

A FAMILY AFFAIR



By Jessica Campbell
Photographs by Steven Young

Craftsman styling distinguishes a Whidbey Island beach house

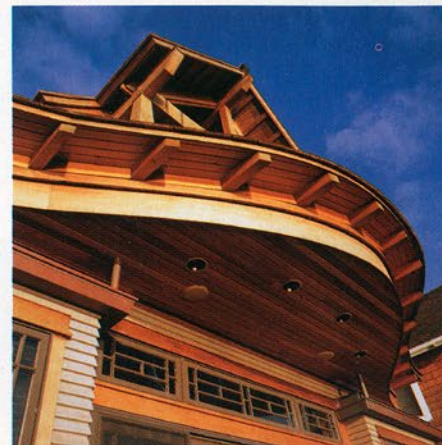
FOR MUCH OF THE YEAR, George and Marlene Zoffel's Whidbey Island home is a cozy retreat for two. But Thanksgiving dinners and summer get-togethers transform the petite beach house, filling it with the smells of cooking, the clinking of wineglasses and the voices of 16 grandchildren.

And that's just what the couple had in mind when they built it.

The Zoffels had one all-important requirement for architect Todd Soli: The house had to accommodate the whole family—all 28 of them—for dinner. But it also had to fit on the tiny parcel the Zoffels have owned since the 1960s.

"This lot is all of 40 feet wide," Soli says. "We filled up every inch of it."

Thankfully, the close quarters didn't create problems with the people on either side. The tightly knit neighborhood includes several college friends and five of George's fraternity brothers, as well as houses where the Zoffels' five grown daughters often stay.



CONTOURS IN THE ROOF (*above*) AND A CURVED BALCONY, BAY AND STEPS (*opposite*) HELP DISGUISE THE BOXY FORM DICTATED BY THE HOME'S 40-FOOT-WIDE SITE.

It took some ingenuity to turn the 1,875-square-foot home into a gathering place for such a large group. A tiny library at the front of the house doubles as a bedroom for the occasional overnight guest; a shower is tucked into the first-floor

powder room. And tables and chairs scattered all over the house are pressed into service for big dinners.

Despite the family-friendliness mandate and the waves nearly lapping at the back

deck, Soli and interior designer Mary Wright veered away from beach clichés. The one-bedroom house is instead enveloped in warm fir accented by rich fabrics and textured stone—an atmosphere inspired by a rainy-day dinner George and Marlene shared in the wood-shuttered dining room of a Hawaiian hotel.

“We both noticed how warm and cozy it was being surrounded by wood, and we told Todd about that,” Marlene says.

Despite the Zoffels’ Hawaiian epiphany, the home is decidedly *untropical*. Soli suggested an updated craftsman look to give

the couple the warm, homey feel they wanted. To add interest to the boxy shape dictated by the small lot, he dreamt up a complex, curvy roof whose contours are echoed throughout the home. Soli credits contractor John Rich with pulling off the rich detailing.

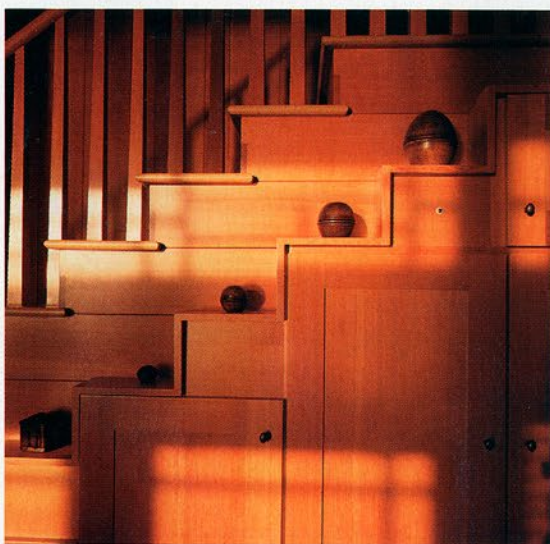
“Curves are easy to draw, hard to build,” Soli laughs.

Fir wainscoting and custom-made crown molding achieve the effect the Zoffels had in mind when they

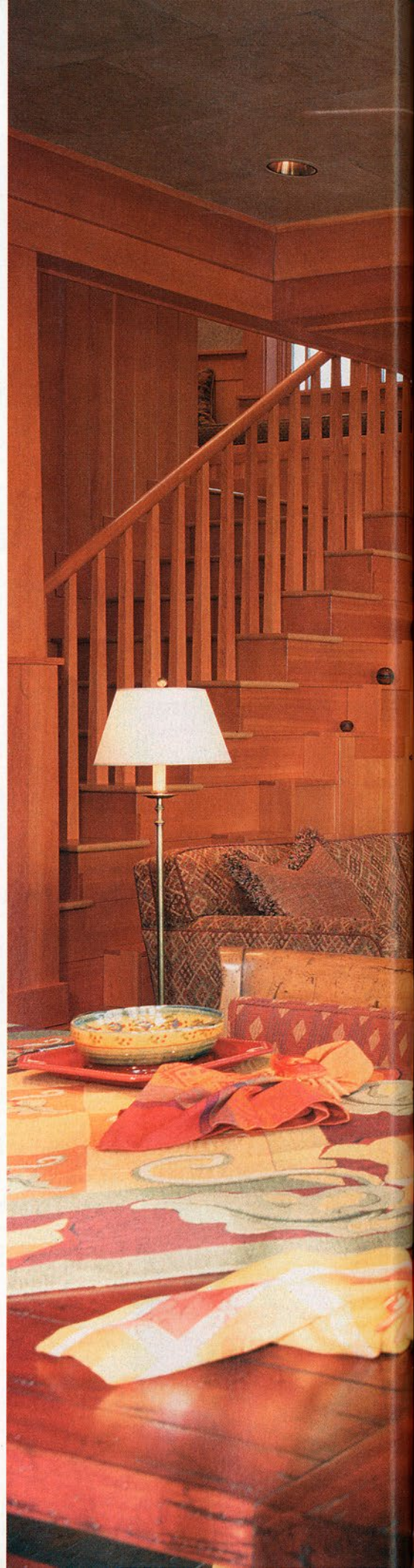
were ensconced in that Hawaiian hotel, while handmade Nepalese paper lends a creamy, mottled contrast to upper walls and ceilings.

The paper was not easy to come by. “It took forever to get here,” Wright says. “We were sure it was lost somewhere on the back of a yak.”

The warmth of the wood is compounded by furnishings in mustard, rust and sage. Durable chenilles in spill-hiding patterns cover much of the furniture. Colorful rugs withstand tracked-in sand.



FIR PANELING (right) WRAPS THE INTERIOR IN WARMTH; PATTERNED FABRICS AND SLATE FLOORS HIDE SPILLS AND SAND. TANSULIKE STORAGE (above) MAXIMIZES SPACE UNDER THE STAIRS.







THE DINING TABLE
(left, above)
ADJOINS THE LIVING
ROOM. THE LONG
GALLEY KITCHEN
(left, below)
WELCOMES EXTRA
HANDS. THE MASTER
BEDROOM *(opposite)*
FEATURES A BARREL-
VAULTED CEILING
AND COZY
INGLENOOK.





“As much as it’s more formal than a typical beach house,” Marlene says, “the dog comes in; the cat comes in; the kids run in and out.”

A Guy Chaddock table cozies up to a wet bar at one end of the great room. A field-stone fireplace anchors the other end. The sofas flanking it can be moved out of the way when the whole brood gathers for a meal.

An enormous Viking range holds court in a slate-lined niche in the galley kitchen, which is divided into workstations to accommodate several cooks at once. The adults in the family voted unanimously for the range, which has a built-in grill for Marlene’s legendary clams.

“We get them right off the beach. It’s one of our traditions in the summer,” George explains.

While Marlene works the grill, George tends to the wine, choosing bottles from the glass-fronted wine closet separating the entry from the kitchen. Cleanup is aided by a dishwasher in the wet bar that is specially designed to hold wineglasses.

A closetlike office is tucked under the eaves upstairs, and an equally diminutive exercise room offers a peekaboo view of Saratoga Passage. Built-ins at the top of the stairs hide Marlene’s sewing equipment. A curved wall embraces the bathroom, while the bedroom boasts a cozy inglenook and the best view in the house.

“There isn’t anything more spectacular than waking up in the bedroom and seeing the sunrise,” Mary says.

Except, perhaps, seeing the whole family gathered around the dinner table. ■