

STEP UP YOUR FRONT PORCH'S LOOK

SHOP S.E. BELMONT ST.

# oregon home

OREGONHOMEMAGAZINE.COM

SEPTEMBER 2009

## LAKE HOUSE LURES

A floorplan oriented to the water makes a Devil's Lake home a magnet for friends

# 17

tips for great master baths



PERIODICAL



DISPLAY UNTIL SEPT. 14, 2009

### PLUS!

### A 1940s WORKER HOUSE GETS A SOPHISTICATED MAKEOVER

# Lure *of* the lake

Four years ago, Tracy and Todd Wright bought a run-down "fisherman's cottage" on Devil's Lake. Take a look at the focused-on-the-water custom home they built to replace it.

BY SHEILA DE LA ROSA  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SALLY SCHOOLMASTER





"We hired Don Wisener, the blacksmith who did our handrails, to make a firescreen that would let us see the Rumford fireplace," says Tracy of the ironwork in the living room, where daughter Alex curls up with Lola.

FIRST-TIME GUESTS TO TRACY AND Todd Wright's 2-year-old home on Devil's Lake get a very different idea of who the couple is, depending on whether they arrive by car or boat up to the dock out back. From the front of the house, where four not-so-big "boxes" are topped with differently angled rooflines, you'd swear the Wrights were a couple of modest green architects from the Midwest who succeeded at making a 3,200-square-foot, 3-bedroom, 4-bath house look as unassuming as a decades-old, cedar-sided cabin that's been artfully added on to over the years.

From the dock, though, the house goes all Street of Eames on you—in a *good* way. Walls of windows, a deep copper fascia and a horizontal roofline that appears to sail toward you thanks to the residence's view-maximizing setbacks plant the seed that maybe the Wrights are . . . *somebody*.

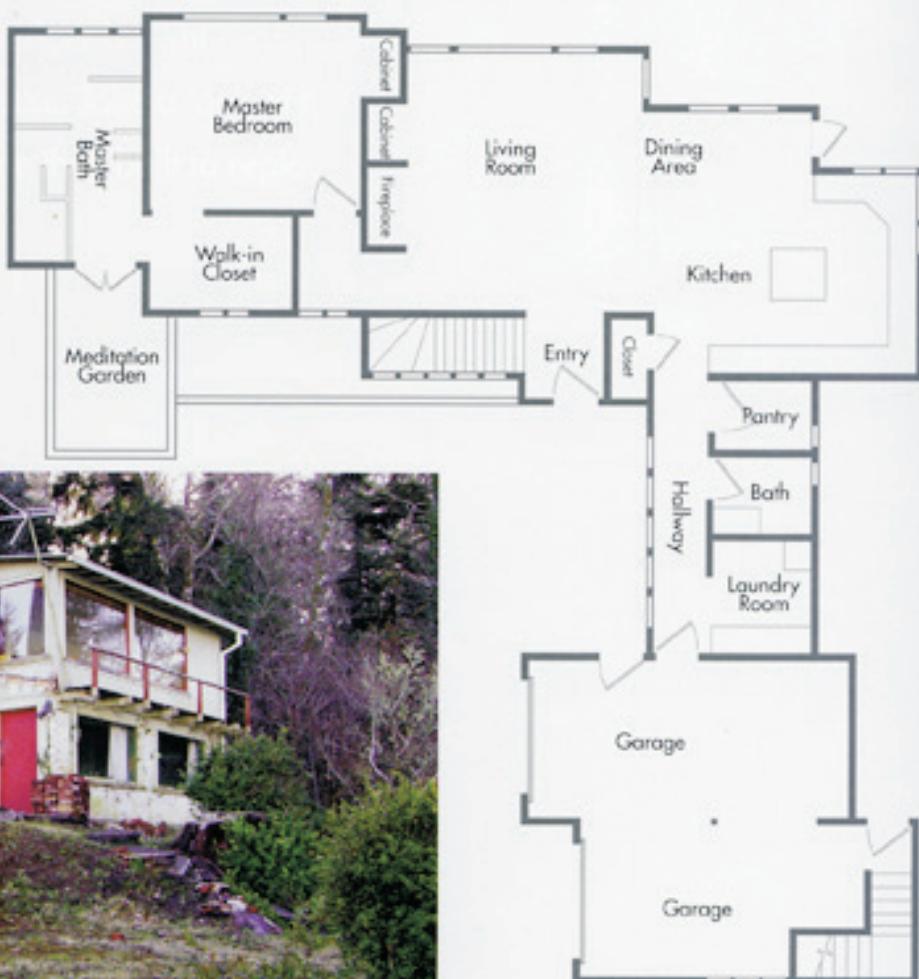
And that's just how the down-to-earth couple intended it. "From the beginning, I told our architect, Nathan Good, 'I don't want the house to look like anything to someone driving down the road,'" says Todd, the owner of two Good Cars, Good People used-car dealerships in Salem, Ore. "I almost wanted them *not* to see it. I didn't want someone driving by to go, 'Wow! Look at *that* house!' In fact, now that the construction is over, we're going to let the laurels near the driveway's entrance grow to their full height so that, from the road, you won't see the house at all."

The site's original house (*below*) had been billed as a "fisherman's cottage"



The Wrights, with Bella and Lolo

#### MAIN LEVEL



when it was on the market. Tracy, who works at *Toujours Boutique* in Gleneden Beach, Ore., remembers the opposite-of-warm-and-fuzzy feeling the circa-1930s residence had given her. "When we pulled up to the 'cottage,' I told Todd, 'There is no way we're going to *buy* this property,'" she says. "But once we got past the house, we thought about how great it would be to live on the lake—and we ended up buying it, thinking we might be able to do something with the original house."

That something turned out to be razing it, a deed that even one of the country's greenest architect's—Good, the principal of Nathan Good Architect PC in Salem, Ore., who was the fifth professional in the U.S. to earn LEED certification—signed off on. "I always see taking a building down completely as a last resort, but there really weren't any qualities—not one big beam, not one decorative gate—worth reusing in the house that came with the property," he says. "Like a lot of old structures on the coast, they just turn into vines after enough time. The original house was so dilapidated, there were signs that it was just turning into compost. The weather on the coast is just brutal and nonforgiving. When you build a home on the coast, you *have* to design with durability in mind, and that house, unfortunately, wasn't designed that way."

FROM THE BEGINNING, TRACY AND Todd were interested in an unconventional home-building process that would allow them to end up with a great house for as good a price as possible. After getting bids from general contractors ("They wanted *crazy* amounts of money," says Tracy), the couple decided that Todd, whose interest in home construction goes as far back as his boyhood, would serve as general contractor.

"When I was a little kid, I can remember when they would dig out and excavate land to build a house in my neighborhood and I was just fascinated with the process," he says. "I'd ride my bike to the job site and watch what was going on."





"The lake is 36 feet lower than the house, so we took advantage of the sloping site and did a sunken living room," says Todd. The dining room table and chairs are from Crate & Barrel. The kitchen's Blue Louise granite countertops are from EleMar Oregon LLC in Tualatin, Ore. Keith Stoller, the owner of Doug's Cabinet Shop in Salem, Ore., fabricated the Lyptus cabinetry. Keith Downs of Otis, Ore., did the painting.

Good was brought onto the project knowing that Tracy and Todd had a limited design budget and a desire to be very hands on with how the house was finished off. One of Good's earliest discoveries was that each spouse has a different design sensibility. "I think of the homes that I

design for people as portraits of *them*, so I really spend a lot of time learning who they are and what their tastes are," he says. "Todd is very interested in agrarian structures: barns, simple farm structures, board-and-batten siding, and simple forms and roof lines. Tracy is much more

contemporary in her taste. She likes modernist homes. I tried to make the home a synthesis of *his* interest in simple agrarian architecture characteristic of the Willamette Valley and coastline for the last 100 years and *her* preference for more modern contemporary. And you can see clearly who won on the interiors—Tracy! She selected some fantastic materials like the granite in the kitchen and the Lyptus cabinets that give the house its very clean, crisp contemporary look."

## THE HUMBLE LUXE HOUSE

NOT ALL CLIENTS WANT TO LIVE IN A HOME THAT SCREAMS, "LOOK AT ME!" AND Tracy and Todd Wright are among them. "One of the first things they talked about with me was that they did not want a big house that was all 'Show and Tell' from the road," says architect Nathan Good, the principal of Nathan Good Architect PC in Salem, Ore. "It's true that the house looks like a 'Show and Tell' house from the lake, but that's more of a byproduct of wanting a lot of windows that captured the views looking out to the lake."

Still, the quality of the Wrights' house's finishes are as plain as the wide copper band that wraps around the outer edge of the eaves just below the roof. Here are some of the home's rich finishes that the couple intentionally underplayed.

**The copper bands near the roofline.** "They were expensive, and after they went up on the house, I thought, *Oh my god, the copper is so shiny, thieves are going to be stealing this stuff off the house every night!* But nothing was ever stolen. We let the copper patina naturally and now we like the variation the copper gives the house next to the roof material."

**The double-paned Pozzi windows.** "They're aluminum-clad storm windows that are supposed to weather on the outside but have a handmade look on the inside," says Todd.

**The lack of a street-facing window wall.** "I didn't want someone visiting for the first time to know what's inside the house before they entered it," says Todd. "I wanted a house where, from the front, you could see glimmers of the lake through the house, then you get to the front door and you still don't realize what's on the other side. Only after the door is opened do you see that the lake is right there. I like that from the driveway, you can't tell where the front door is and you don't know what you're going to get. That's a real Nathanism."

—S.M.D.



GOOD'S 'PORTRAIT' OF TRACY AND Todd is, ultimately, a celebration of living lakeside—with architecture engineered to withstand the coast's conditions so that the Wrights' new home doesn't end up like the cottage that once graced their lot.

"It's extremely difficult to design a house on a lake, especially when the lake is near an ocean," says Good. "You have to think about things like all of the salt in the air and the horizontal rain that falls, and you have to use good materials and plan for durability. I didn't succeed at everything we tried to do, like reducing the glare from the lake. A home facing west over the lake is brutal during late afternoon during the summers. You want the views, but until more advanced glazing products are available, we're going to continue to wrestle with that. We put a little bit of an overhang on the west side and we did visually transparent sunscreens that roll down in the late afternoon to knock down a lot of that glare. As long as we can keep the sun off of the concrete floors, that's somewhat of a victory."

The street-facing view of the house (*left*) is a pleasing gathering of simple forms bumped out and pushed in, topped with rooflines that butterfly this way and that. You pass two single-bay garages, one topped with a home office, to an unassuming front door (*see "The Humble Luxe House," left*) tucked into a mini-courtyard-like space. Inside, walls of windows feature a cinema-screen-huge panorama of Devil's Lake. From the kitchen at the north end of the house to a stepped-down living room to a master suite anchoring



"Weather permitting, people come out," says Todd (far left), visiting with his Portland-based daughter Alex, while Tracy (in rocking chair on right) chats with her son Taylor, holding Bella, and Neskowin, Ore., friends Irish and Dennis Porreca. The ship's prow-like patio, off of the home's lower level, overlooks their boat dock.



the level's south end, every room has a to-die-for view complemented with sophisticated interiors with not a nautical theme in sight, thanks to Tracy's refined eye and her decision to seek the counsel of interior designer John Gross, the owner-principal of John Gross Interior Design Inc. in Salem, Ore.

"Tracy and Todd both have a tendency toward natural woods and concrete floors and classic materials," he says. "I wanted to use fresh combinations like the 'approaching chartreuse' sofa punched up with two tangerine chairs in the living room, which we accented with a very traditional shaped side table done in a polished aluminum that reflects the water. Tracy and I used colors that, to me, go back to a Northwest Indian palette, a real ethnic influence that honors the architecture of the home."

The home's lower level contains two guest rooms, two bathrooms, a Man Cave featuring a gaming table and a media-watching area, a wine cellar and, perhaps most useful to living at the water's edge, a huge concrete patio shaped like the prow of a ship. "I love to do decks shaped like a ship's prow, whether the deck is at grade level or raised," says Good. "When one or two people are on them, they just naturally migrate out to the point. And especially with the lake right there, I wanted the space to feel *exactly* as if you were on a ship."

The focal point of the patio is a square concrete firepit set on the diagonal, which pays homage to one at the Salishan Spa.

Todd thinks fondly of his 16-month-long stint as general manager. "Every one of the sub-contractors was great," he says. "I'd hire them all again. But it *was* a learning experience. If one of them didn't show up after he told me he would, 'I'd just call him up and say, 'Did I misrepresent you or lie to you in some way? Why



The master bedroom has a panoramic view of the lake and the family's dock, where Taylor likes to fish and Bella greets every arriving boater. The headboard is from Williams-Sonoma Home. The paintings are from Le Domaine at Gleneden Beach, Ore.



did you *tell* me you'd be working at the house, but you never showed up?" I didn't let them treat me any differently than they would a professional general contractor."

In fact, he says that serving as a general contractor was a character-building experience. "It made me much more patient with everything—with my family, with my business, with who I am," he says. "Just for that learning experience, I'm very thankful. Patience is something that came out of building

this house, because all of it was out of my control. See these hands? They can do . . . *nothing!* The guys would want me to help nail something, and I'd say, 'I'll *do* it, but you'll just have to redo it because I can't nail a nail properly.' I was here three or four half-days a week, and the crew would give me little projects to keep me busy for half an hour here and there. It all worked out because I have great employees to manage my business."

Not that Todd is ready to trade in his dealership business for a home-building career. "Home-building is nothing I'd want to do professionally," he says. "It's

## meet the professionals



### The Cabinet Maker

**Keith Stoller**, owner Doug's Cabinet Shop, **Years in trades:** "I've been working in my dad's cabinet shop since I was old enough

to push a broom," he says. "My dad started the company in 1961; I was using a table saw when I was in middle school."

**Favorite piece of cabinetry that he fabricated for the Wrights:** "The center island," he says. "Working with the lyptus wasn't that difficult. The most challenging part was getting a uniform color throughout the cabinetry."

**Best part about making cabinetry:** "I like when my clients see the finished cabinets and they get all excited," he says. "It's fun to see what they envisioned come to life."

**Contact info:** 503-503-362-4752 or e-mail him at [stollerkdsdc@aol.com](mailto:stollerkdsdc@aol.com).



### The Painter

**Keith Downs**, owner, Keith Downs Painting, Otis, Ore.

**Years as painter:** 18

**Years owning his own company:** 10

**His favorite clients:**

"People who know what they want," he says. "I do all kinds of painting—in fact, I'm painting a doctor's office right now—but I really like to do work on custom homes."

**On how he stained the wood ceilings:**

"No, we didn't have to climb scaffolding to stain the wood ceilings," he says. "We did it on the ground. We put down pallets and pallets of wood and put the ceiling boards on top of them. Did you know that if you put all the wood we stained end to end, it would cover two miles? If we would've stained the wood after it was installed, I'd still have a pretty good neckache."

**Contact info:** 541-994-2391 or e-mail him at [keithdowns@gmail.com](mailto:keithdowns@gmail.com).



"This is our Man Cave," says Tracy of the cozy corner on the lower level where a he-man antler chandelier illuminates a gaming table from Billiards & More in Tigard, Ore.

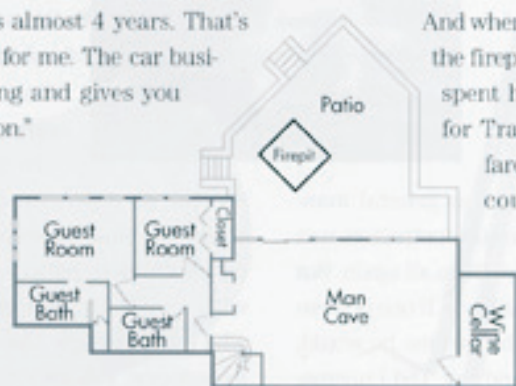
just too taxing. It's too mind-boggling a process. These guys earn their living, no question about it, and the stuff they have to put up with, I couldn't deal with it on a daily basis. From start to finish from when we looked at the property to when we moved in was almost 4 years. That's just way too slow for me. The car business is fast-moving and gives you instant gratification."

Todd is used to living lake-side now, taking his boat out or fishing with the couple's twenty-something kids, Alex and Taylor,

whenever they mosey back home. An avid chef, he likes to fire up his barbecue to grill something for friends such as Trish and Dennis Porreca, who live in Neskowin, Ore., but who've dropped in on one of their new boat's maiden voyages.

And when, after sitting around the firepit for a couple of well-spent hours, it comes time for Tracy and Todd to bid farewell to the friendly couple, Todd sounds like the true lake lover he is.

"So long, Trish," he says. "See you later, Dennis. Boat carefully!" □



LOWER LEVEL



