

## Cozy as peas in **PODS**

Pod cabins around main home make ideal Eagle Rock retreat for extended family.

**By Jessica Cagle**  
**Photos by Amanda Smith**  
FOR SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS

Marilyn Cross' parents bought what she calls a "strange little house" years ago by the McKenzie River. It had only one bedroom. The bathroom, which had no windows, was on the opposite side of the house.

Although the center part of the house was an A-frame, the rest was under a flat roof—not the best construction for a home surrounded by trees. But Cross' mother always had wanted a place at Eagle Rock, and despite its flaws, the old house faced the towering landmark.

Years later, the house started rotting from mold. Cross' father passed away, and her mother moved.

So Cross talked to her brothers and decided to take on a remodel with contemporary sensibility. She wanted a vacation retreat that would allow togetherness, while still providing the grown siblings and their families some privacy.

The labor of love brought Cross and her brothers closer even before the home was finished. "At one point during the construction, there were tarps everywhere, and my brothers came over and brought some salads," she says. "We set up some saw horses and had a picnic."

### Together, but separate

Before she had an architect, Cross started researching what type of home she wanted. A friend sent her an article about a house made up of "pods," or detached structures as opposed to one large space. Cross liked the pod concept, but never mentioned it to anyone.

One type of pod had a living, dining and kitchen unit. The other had two bedrooms and a bathroom. When she found Eugene architect Richard Shugar, the principal at 2FORM Architecture, she didn't give him too much to go on. "I was kind of vague," she says. "I wanted at least four bedrooms, two bathrooms—we need separate space or we can get on each other's nerves. And a house that Dwell (magazine) would like."

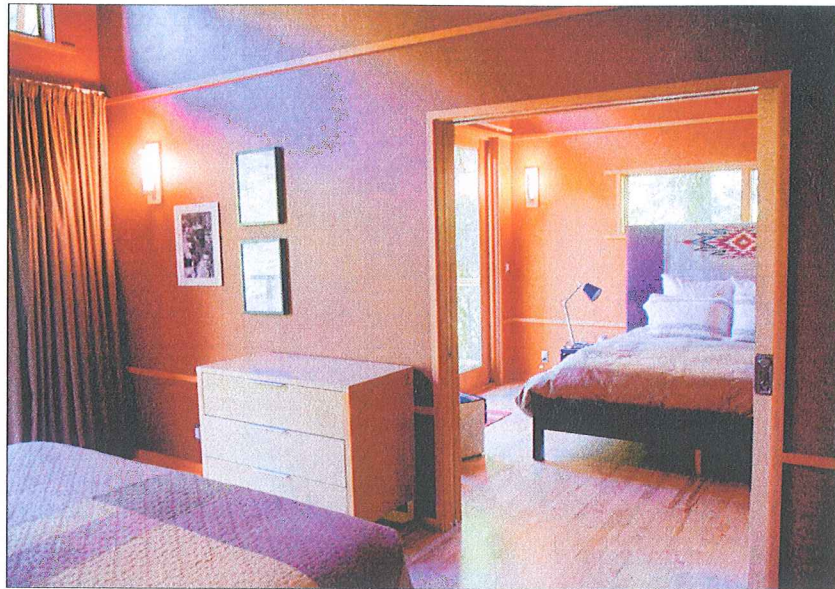
She also wanted to incorporate environmentally friendly building practices and to take full advantage of the site's natural beauty.

When Cross saw the plans that Shugar and his designer Jenna Fribley devised, she couldn't believe it. "I loved it. They had laid out a house that had pods, and here I had never told anyone (of her interest in that type of design)."



Windows up to 20-foot ceilings capture McKenzie River views and vacation ambiance in the central house at the Cross family retreat.





Walks connect each pod to the main house, far left. Individual families can enjoy quiet time and sleeping in their own units, then gather for meals in the central unit's dining room with long table, or perhaps in the towering living room beneath some beams saved from the original home.



Eugene architect Richard Shugar included decks on each pod unit for enjoying McKenzie River views at Eagle Rock. The main, central house stands at the site of the family's original A-frame house.



The center pod, with ceilings that reach 20 feet at their highest point, houses the living room, kitchen, a sleeping loft and two bathrooms. Here the family can congregate at the long dining room table for meals or in front of the fireplace in the living room under support beams that came from the original A-frame.

Shugar wanted to salvage the original beams, both for sustainability and sentimental reasons. "It was a way to keep the old house a part of the new, and to continue the legacy of the property," he explains.

The kids who visit the house get to see a piece of the beams up close: A small bench made from them was installed near the sleeping loft that Cross designed with her brothers' grandchildren in mind.

The area has four small windows with deep ledges, or "cubbies for kids to put all their stuff," she says. There is also a polycarbonate panel that has linen threads running through it that provides beauty along with privacy.

Shugar incorporated many of these types of elements to keep the large space from feeling austere. "Stylistically, this is a modern home, but we wanted to make it warm and cozy. We used a lot of wood (mostly fir with maple floors), built-in cabinets, radiant heat, and an



Savoring views of the McKenzie River and landmark Eagle Rock are key to the family-style vacation home. Above are Marilyn Cross, left, her brother Sheldon and his wife, Barbara.

exposed structure inside so you can see the bones of the building. It feels like it's embracing you."

#### Outside, but in

The embrace continues as you walk outside to get to the home's bedrooms. Cross' siblings and their wives can walk out the back door off of the dining room onto a connecting deck that leads to

their rooms on the right side. She has the rooms in the pod on the left. Because the house is by the river, Shugar says every major room opens out to a deck. There guests can watch the river go by or admire the three imposing fir trees that Cross and Shugar kept as centerpiece of the house. Shugar says each pod is like "a little cabin on the river."

The original plans provided no

covered access to the pods. When one of Cross' sisters-in-law worried about rain, they added a covered vestibule, which is still technically outside, for getting to the bedrooms on the right side.

To add to the relaxing retreat feel, the bathrooms in the two outer pods have floors made from concrete slab that dip down to form a soaking tub and shower. At eye level with the tub sits a long, rectangular window that Cross plans on keeping private by planting flowers there.

Along with the spa-like bath, there are two side-by-side bedrooms, separated by a pocket door. Cross admits the rooms are relatively small because, in her words, "this is not meant for a primary residence."

Instead, it's meant to be a place for family and friends to relax and reconnect with each other while surrounded by natural beauty. Completed a year ago, the house already has done its job.

"Both brothers were very involved in this process," says Cross.

Because the siblings have often lived far from each other, "We went years without seeing each other. This has given us a place where we can get together."

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