

— WALKTHROUGH —





Living Aloft

Natural environment
is part and parcel of
an architect's home

STORY BY ARIEL OLSON
PHOTOS BY LANNY SEVERSON

STANDING IN FRONT of Richard and Kamala Shugar's home on Beech Street in Eugene, one can't help but wonder what is within. It is easily the most modern house on the block, with bold red paint, cedar shingles and corrugated-metal siding that scales two stories of mixed-media architecture.



But tucked inside the somewhat industrial exterior is a comfortable loft home with a luxurious view of Spencer Butte and the rolling hills of south Eugene.

"What inspired us was the lot, the site and the view," said Richard, an architect, who designed the home. "That's why the house became what it did." He and Kamala bought the property in 1997 and moved into their new home in August 2001. "I wanted the site to be the first thing you experienced," he said.

To accomplish this, Richard aligned the home's front entrance with a sliding glass door leading directly out to the back deck. Visitors are greeted in the entryway by an expansive skyline, lush treetops and radiant sunsets. The deck, which the Shugars describe as their "outdoor room," is nestled comfortably into the corner of the home's L-shaped design and can be seen from virtually every part of the house, including two second-story balconies.

"We spend a ton of time out there in the summer," said Kamala. "At one party we had people interacting with each other from all three decks. It was great."

The Shugars' love for nature is apparent both inside and out. The entire house is folded into a small grove of trees that occupied the lot before the home was ever built. The largest among them is a giant Douglas fir that towers just outside the living room. Two stories of windows allow an unobstructed view of the tree from its base to its highest boughs, all of which can be enjoyed from the comfort of the living-room sofa. The trees lend seasonal variety to the Shugars' magnificent view of the valley.

"I really like the fact that the trees are in my way," said Richard. "It gives me a filtered view instead of just one massive view that never changes. This view changes throughout the year."



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Inside, natural wood extends from floor to ceiling. Hardwood floors, cabinets and ceiling panels add warmth and texture to the living and dining area, while exposed wooden beams emphasize the home's butterfly roof structure. It extends up and out from a central beam, creating panoramic views that can be enjoyed throughout the home.



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"Obviously, I love wood and I like to celebrate it instead of hiding it," said Richard, a University of Oregon graduate and the principal of 2 Form Architecture, formerly Waterbury Shugar LLC. When his partner, Ed Waterbury, died unexpectedly in June 2006, Richard had to rethink his practice. He came up with the new name and a motto that captures the essence of the firm's design philosophy: 1 people + 1 environment = 2 Form architecture.

"I came up with the name 2 Form Architecture because it opened up a new realm of opportunity for the firm," he said. "I don't feel that I'm limited to architecture. I can form furniture. I can form art. I can form ideas. To me that captures the spirit of design—the opportunity to create something new, special and unique."

Richard and Kamala seized every opportunity to make their home unique and special as well. The heart of the house consists of a conjoined kitchen and dining area, opening onto a cozy living room. Details such as lighting, an area rug and subtle variations in ceiling design help to define each area as a separate living space. Although the house is modest in size (under 2,000 square

feet), an open floor plan and an upstairs loft achieve the spacious elegance of a larger home without a sprawling footprint. The design also allows them to entertain visitors while preparing meals and to monitor their two children, Avi, 6, and Miriam, 2, as they play in other areas of the home.

"The house is designed specifically to accommodate how we like to live, which is in a really open, informal way," said Richard. "We didn't need a formal dining room or a separate kitchen. There are no hallways. It's all one contiguous space."

Furthermore, by limiting the size of the house, the Shugars were able to splurge on the luxury amenities that they valued most, like a stainless-steel refrigerator, large counters (30 inches deep instead of the standard 24 inches) and plenty of light. Windows, large and numerous, along with skylights, an open-tread staircase and an angled roof, allow light to pour into every nook of the home.

"The most important elements of the house were the windows and the light," said Richard. "Where the sun enters the house gives it volume and shapes the experiences that we have."



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A self-professed tree-hugger, Richard is also quick to point out the “green” aspects of the home’s design: a sustainable, medium-density fiber board for the interior trim; durable Trex decking for longevity; non-toxic, low-VOC paint; and salvaged carpet remnants to reduce waste. Structurally insulated ceiling panels (SIPs) help to prevent heat loss and keep energy costs from, quite literally, going through the roof. In the winter, radiant heating—hot water flowing through plastic tubes to heat gypcrete tunnels in the floor—keeps the house a warm, even temperature. Ceiling fans and well-placed windows ventilate the home during the summer.

“We don’t have air conditioning, and we really don’t need it,” said Richard. “We have the shade from the trees and plenty of windows to keep air flowing.”

Heading upstairs into the loft, it’s as if one is climbing the Douglas fir outside. A landing between the first and second floors provides a small study space complete with a framed view of Spencer Butte rising in the distance. Rain can be heard splashing off the home’s metal siding and funneling down giant rain chains suspended from the roof.

From the landing, the staircase opens onto the upstairs loft and what Richard calls “the children’s realm.” It includes a bathroom, a built-in bookshelf, an activity table, a skylight and a colorful open space where the kids play. Avi and Miriam also have their own deck to enjoy as they get older.

“This whole area is really devoted to the children,” said Richard. “Because we made this common play space for them, the bedrooms didn’t have to be very big so we kept them relatively modest.”

The children’s bedrooms comprise one large room separated by a set of sliding doors. They are mirror images of one another, each containing a bed alcove and a small loft above a built-in closet. The lofts are already equipped with electrical outlets for an alarm clock or a reading lamp in anticipation of the children’s desires to recreate their rooms as they mature.

“When I was a kid I wanted to control my space and how I grew up with my siblings,” said



The Shugar hill gang enjoys some family time.



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“I love the connection that the house has to nature. Whether you’re looking at the rain chain out the window or watching the trees change, you’re always interacting with it.”

—Kamala Shugar



Richard. "So this is one way of giving them the opportunity to control their own environment. They can close the sliding doors. They can sleep up in the loft. As they grow the room can change for them."

A medley of brightly colored walls and spirited carpeting guides the visitor from the play area, past a small office and the master bath (complete with a transom window, a two-headed shower and a Jacuzzi bathtub) into the master bedroom.

The bedroom's interior is modest. Matching his-and-hers closets frame the bed, which rests under a window against a bright purple wall. A second butterfly roof creates a dormer above the bed and high ceilings that explode out onto a third balcony. Its overhanging design provides some shade for the lower deck, and a steel cable railing allows for an unobstructed view of the yard below. Like the rest of the home, this second-story retreat allows the family to engage each other and their environment with ease and comfort.

"I love the connection that the house has to nature," said Kamala. "Whether you're looking at the rain chain out the window or watching the trees change, you're always interacting with it. You can easily step from a room onto a deck and be in nature or you can be inside, protected from the weather and still enjoying it." ■



Gourmet Retreat

With an outdoor kitchen, you can
do more than just barbecue

BY HOLLY LEITNER



JANE AND KAMERON MAXWELL moved from San Diego to the McKenzie River three years ago. They were happy to leave many aspects of their lives in San Diego—the suburban sprawl, strip malls, congested 11-lane freeways—but some things they knew they wanted to take with them. One aspect of their California lifestyle that they considered a must was the ability to cook outside, not just barbecue.

“We cooked more at the outdoor kitchen than [we did] inside in San Diego,” said Jane. As a result, they wanted to create an outdoor living space in Oregon, despite the wet seasons.



With the assistance of architect Richard Shugar, general contractor Dennis Coduti, the Neil Kelly Company, and Radius Design of Portland, they reshaped their New England saltbox-style house with an outdoor room facing the McKenzie. Thus the Maxwells brought daily al fresco living to Lane County.

For many homeowners, an outdoor grill is simply not enough. In remodels, they want to incorporate small kitchens and living spaces outdoors. After all, the kitchen is the heart of any party: It's where the food originates. Traditionally, the kitchen was a gathering space simply because it was the warmest area of the house. An outdoor kitchen brings the cooking room outside,

into Oregon's lusciously green yards and sometimes along a roaring river. Trends in home remodeling have introduced durable materials that can stand up to most of Oregon's seasons, as well as designs that fit each house and budget.

"Even though it rains seven months a year, there's still time in the late spring and early fall for being outside," said Shugar—as long as it's a covered area, he added.

Cooking Inside Out

Jane Maxwell was inspired to cook outdoors when she discovered some of the relics of the 1920s-era riverfront home. Among



Holly Leitner



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“Even though it rains seven months a year, there’s still time in the late spring and early fall for being outside.”

—Richard Shugar

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Chef C.J. Silverman puts an outdoor kitchen at Hidden Meadows, a new housing development, to the test.

Larry Severson

the appliances was an antique stove with a charm she couldn't resist. She realized that it would fit perfectly outside, adjacent to their Wolf liquid-propane gas grill and rotisserie.

Walking out to the Maxwell's exterior cooking area, it feels as though you're walking into another room. French doors lead to the softly lit living area. The Maxwells chose tile flooring to add to the kitcheny feel. For color, they chose warm, neutral stone rather than gray brick. A warm ambience penetrates this outdoor room: Light is filtered through a ceiling sheet of polycarbonate, which blocks 70 percent of ultraviolet rays but allows 90 percent of the light to beam into the area.

The fireplace and walls are constructed from tumbled mahogany rock, a pale and rustic-looking stone. The counters are Palomino Rock, a peach-toned concrete that compliments the hues of the stone. A wood-framed ceiling adds elegance; stainless-steel appliances were chosen for efficiency.

A lighted ceiling fan and sidelights along the house provide ample nighttime illumination. The wicker chairs blend the

feeling of outdoor and indoor furniture. The cushions are made with Sunbrella designer fabrics, which resist fading in the sun.

The Maxwells have shaped their McKenzie River estate to fit their lifestyle in many ways. Retired from careers in genetics and biotechnology, they knew they wanted to spend their golden years outdoors. Along with the kitchen, Jane spends much of her time in the home's own vegetable and herb garden, called Barking Trout Farms.

If You're Remodeling

The Maxwells demonstrate just one style of outdoor living space. If, like them, you want to spend every possible moment in your backyard—if you detest running from the kitchen to check on the sauce, grab another cocktail or prepare the hors d'oeuvres—you may also want an outdoor kitchen. Here are some tips from the pros to consider before jumping in.

The Plan: It's important first to analyze your space and to develop a plan. How big do you want your kitchen to be?

What sort of feel should it have? You'll need a roof to protect it from rain: Do you want metal or a translucent material? Will it be an outdoor living space or simply a kitchen cart that offers many of the conveniences of an indoor kitchen? If you want it to be inviting through most of the seasons, you might want to add an outdoor fireplace. Jane Maxwell reminds people to make sure there are enough electrical outlets for blenders, hot plates or other cooking devices, as well as adequate counter space for preparation, buffets or an outdoor bar. Shugar recommends constructing the cooking space close to an entry to the house, for easier access to the indoor kitchen.

The Grill: The grill is the heart and soul of the outdoor kitchen. It is the inspiration for developing a whole outdoor dining space. It's important to pick out the type of grill that works best for you, and equally important, to properly place it. Jane advises thinking about the wind: If there's a strong breeze, make sure to keep the grill far enough from the house that a summer barbecue scent won't linger on the carpet. You might want to have a mason build countertops around it, or perhaps just keep it on a freestanding cart.

The Maxwells have nearly completed their outdoor living area. All that's left is painting columns and positioning the mantle above the fireplace, where Jane likes to sip her morning coffee. Recently they hosted a weekly Friday-night cocktail ritual celebrated by McKenzie River residents, inviting five other couples to christen the space. They celebrated by gathering around the food in their outdoor kitchen, as music poured from speakers and wine poured from bottles. ■

Holly Leitner is a freelance writer and photographer living in Eugene.



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