out there — that four-room, center-hall plan of the 18th century is still there, not because it's quaint, but because the bloody plan works. It's a good house.

James Renwick said in 1871 that the purpose of American architecture is to build a building that will last, give or take, 25 years. Now when you look around at our cities you realize it was very prophetic to say that as you watch our skylines go up and down and you watch this marvelous urban sprawl wipe out our cities' downtown cores and the countryside. We have yet to do anything about it.

As far as urban and regional planning, we are in a terrible dilemma — a kind of retro phase, going backward with the New Urbanism and the charm of Windsor and Seaside. I remember a marvelous debate between Andres Duany and Peter Eisenman. And Peter said, "What in God's name are you guys doing down there in Florida?" And Andres said, "We are doing cutting-edge planning and architecture." And Peter said, "If that's cutting edge, I'm a crypto-Fascist." And Andres said, "I'll accept that."

One of the questions I'm often asked is why do I design houses? I have three children, a wife, and a family, and I need work. I was trained, like all of us, as a generalist. There is not a building type I have not designed and not built. But you get typecast like Lassie in this profession and right now eighty percent — no, ninety percent — of my work is single-family detached houses. Prior to the great crash of '88 to '90, eighty percent of my work was in university buildings. I have not had a jingle on the telephone since. I remember a number of years ago, I was introduced: "Jacobsen has chosen to remain small." What a crock! I am doing houses because that is what I have to do. But I do love doing them.



Jacobsen's first house in Windsor, Florida, focused inward on a swimming pool and terrace (photo and drawing).

Regionalism, Texas-Style

David Lake, FAIA, is principal of Lake/Flato Architects in San Antonio, Texas. Since 1984, the firm has been constructing practical buildings whose ingenuity and craftsmanship merge tradition with new technologies.

Ted Flato and I met in O'Neil Ford's office in 1980. O'Neil Ford is important to me and to Texas not only because he was the first preservationist, but he was also a Modernist. He pushed the limits of his Modernism as he saw it. And we took his cues. When I think of houses and what they mean to me, I think of what they meant to O'Neil Ford. When others might start considering where the bedrooms go and the bathrooms belong, he would stop and say, "Why don't you think of this house as a ruin? Why don't you go down the timeline a bit and see what this house would be like as a ruin? If it's a good ruin, I like it. I don't care about the bathrooms."

Really that's what he meant by premodernism. The permanence of our shelter takes us all the way back to the visceral experience of the old adobes. The reason they make you feel good is because

you get this sense of being in a cave. All five senses are really challenged by great, old premodern structures.

In our design work, one of the things that inspires us are the great agricultural and industrial buildings sitting out in the Texas landscape. The silos especially are a very powerful element. About eight years ago we had an opportunity to work directly with one of these buildings. We had a client who had no money – but he had a Butler building. He came to us and said, "Can you make something out of this Butler building?" I said, "No, but we do know of a cement plant down the road that is being salvaged and sent to Mexico. All the steel is being melted down." So he went down and talked to the demolition guy and worked a deal. This client is a great scrounger. He traded his Butler building for the Alamo Cement Plant. Not only did he trade for this building, which had great girder trusses in it, but he worked out a deal where they would go out to his ranch 30 miles away and erect it.

Once we worked our way into getting this building, we had no idea what to do with it. We never dreamed he would really get it. Then he called us back and said, "I've got it." And then we thought, "Oh my gosh, now we've got to figure out what we're really going to do with it." This is a situation where it was nice to have somebody who didn't care about convention. We took the building and broke it into three pieces. The trusses are 40 feet wide and the span between them is 12 feet.

So for about \$125,000 we built this house, and it is still one of my favorites. The building is screened and the stone building floats within it. Part of the reason we did that is the cold winds come out of the north, so we use the stone portion like a *baranca*, a way of diverting the winds so the screened porch becomes living space.

We used a myriad of industrial materials. Whenever you turn the corner to go into the building, you go from corrugated metal to sheet metal. It's a way of addressing that tricky corner detail you always have with corrugated metal. And on the screening, we came up with a detail of doing an angle and running the screen laterally. Screening comes in 48-inch widths and any length you could possibly want. So the screening runs continually down the length of the building.

It's the largest screened porch in Texas, which of course makes it the largest screened porch in the world. The lights, the stair, the angles are all from the original cement plant. We took the old clinker kiln brick, which is curved, and made an inglenook from the cement plant. So you hang out around the fireplace. The floors are concrete and outside is paved with Mexican brick on sand. They really use this screened porch. Central Texas has a very mild climate, if you know how to design for it. They can live out there literally 10 months of the year.

Lake/Flato's Carraro Residence (above) adapted an old cement plant into a place for Texas living.

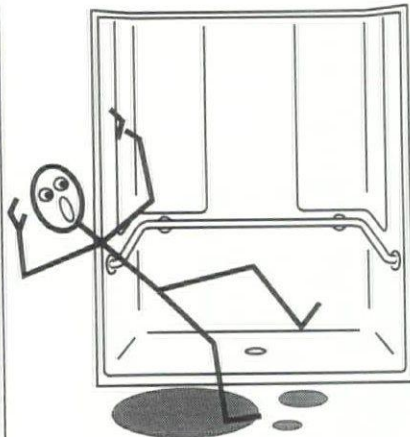
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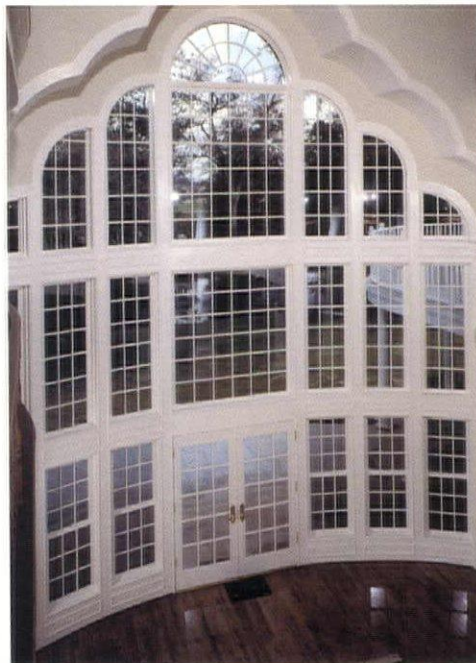
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Gurney placed a cupola on the addition to bring more light into the family room, and topped the cupola with a custom-designed weathervane (left).

A Modern Classic

Close-in Washington, D.C., neighborhoods with tree-lined streets and established gardens were born in the '40s and '50s. The housing stock reflects that era. But today's young families, like Tom and Ellen Ochs, want the neighborhood as well as '90s design amenities.

Enter Bob Gurney. The Alexandria architect looked at their northwest Washington neighborhood – characterized by detached houses, rolling topography, and mature trees – and saw the potential for height and light in renovating the kitchen and adding an airy 600-square-foot family room addition to their brick Colonial.

"Given the era of that house, most of the rooms were small," says Gurney,

principal of Robert M. Gurney AIA. "The kitchen was never renovated. It had a small dining nook and you had to walk through the study or dining room to get to it. Access to the space wasn't very good. Many of the windows on the back of the house, which is south-facing, looked onto a one-story porch. The combination of 8-foot ceilings and small windows made the space very dark."

The Ochsens had a wish list. They wanted a better relationship with the outdoors, but didn't want the kind of pressure-treated wood deck found on every other suburban backside. They wanted a serious cook's kitchen that opened to an informal eating space and a family room. They wanted a family living

room for a mammoth TV screen. And they wanted an addition that respected the house – nothing too severe.

Gurney, in collaboration with his wife, interior designer Therese Baron Gurney, checked off the Ochsens' list and added a few items of his own. He saw opportunities to clean up circulation and add height and presence and light without overwhelming the old house. In the new scheme, the living room ceiling rises 16 feet with a glass cupola and custom weathervane atop a standing-seam metal roof.

To add a family room with greater height would have blocked the upstairs master bedroom windows, Gurney notes. To avoid that problem, he stepped the addition away from the original house by



Photos: Hoachlander Photography Associates

A trellis provides the right punctuation mark at the end of new blue-stone terrace (left).



First Floor Plan



0 10 20

- 1 Entry
- 2 Living Room
- 3 Dining Room
- 4 Study
- 5 Kitchen (renovated)
- 6 Breakfast Room
- 7 Family Room
- 8 Terrace
- 9 Garage

the width of the breakfast room. "I took three feet of space out of the study and added two cabinets between the dining room and the kitchen to open up the space." He also lightened the kitchen and eating space with a 4-by-9-foot skylight in the flat roof above them. The view through the skylight reveals an unusual perspective on the cupola which, Gurney points out, is "an architectural element that's been used for centuries and is still valid. You get light all day long."

A massive black-green cabinet penetrates one wall of the family room adjacent to sheets of tempered glass that form see-through corners of the room. Out back are large azalea beds. "In the spring, you're looking through that corner glass into lots and lots of color. I also wanted to break the walls down," Gurney explains.

Like a descriptive adjective in a sentence, the backyard bluestone terrace ties the addition to the old house. "In an effort to end the terrace, to put a period on the end, I needed a vertical piece. There's a low brick wall along the terrace. At the end is a trellis piece. It articulates the end of the terrace and picks up similar lines from the existing house."

Standing on the terrace and looking back toward the addition, one easily gets the impression that the architect has his foot in two camps at once. The combination of traditional French doors, with tiny panes of glass, juxtaposed against large sheets of glazing that run from floor to ceiling, create an architecture that is clearly of the 1990s but respects the vintage of the original house. "This is clearly a Modern addition – it's just not in-your-face Modern." –Sue Robinson



Renovation transformed a cramped kitchen into a spacious area for family life.



Photos: Prakash Patel

Whitehead's detailing of the copper drip edge emphasizes a series of horizontal bands on the exterior (left). A small pavilion greets visitors at the entry to the house (right). Space opens overhead in dining room (below).

On Tranquil Waters

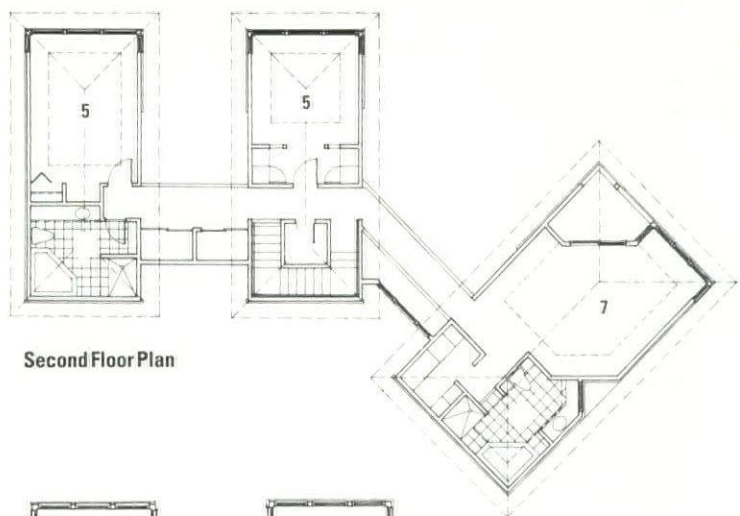
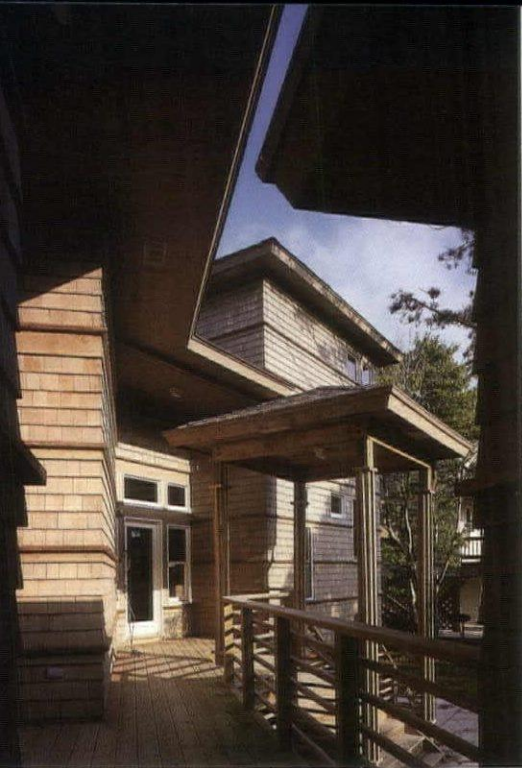
Walk along any developed beach on the Atlantic coast. Huge houses rise like fortresses above fragile dunes, claiming space punctuated by the sound and fury of surf and weather. Cross the main beach road to the sound side and find a quieter place.

That's what architect Camden Whitehead found himself doing – figuratively crossing the road to think in new ways about building on salt water in Corolla Light, on the northern end of North Carolina's Outer Banks. "At the ocean side, it's a much more brutal environment," says Whitehead, a principal of Sadler & Whitehead Architects of Richmond. "There's a clear demarcation between ocean and beach. But the sound is more of an estuarian environment. The distinction between water and land is gradual."

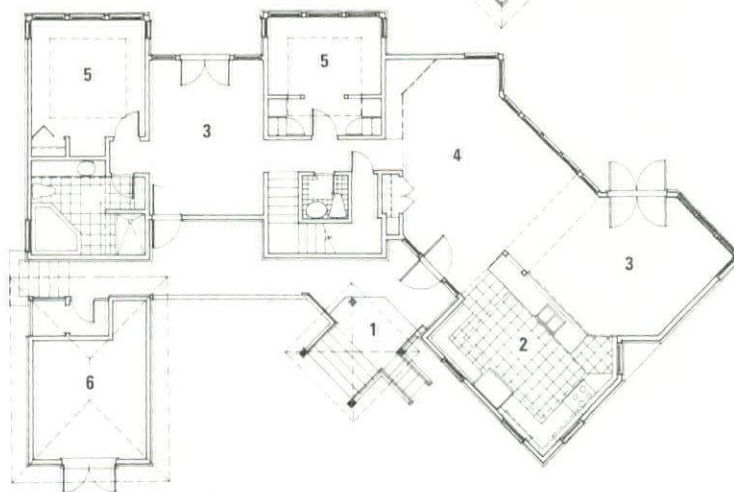
Building in this in-between zone, where land and sea overlap on Currituck Sound, challenged Whitehead's vision. "A house on an oceanfront really has to be a fortress," he says. "It's being hit by sand and water constantly. This is a much more gentle place – not a site that blurts out an answer or one that needs a monument. It's seeking a response rather than a statement."

Whitehead answered with a series of pavilions, decks, porches, and connected living spaces – a 3,300-square-foot compound of rooms linked to each other and tied to the water view. The dominant living, eating, and cooking space gives way to twin towers with bedrooms upstairs and down. In the middle of the sleeping wing is a second living room for children's use or television watching. Above the kitchen, the master bedroom –





Second Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



- 1 Entry
- 2 Kitchen
- 3 Living Room
- 4 Dining Room
- 5 Bedroom
- 6 Garage
- 7 Master Bedroom

with a large bathroom, screened porch, deck, and hammock – offers privacy for the owners, Brent and Kimberly Fauss.

Something of a family practitioner for his clients, Whitehead had previously done two projects for the Fausses. In this instance, they approached him looking for a house that would take advantage of the site, a pie-shaped waterfront lot full of pine trees. Brent is an avid wind surfer and chose the sound side for his second home. He also lived as a youth in Thailand and admires traditional Thai architecture, says Whitehead.

Blessed by his existing relationship with the couple, Whitehead was tested

instead by schedule and distance. The clients came to him in April and wanted to begin construction by September to have the house ready to rent by the following summer. With the building site three-and-a-half hours away from Richmond – where Whitehead is a professor of interior design at Virginia Commonwealth University – communication lagged.

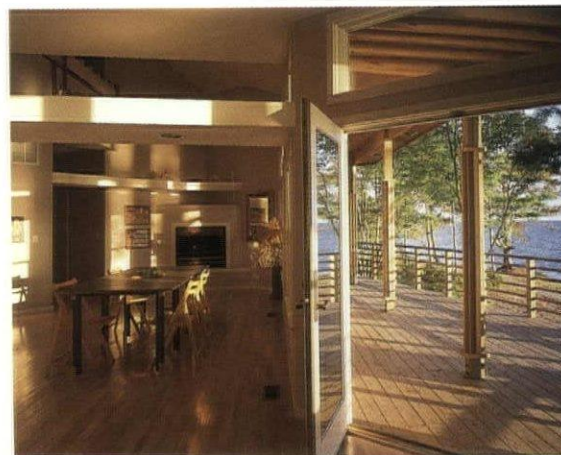
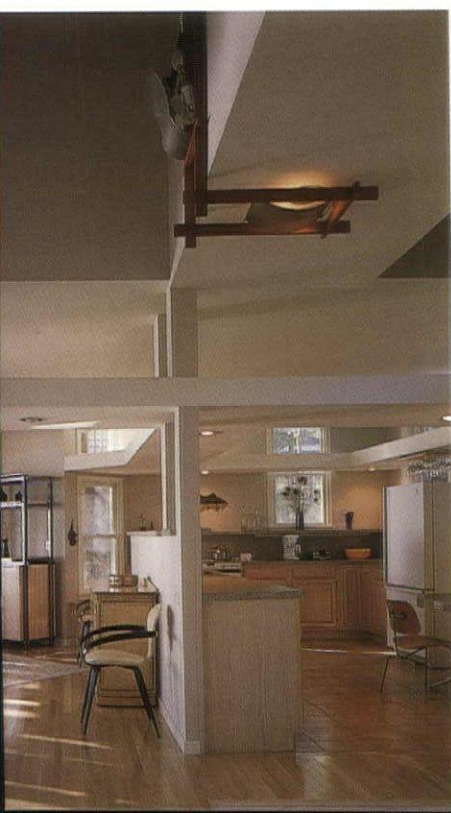
“On-site construction administration was hard,” he acknowledges. “I wasn’t there a lot. On any project you make adjustments on construction. Some of those things I couldn’t do.”

To an extent, materials were set by the development’s design guidelines. The owner preferred cedar shake siding. “Then we started looking at how we could really use cedar shake,” Whitehead recalls. “One thing I’d noticed about housing at the beach is the amount of blowing water and blowing rain. To better ground the house, to make it sit down more in the site, we used the cedar shake along with a copper drip edge.” Typically, the drip edge runs only along at the bottom of the house. Here, Whitehead called for it at 30-inch intervals right up the side of the house. The approach gives the house a strong horizontal character,

which creates the impression that it blends into the earth rather than projecting out of it. Over time, the cedar will age and the copper will tarnish, giving the exterior a weathered patina that will distinguish it from other houses nearby.

Inside the house, some rooms have high, narrow clerestory or transom windows. In other places, a series of windows drops lower to reveal wider views of the sound. “It’s an estuary house,” says Whitehead, “and that distinguishes it from others.”

– Sue Robinson



Living room opens to deck across back of house with views toward Currituck Sound.



Photos: Maxwell MacKenzie

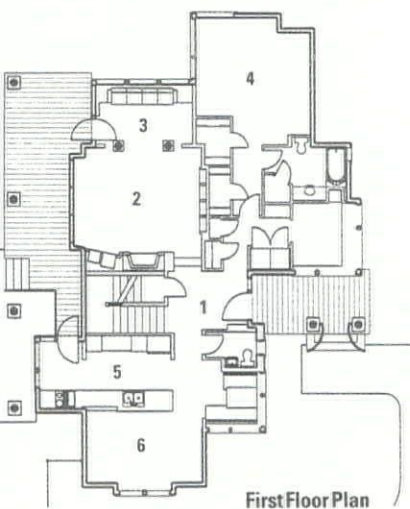
The rear side of the house (left) offers privacy from the well-traveled street.

A Play on Tradition

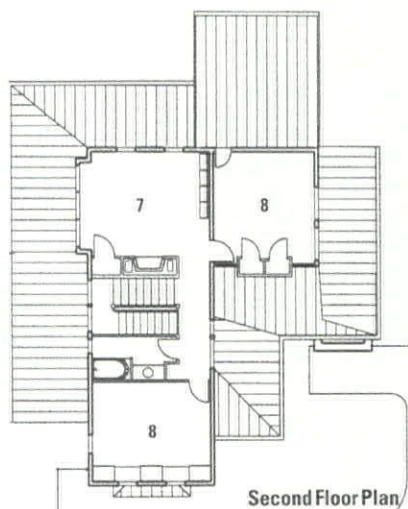
At the turn of the century, well-heeled Richmonders abandoned their brick town houses in the heat of summer. They hopped trains bound south across the river in search of good air free from the factories' stench and dust. There, in the Victorian community dubbed Bon Air, cool green yards and wide porches made for taking in breezes, dodging the sun, and lingering with books, letters, and talk. There, they waited out the heat.

For nearly 25 years, Richmond architect Ernie Rose and his wife, Connie, lived on the edge of this quaint resort. They reared three sons in a taut Modern home Rose designed in the '70s. But with age, he found his tastes beginning to shift. "I became interested in traditional neighborhood planning," acknowledges Rose, principal of Rose Architects. "Previously, I had abhorred anything that was traditional. But over the years, I've mellowed."





First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan

- 1 Entry
2 Living Room
3 Sunroom
4 Master Bedroom

- 5 Kitchen
6 Dining Room
7 Sitting Room
8 Guest Bedroom



Smitten by the sense of small-town community life, the Roses decided to build their empty nest home in Bon Air. With kids out of the house, they were ready for life as a couple and wanted a house that fit that lifestyle: easy care, downsized living space confined to the first floor, upstairs guestrooms for family visits, a home office, and places for Connie's garden and Ernie's wood shop.

Knowing what they wanted was easy compared to finding a place to build it. After two years of scouring the neighborhood, they found a lot. But, unlike their former house, which overlooked a quiet lake on a dead-end road, the new site fronts a two-lane, grownup country road that carries 15,000 cars a day. To counter the noise, Rose placed the living room and master bedroom away from the street. In contrast, the home office turns toward the street and driveway – “almost like a control booth.”

Rose's vision for the house – which has 1,800 square feet downstairs and 700 upstairs – was firm. “I played around with a lot of designs and a lot of models. But I felt that we should acknowledge the existing street grids, the setback, that it should look like a house that has been there forever and then modified.”

The house Rose imagined would have started in the 1890s as a two-story, gable-fronted cottage. Porches came later. Eventually they were closed in for living space, and a wing with a clipped gable roof was added in the 1920s. Staying true to the ruse, Rose's woodworking



Rose manipulated the scale of the house by using large windows and oversized columns.

shop resembles a period carriage house. The “additions” to the house are finished with painted brick, Dutch-lap siding or board-and-batten siding. A mixture of double-hung and fixed windows contributes to the feeling that the house grew over time.

To raise the house off its low-sloping site, Rose emphasized vertical proportions. “The house is skinny and very tall,” he explains. “Scale is played with in a lot of places. Trim, columns, and chimneys are too big on purpose.”

Rose, an avid woodworker, built exterior doors, kitchen cabinets, and other built-ins. The homespun result is a far cry from his day-to-day specialty – office buildings. In that arena, he admits, “I steer clients away from emotional influences. But building your own home is emotional.”

—Sue Robinson

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As envisioned by Rose, the north façade (left) resembles a house that has been improved with many additions. Living room (right) is cozy, but filled with light.





Rediscovering Neutra's Way



The Rices in front of their secluded retreat: "It's a miracle that Neutra came here."

By the mid-1960s, Walter and Inger Rice had traveled the far reaches of the earth for business and pleasure. America was their home, but they were truly citizens of the world. So when it came time to build a house, their choices were naturally influenced by their cosmopolitan view. Although they were members of Richmond's social elite – Ambassador Rice was, at the time, a vice president at Reynolds Metals – their tastes ran less toward Williamsburg colonial and more toward International Style modern.

"We knew we could not build this house in conservative Windsor Farms,

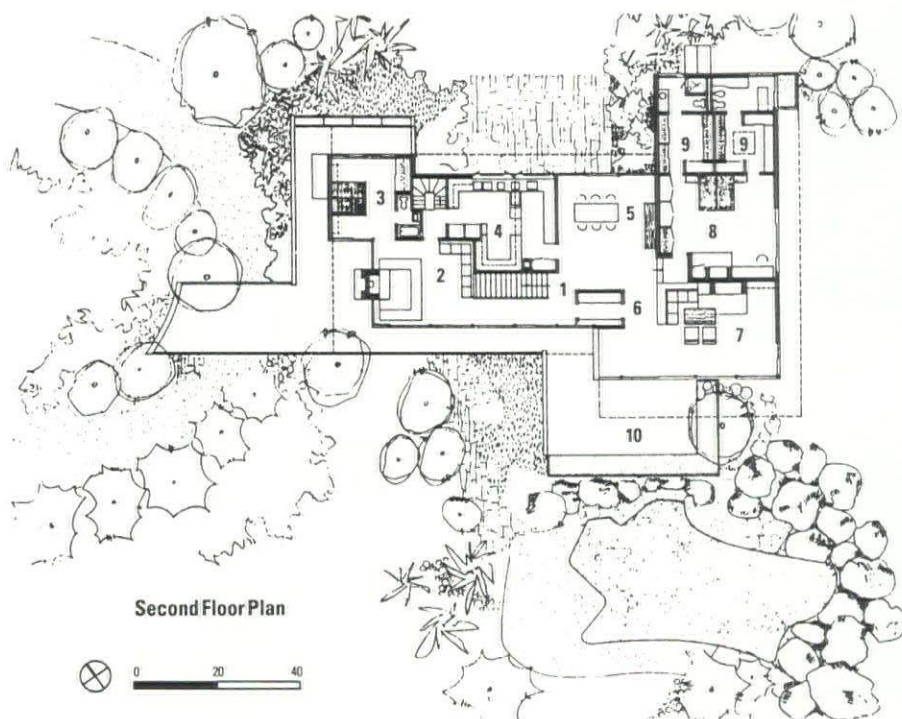
because it would have shocked the neighbors," says Inger Rice, seated in the marble-and-stucco house she and her husband built on a private island overlooking the James River. "But here we could do what we wanted."

That's just what they did. To design their dream house, the Rices commissioned Austrian-born architect Richard Neutra, revered today as one of the masters of 20th century architecture. It made headlines at the time. And the house made news again in 1996 when they donated it to the Science Museum of Virginia to use as a residence and study



Photos: Christian Wildman

- 1 Upper Entrance
- 2 Japanese Room
- 3 Guest Room
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Dining Room
- 6 Bar
- 7 Living Room
- 8 Master Bedroom
- 9 Dressing Room
- 10 Terrace



Second Floor Plan



center. Last fall, their benevolence was acknowledged by Virginia architects through the Architecture Medal for Virginia Service, which was presented jointly to the couple.

At the time they built the house, it was a daring thing to do. But the decision to hire Neutra was no whim. Inger spent days at the AIA headquarters in Washington, D.C., poring over books on American architects. She narrowed her choices to three: Philip Johnson, Edward Durrell Stone, and Richard Neutra.

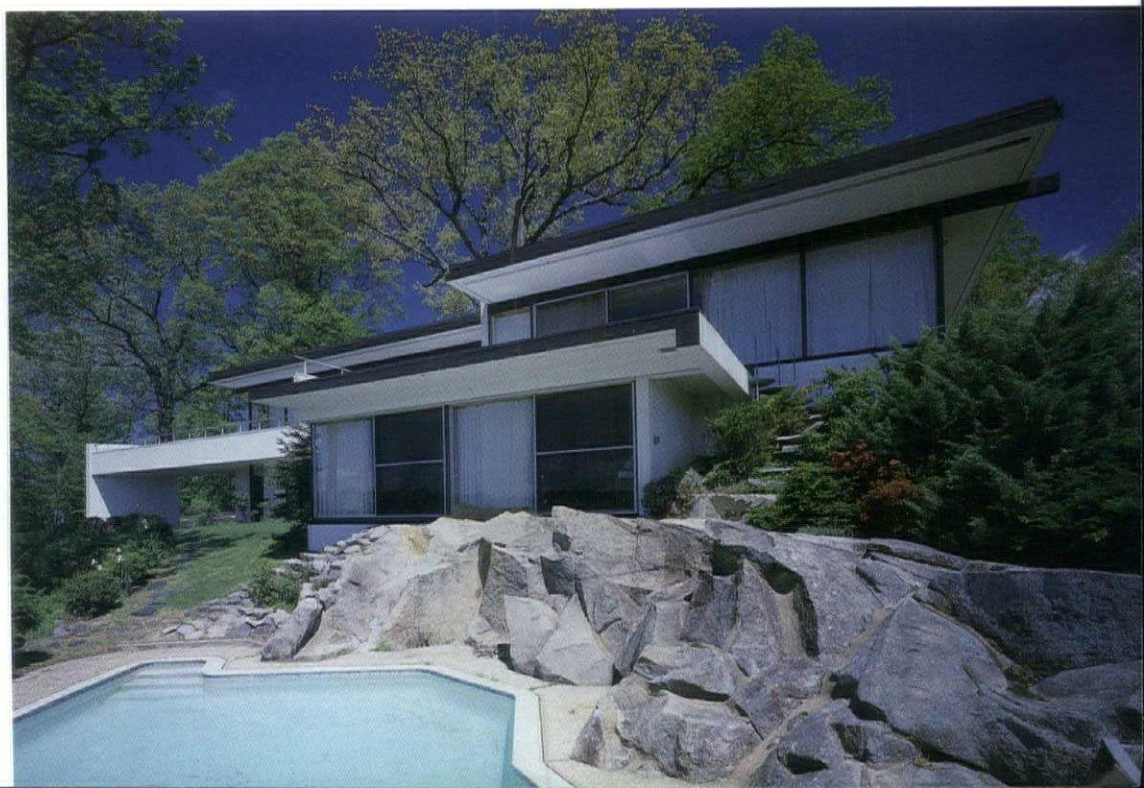
Neutra was practicing in Los Angeles by then, having apprenticed briefly during 1924 with Frank Lloyd Wright in

Wisconsin before moving to California to join his friend Rudolph Schindler. There he has won worldwide acclaim for his designs, beginning with the Lovell Health House completed in 1929. By the mid-1960s, Neutra's career had long since peaked, but according to Inger Rice he was no less arrogant for having passed his 70th birthday.

"It's a miracle that Neutra came here," she says. "He told me that he was famous and he wouldn't come to Richmond. But I told him this is a very spectacular site. There is nothing else like it. So that got his interest. Then he said, 'Well, I only do houses for people I like. And I will

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Visitors approach the house beneath a porte cochere and enter through a lower-level door (above left). Children's bedrooms look directly onto the pool, which is set among natural boulders (right).



come to Richmond and if we like each other, I will be your architect."

Inger says she was willing to put up with Neutra's ego because she was so enamored with the openness of his houses and his knack for combining the natural environment with a house. She admired the crisp lines of the cantilevered overhangs he often designed. "And I think he was an artist with lighting. We can light up the trees, and the overhang, and the waterfall, the parking area – all sorts of things."

The house Neutra designed for the Rices exploits the drama of the cliff-top site, stretching the public rooms along the top of the ridge parallel to the river. Large plate-glass windows open to views of the water coursing over rocks below; many of the windows slide open to

provide access to a terrace bordered with a shallow water-guard in place of a railing.

Neutra wedged the house alongside massive boulders that push from the ground in front of the house, creating a contrast between free-form nature and the rigid geometry of the house. Quirky "mushroom stairs" leading from the rocks up to the terrace seem somewhat dated today, although they are typical of the expressiveness of their time.

Inside the house, many of the furnishings are built-ins designed by Neutra – notably the sofas in the living room and the sunken Japanese room. Inger added a Danish dining room table and chairs, much to the chagrin of Neutra, who hated tables and chairs.

After living in the house for more than 30 years, the Rices began thinking about its eventual fate. Before donating the house to the Science Museum, they considered giving the property to other institutions in Richmond, but felt none had the same commitment to preserve the site, which is rich in history as well as natural beauty. Known as Locke Island, the property overlooks the remains of the "Five Mile Lock" along the Kanawha Canal, whose construction was planned and overseen by George Washington. Beside the cliffs is a shot tower where ammunition was made for the Civil War. But the dearest resource, says Inger, is the wildlife – herons, ducks, geese, and wild deer. "We wanted it all left natural."

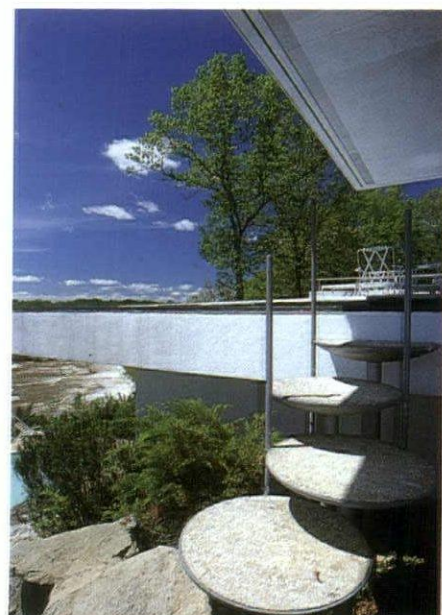
The Rices will continue to make the 17-acre island their home for the rest of their lives. Ultimately, the house will be preserved as a residence, either for a Science Museum director or a scholar-in-residence. The property will be known as the Ambassador Walter Rice and Inger Rice River Center, a site for study of the natural history, archaeology, biology, commerce, and ecology of the James River. The Rices also donated an adjacent 18-acre parcel that is being sold to establish an endowment for the property's maintenance.

—Vernon Mays

Rough-cut Georgia marble continues from the exterior walls into the living room; sofas are Neutra built-ins (left).



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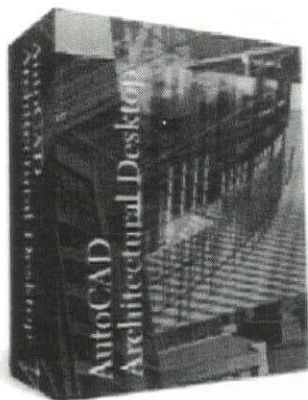
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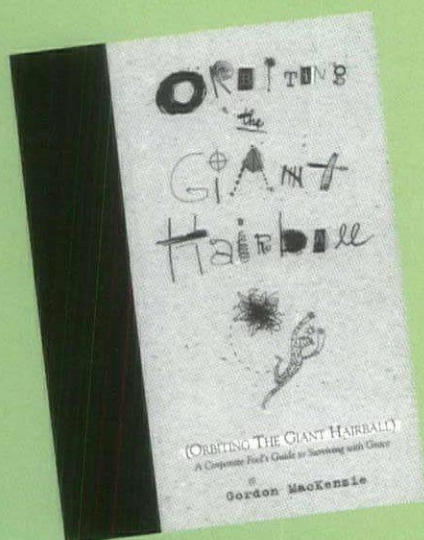


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Orbiting the Giant Hairball: A Corporate Fool's Guide to Surviving with Grace. By Gordon MacKenzie. 224 pages. Illustrated. New York: Viking Penguin. \$22.00 cloth.

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Review by Douglas McCreary Greenwood



There are some books you read and then forget; some books you read and shelve in your library; some books you read and recommend to friends. Gordon MacKenzie's *Orbiting the Giant Hairball* falls into the latter two categories, though if the truth be known, it's not really in my library. I keep it on my desk.

You will, too, if you're feeling a little demoralized by the ruts most of us fall into and, at the same time, are subversive enough to want to keep in touch with your childlike creative impulses. Already something of a cult book, this small and delightful work, laced with what look like kids' drawings – stick figures, squiggles, and doodles amidst patches of bright colors and all sorts of graphic nonsense – is irresistible.

My six-year-old daughter, an accomplished artist of the Morris Louis rainbow color school, picked the book up and said, "Wow, Daddy, this is cool." An architect friend oohed and aahed her way through the text and

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"Hairball is policy, procedure, conformity, compliance, rigidity, and submission to status quo, while Orbiting is originality, rules-breaking, non-conformity, experimentation, and innovation."



Maintaining a Creative Edge in a World Bound by Rules

immediately wanted to know where she could get a copy. Only my wife, an economist with the USDA, found fault with *Orbiting*, her chief complaint being that if people took MacKenzie's "let's lynch the bastards" suggestions to heart, their businesses would be heading towards Chapter 11 before the next quarter rolled around.

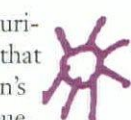
Not everyone in corporate America agrees. The CEO of Hallmark Cards, Inc., where MacKenzie toiled for thirty years as a designer, acknowledged in *Fortune* magazine that MacKenzie was a positive force at the greeting card emporium – an employee who, as he put it, straddled the gap between Hallmark's creative types and the "suits" who ran the business. MacKenzie, who ended up at Hallmark with the bizarre job title Creative Paradox, writes, "Some came to describe me as 'the bridge between Hallmark's creative forces and its executives.' Others saw me as con man, charlatan." And this delightful dichotomy provides some insight into the man behind the book. It helps explain the



"hairball" of the title (that curious and unique web that describes every organization's or bureaucracy's unique culture), and even begins to make clear some of the Zenlike quotations that are liberally sprinkled throughout the book.

MacKenzie's strategy in *Orbiting* is to remind the reader with anecdotes and parables that falling into step with what Madison Avenue, the federal government, and your boss all want is equivalent to abdicating the throne, turning over to others what is most sacred to your creative spirit, your individuality. As MacKenzie explains it: "Hairball is policy, procedure, conformity, compliance, rigidity, and submission to status quo, while Orbiting is originality, rules-breaking, non-conformity, experimentation, and innovation."

Like Emerson, who insists in *Self-Reliance*, "Trust thyself, every heart vibrates to that iron string," MacKenzie would have us insist on the primacy of self. And like the



great Romantic poets, who celebrated childhood for its innocent embrace of nature, MacKenzie encourages adventure. "Flying off on a tangent is the first step in the process of going into Orbit," he writes. Or to put it more succinctly: "Orville Wright did not have a pilot's license."

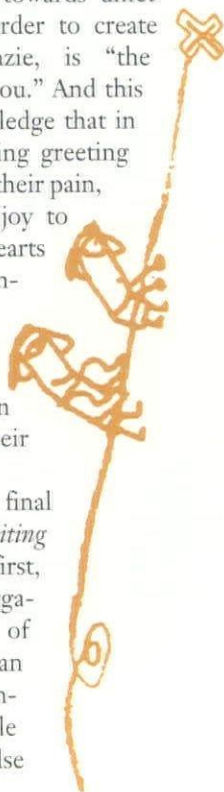
Obviously, it would not be hard to dismiss *Orbiting* as a sort of post-Modernist throwback to the hippie mind-set of the 1960s. Indeed, a sense of the innocent wonder of a child encountering mud puddles for the first time (or



the fifteenth) fairly courses through *Orbiting*. It shares something of the don't-trust-anyone-over-30 mentality, which in other contexts – say, in Huck Finn's coming of age pronouncement, "All right, then, I'll go to hell" or Thoreau's liberated citizen, marching to the beat of a different drummer – can be seen as philosophical stances that have truly heroic dimensions.

Orbiting may well remind some readers of works as diverse as Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, St. Exupery's *The Little Prince*, Gibran's *The Prophet*, even Machiavelli's *The Prince*. What *Orbiting* has in common with these classics is a sense of the individual confronting a world which threatens, in one way or another, to virtually eat him alive. But the individual, each of these works asserts, by virtue of intelligence, free will, and sheer determination, needs to find an appropriate balance between the demands of the "real world" and the competing impulse towards unfettered freedom in order to create what, for Mackenzie, is "the masterpiece inside you." And this in spite of his knowledge that in the very act of buying greeting cards – to articulate their pain, their sorrow, their joy to sisters and sweethearts and plain old acquaintances – people are, in essence, caving in, taking the easy way out, relying on others to convey their own thoughts.

What in the final analysis makes *Orbiting* so compelling is, first, the book's central organizing principle of non-linearity (you can begin at the beginning or in the middle or anywhere else



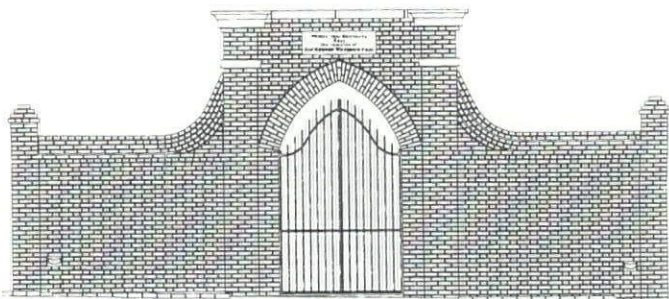
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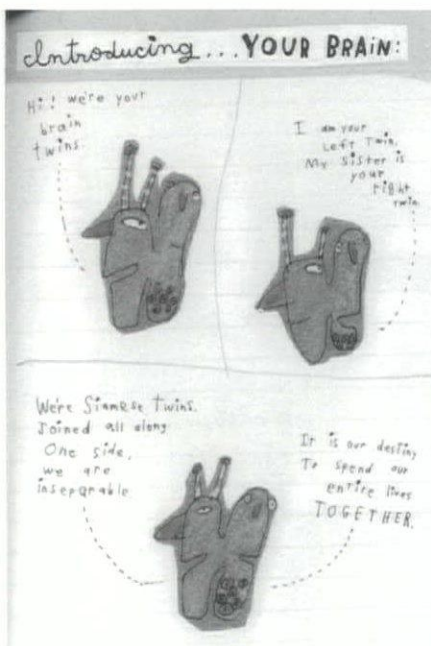
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because of the author's anecdotal style); second, MacKenzie's beguilingly seductive prose which is simple, yet penetrating; third, the refreshingly upbeat attitude he maintains; fourth, his exquisite sense of humor; and finally, the sheer delight evident in the stories he tells and the graphic images that amplify them. The more you look, the more you find between the lines.

The graffiti interspersed throughout the text, wandering through the table of contents, into the margins, and onto the graphs and charts as editorial remarks an editor might make, draws us further into MacKenzie's orbit. We are, in effect, invited to doodle, to become children ourselves, to play the fool (a brilliant role, you will recall, in the hands of a master such as Shakespeare, because he, the fool, could see the deception in the "real" world and, by virtue of his station, could say to the king pretty much what he wanted).

Orbiting the Giant Hairball is fun and deadly serious – a gambol, if you will. As Gordon MacKenzie so aptly puts it, "In the eyes of any Anal Retentive worth his salt, anything that cannot be measured is of doubtful value ... even of doubtful existence."

Douglas Greenwood, a Vienna freelance writer, is a frequent contributor to Inform.

Editor's note: True to the independent spirit of its author, Orbiting was first published and distributed by MacKenzie himself in 1996. Printed by Stinehour Press of Lunenburg, Vermont, the original edition is available from OpusPocus Publishing, P.O. Box 15891, Shawnee Mission, KS 66285-5891.

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Architect: SFCS, Inc., Roanoke

Project: Salem Towne, The Moravian Home

SFCS is completing schematic design for expansion of the CCRC campus in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The project includes a new entrance road, covered parking, a new 20,000-square-foot community center, 76 independent living apartments, 20 cottages, and a health center with clinic spaces. 540-344-6664.



Architect: Guernsey/Tingle Architects, AIA, Williamsburg

Project: Little Residence

Blending into a new Williamsburg neighborhood of traditional style houses, this home is thoroughly contemporary inside. High open spaces, minimal trim, and innovative glass areas oriented toward a wooded area in back play off the forms introduced in the facade. 757-220-0220.

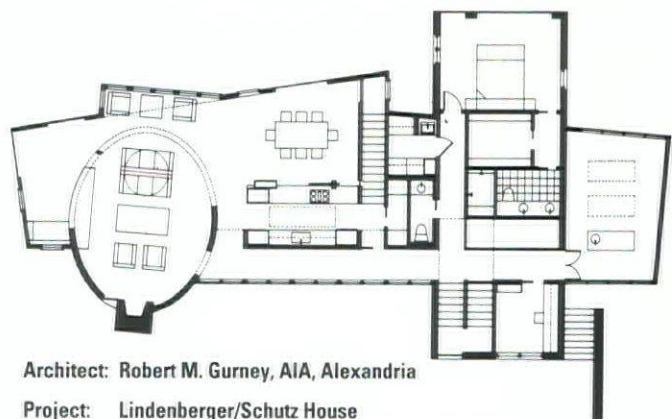
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Architect: Frazier Associates, Architects & Planners, Staunton

Project: Staunton Garage

This 350-car parking garage will be the first large new structure in downtown Staunton in decades. Its corner location on an existing parking lot dictated several things: That it be a gateway to downtown, respect existing historic character, tie into an adjoining hotel, and incorporate storefronts. 540-886-6230.



Architect: Robert M. Gurney, AIA, Alexandria

Project: Lindenberger/Schutz House

This new 3,400-square-foot house is designed to take advantage of incredible river views and a wooded ravine. The house is composed of two volumes: one clad in ground-face block and anchored into the earth, the other covered in cedar and resting lightly on the earth. A bridge connects the two. 703-739-3843.



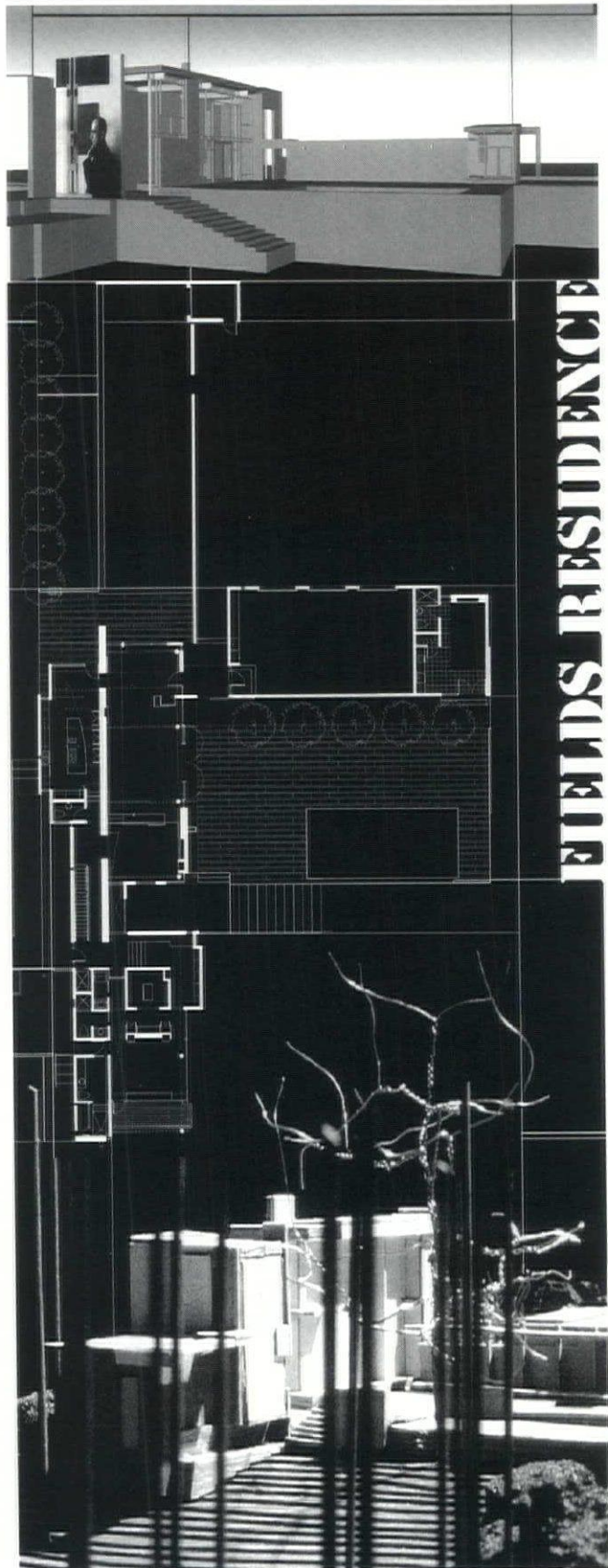
Architect: Lyall Design Architects, Norfolk
Project: The Tradewinds Resort

This addition to the Tradewinds Resort located along Atlantic Avenue in Virginia Beach comprises a ten-story tower with a ground-floor themed restaurant and a 98-car parking garage with rooftop pool and health club. 757-622-6306.



Architect: Bond Comet Westmoreland + Hiner, Richmond
Project: The Richmond Ballet

The new Canal Street facility triples the area now occupied by the Richmond Ballet and brings vast improvements in space and efficiency. The second-floor Center for Dance houses studios, locker rooms, and offices. Spacious new studios for the Company fill the third floor. 804-788-4774.



Architect: SMBW Architects, Richmond
Project: Private Residence

This 5,000-square-foot house is the next chapter of Richard Neutra's legacy in Richmond. Drawing from regionalist influences, the house is a bridge between Jefferson and Neutra. The material palette includes concrete, bluestone, stucco, douglas fir, and flat-seam copper. 804-782-2115.



Architect: Dalglish, Eichman, Gilpin & Paxton, P.C., Charlottesville
Project: Foxport Farm

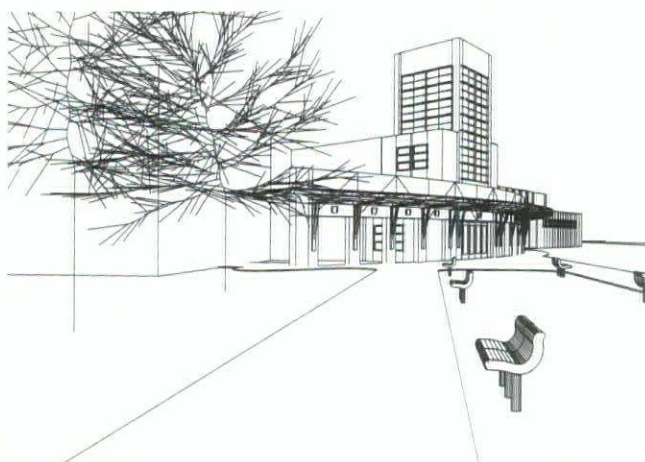
This 10,000-square-foot Main House is the centerpiece for a 350-acre Albemarle County farm. Reminiscent of an English country house, its exterior materials include whitewashed brick, slate roofing, and bluestone terraces. Services include master planning, farm structures, and entrance gates. 804-977-4480.



Architect: Carlton Abbott & Partners, P.C., Williamsburg
Project: Poor Potter Kiln, Colonial National Historic Park

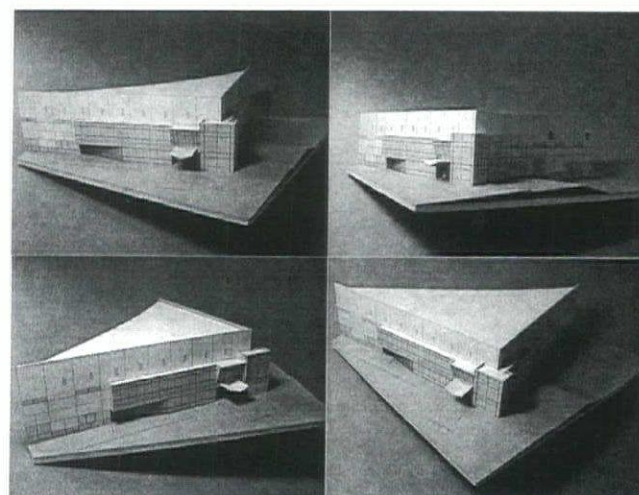
Proposed as an exhibit shelter, the building will interpret the excavated ruin of the Yorktown Potter Factory Site. "Poor Potter" is an important example of early commercial pursuits, and its history will be part of a self-guided interpretive program developed by the National Park Service. 757-220-1095.

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Architect: Marcellus Wright Cox & Smith Architects, Richmond
Project: Sports, Wellness and Convocation Center

MWC&S and Cannon Architects teamed together to design this \$12.6 million facility for Christopher Newport University. The center will provide fitness space for the university community, an arena for intercollegiate athletic events, and a community wellness center. 804-780-9067.



Architect: Baskervill & Son, Richmond
Project: Proposed Distribution Center in Texas

The 600,000-square-foot office/warehouse will be constructed with tilt-up concrete wall panels. Included will be 20,000 square feet of administrative offices and 20,000 square feet of warehouse operations offices. Opposite sides of the building are served by truck loading/delivery and rail. 804-343-1010.



Architect: Train & Spencer Architects, Charlottesville

Project: McCartney House

Anchored to a mountainside with views of landmark mountains, this modern home is designed in the traditions of Henry Bacon's "Linville Style." Large expanses of glass open onto wide verandas protected by deep overhangs engaging the clients to sit among the trees on the striking site. 804-293-2965.



Architect: Ensminger Architecture, Richmond

Project: Riverside Residence Addition

This addition will take advantage of the site's wonderful river views, while celebrating the home's existing Tudor vernacular. Other program requirements include a renovated kitchen and a glass-roofed conservatory. 804-254-3899.

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! Taking Note

In the beginning, there was the river. Viewing the river's winding course from atop a rise on the south shore was good. Building a house there to share the view – but not block it – was the challenge, a challenge met successfully in 1957 by architect George Matsumoto, a young California architect who had come east

to teach at N.C. State. His crisp solution, grounded in Modernism, was to place an elegant rectangular box on the slope with large panels of glass front and back to main-

tain the view and solid walls on the sides to anchor the house into the slope.

Forty years later, a new challenge arose. Jeanette Lipman, a widow who had built the original house in Richmond with her husband Eric, was growing concerned about her personal safety. But she remained fiercely loyal to the house. So she approached Sanford Bond, AIA, of Bond Comet Westmoreland + Hiner in Richmond to add a covered walk from the car to the house. "If you can find room for a guest room," she told him, "so much the better."

Bond deferred to the purity of the main house. "We didn't want to touch it, because it was so complete." His design called for an understated connection to the lower level of Matsumoto's self-contained box, with an enclosed stairway rising to the new garage. Only the one-story guest room actually connects to the original house.

Between the original side entrance and garage Bond inserted a stairway bounded by a retaining wall that parallels the lot line. Its curved copper roof mimics the uphill slope. Unlike the original house, the stairway opens itself to all directions through glass set atop the stucco retaining wall. The resulting contrasts – stucco against glass, angles to curves, enclosed to open, horizontal to vertical – defy the eyes to rest. For that, one need only to shift his gaze to the meandering river.

– T. Duncan Abernathy, AIA

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New stair widens as it draws closer to the original house (above). Seen from the street, addition recedes behind Matsumoto's masonry-and-glass box (above left).



Garage, at right, and stairwell create a new edge to backyard garden.

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