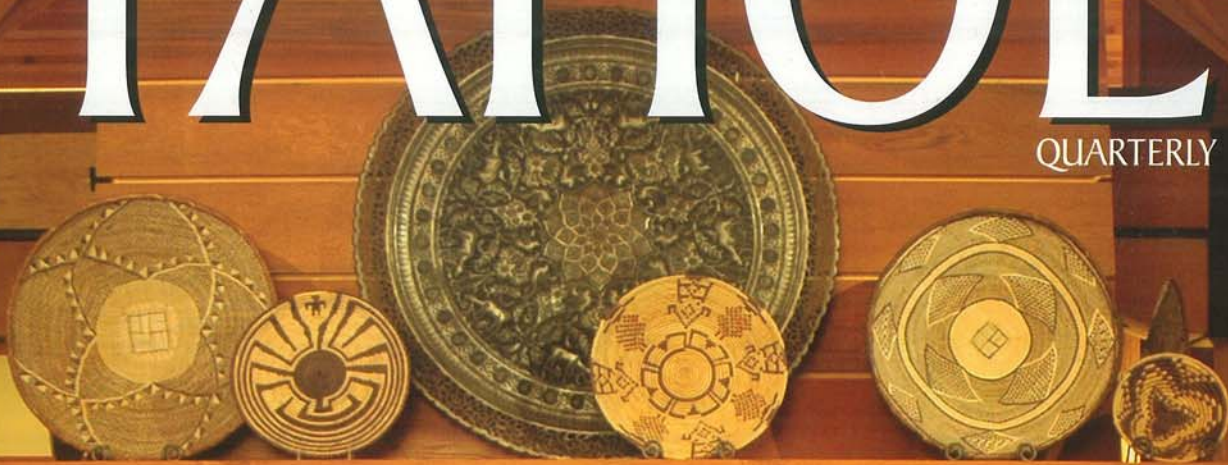


MOUNTAIN HOME 2006 | GREEN THINKING

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THIRD ANNUAL MOUNTAIN HOME AWARDS
WHAT WE'LL BUILD AFTER BUILD-OUT • HARRAH'S HOME

The Art of Collaboration

BY ELLEN HOPKINS

PHOTOS BY ROBERT BROWN

OUTSTANDING CRAFTSMANSHIP

ARCHITECT: Ryan Group Architects
David Horan, A.I.A., Scott Ryan, A.I.A.

BUILDER: Ed Kalbaugh Construction

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Ryan Group Architects
Kasey Hudson, N.C.I.D.Q., Noelle Nixon

SQUARE FOOTAGE: 6,300

YEAR COMPLETED: 2003

2006 *Tahoe Quarterly*
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Awards





The great room of this versatile vacation home (this page) includes a social kitchen space (facing page, middle). A combination game and entertainment room on a lower level (far left) is sound insulated from the rest of the house.

OUTSTANDING CRAFTSMANSHIP

Take a building pad with a 28 percent grade. Add an owner with an Arts and Crafts vision, plus an architect schooled in modern design. Figure in a builder with his own ideas about what constitutes a quality mountain home. What have you got? Artful collaboration, and a home that impressed our judges for its livability, innovations and overall "craftsmanship," the word they agreed best described Randall Sosnick's Northstar-at-Tahoe vacation home.

Craftsmanship relies on honed skill, and it took the combined skills of many to create this exceptional, 6,300 square foot, tri-level beauty. The home showcases sweeping mountain views that were integral to Sosnick's design requirements.

"When Randall came to us, his first comment was he wanted a unique home with a lot of glass that took full advantage of the views," says architect David Horan of Ryan Group Architects. "That was a big challenge, because of the steep nature of the lot."

The site was so steep that Sosnick had to acquire two adjacent lots to find enough room for the house he had in mind. Even

"We took the approach of building a long, skinny house, where each significant room had a view."

then, there was only a small pocket of available land between the front setback and the point where the county wouldn't let him build because the slope exceeds 30 percent.

"We took the approach of building a long, skinny house, where each significant room had a view," Sosnick says. "I also wanted a layout where I could shut off most of the house if just the master bedroom was occupied, as is often the case. Thus, the additional guest rooms are on separate floors from the master, kitchen, dining and living rooms."

Initially, Sosnick wanted a true craftsman home in the style of Greene and Greene. "I also loved the look of the old wooden lodges that I visited in several national

parks," he says. "And I wanted a wall full of windows and open interior spaces without a lot of posts."

Horan brought builder Ed Kalbaugh to the table. Kalbaugh, who has crafted homes in the Truckee/Tahoe area for 17 years, said a wooden frame simply wasn't strong enough. "To accomplish so much glass on such a steep slope, a steel frame was necessary. This is a commercial way to build, where the main structure is steel I-beams of various sizes, locked and welded together."

Exposed steel beams, however, offered a much too modern, much too "techie" look for Sosnick. "Steel was not part of my dream alpine retreat," he says. "And when we sent the architectural plans to the structural engineer, the drawings came back looking like a steel skyscraper lying on its side. So we set to work, integrating the steel bones with a wooden skin. We didn't try to hide the steel, just to integrate it with the softer wood."

The deed was accomplished by sandwiching steel and wood. The infill wood planks were bolted on, and the bolts themselves add interesting accents to both exterior and interior beams. "We came up with this look, which we dubbed 'international craftsman,' for lack of a better term,"

Sosnick says. "I'm very happy with the result, although it wasn't where we started the design process."

Horan was also pleased with the end product. "We've tried to accomplish this blending of styles — 'mountain' and 'modern' — for some time. It's an appropriate look for the Truckee/Tahoe area."

But the collaboration didn't stop there. Horan had originally designed the roof with a mono-pitch. Sosnick wanted gables. "We went around and around on this one," Horan says. "Finally, we sat down together and cut up cookie boxes, testing roof designs until we found one that worked for both of us."

The roof, complete with gables, is





The approach to the house includes both a carport and a large garage (at left). Above the garage and storage areas is a charming guest suite.

composite and standing seam copper, which nicely complements the redwood trim, railings and shingle siding. The decks – five in all – are made from Brazilian ironwood. Because they're on two levels, they presented another small dilemma.

"We didn't want the upper decks dripping down onto the lower ones," Kalbaugh says. "So we added a corrugated metal ceiling above the lower decks." The result provides

not only weather protection, but also a pleasing, finished appearance.

Inside, the house focuses on two things – functionality and details. Sosnick says that two spaces took on special importance. The first was the area between the kitchen and dining room. "As anyone who entertains knows, people always seem to end up in the kitchen. So we designed a space on the other side of the kitchen

island, where people could comfortably gather and converse while the cooks were free to move about. We located one side of the fireplace there, as well as some seating and a counter."

The fireplace is not only the focal point of the great room – the combined kitchen, dining and living room areas – but also serves as the main divider between the 3, giving each an intimate, yet open feel. The

OUTSTANDING CRAFTSMANSHIP

22-foot ceilings boast exposed rafters and collar ties. Unique details include a built-in cherry wood buffet and a dining room set and coffee table, made from recycled South African railroad ties of Panga Panga wood.

Sosnick's second "special space" was the lower level game room, which features ping pong, pool, foosball, a big-screen television with surround sound, a built-in computer workstation, wet bar and wine cellar. The floor is Portuguese cork, both sound absorbent and warm.

"After dinner, this is often where everyone ends up," Sosnick says. "It had to be sufficiently large and flexible to handle

"We blended mountain and modern for a look appropriate to the Tahoe/Truckee area."

multiple activities. I also wanted it to be isolated sound-wise from the rest of the house, for the times it becomes the kids' romper room. I guess I modeled this room after the game room in the house I grew up in, which my mom, an architect, designed."

Although designer Kasey Hudson, also of Ryan Group, led the interior design effort, it too was accomplished through collaboration. "Building a custom home allows you virtually infinite freedom to make it your own," Sosnick says. "I saw it as an opportunity of a lifetime. My architects said that I became 'their most involved client ever.' For better or worse, this house is a reflection of my personality."

An enthusiastic participant in many sports, Sosnick requested a separate "outdoor sports" entrance, which includes a cubby storage unit, boot storage with a built-in drying system and a workroom for tuning skis and bikes. It is detached from the main house by an indoor "bridge," which also serves as an entrance to the "tree house" over the garage. This guest or caretaker's unit has its own deck; a kitchen with copper countertops and sink; a bath with Brazilian black granite and glass tile countertops; and an adjacent laundry room

at the foot of the stairs.

The master bedroom is distinguished by a honed tobacco travertine fireplace, built-in cherry media cabinet, walk-in closet with built-in cherry wood dresser and its own laundry room. The master bath has a steam shower, jetted tub and Durango travertine flooring.

On the lower level is yet a third laundry room and a spa bath, with a Finnish sauna, steam shower and access to the hot tub on the lower deck. Two guest bedroom suites take advantage of the views, while two small Pullman (as in the train cars) bunkrooms occupy the earth side.

"A certain amount of the lower circulation was tucked into the earth," Horan says. "Instead of just having a corridor, we decided to celebrate that circulation by making it a sleep area, with Pullman beds and cherry cabinetry. The kids love them, but everyone wants to sleep in them."

Finishing touches include entryway wood reliefs from Mali and China gold slate flooring. In the kitchen are honed granite countertops and a mahogany butcher-block bar top on the island's upper counter. Throughout the house are a background music system and computer/data ports. Some of the furniture was custom-made from recycled old-growth redwood, taken from an old water tower.

"Other pieces I designed and made myself in Costa Rica, from a 150-year-old Guanacaste tree that had blown down in a storm," says Sosnick. "I wanted the house to feel comfortable, so I filled it with objects I could relate to."

The entire construction process, from design to finish, took over three years to complete. "Ed Kalbaugh says, 'Quality has no fear of time,'" says Horan, "and in this case, it had no fear of teamwork. Owner. Architects. Designers. Builders. Landscapers. It took everyone, brainstorming and working together, to accomplish it. At one time or another, we all had to leave our egos at the door." ■





The array of candles suspended over the dining room table appears to glow with lighted wicks, but they are actually a collection of cleverly concealed, tiny light bulbs.