

All play, not much work

Mazama meadow home is designed for lots of activity and little maintenance

BY DON NELSON

WHEN Adam Orkand and Anne Theisen asked architect Tim Hammer to design a “bomb-proof house,” they weren’t talking about a Cold War-era underground bunker. They wanted a high-use,

low-maintenance, high-occupancy, low-impact home on the sunny lot they chose in a meadow near Mazama—a place where they could recreate, entertain and relax without worrying about knocking paint off the walls or scuffing the floors. Orkand, Theisen and their family (now including two children) started

visiting the valley more than a dozen years ago, often with a group of friends, staying at the Mazama Ranch House.

Initially, the trips were wintertime ventures, but eventually they started visiting in the summer as well. The Methow’s attraction grew, especially the Mazama end of the valley, and their thoughts turned to a second home for year-round activities.

“We wanted to build something that, when we retire, we can live in the house and be active ... and a spot that our kids would want to come back to,” Theisen said.

“Active” includes lots of socializing, often in sizable groups, for Orkand and Theisen.

“We love being out here with other people,” Orkand said. “We love bringing friends.”

Orkand and Theisen started by looking at other cabins. “We didn’t find any existing that were exactly what we wanted,” Theisen said. When they decided to consider buying property, Mazama was the spot—they found a lot in what



The exterior is steel and concrete. PHOTO BY DON NELSON



The home is designed to be unobtrusive in its surroundings. PHOTO COURTESY CAST ARCHITECTURE

Theisen calls a “familiar, sun-drenched” meadow within walking distance of the Mazama Store.

“We like the proximity to downtown Mazama,” Theisen said. Being close to ski trails was a selling point as well.

Setting goals

Hammer, of Cast Architects, is a long-time friend of Orkand and Theisen. As soon as they locked in a site, Hammer started drawing up ideas. The architect put Orkand and Theisen through what he calls

an “intake process,” an extended interview to identify the clients’ most important goals. The exercise focuses on how the clients live, and how they want to use the house.

The personal relationship was invaluable, Orkand and Theisen said.

“He [Hammer] knew us, and he really drove the design in a way we would have never thought possible,” Orkand said.

At the same time, Hammer kept the couple’s expectations realistic. “The temptation is to make a statement, and you end up with a novelty,” Orkand said.

A first priority: “We want to be outside. We don’t want to be doing maintenance,” Orkand said.

“The primary [aesthetic] goal was to be saturated with natural light,” Hammer said. As a practical matter, he said “they wanted to be able to host a lot of people.”

As for the site, Hammer said, “it was evident early on that we could tuck it up against the aspen grove for some shelter and privacy.” Another priority, he said, was to be “humble and unobtrusive,” so



A hallway connects the living area with bedrooms and an office. PHOTO BY DON NELSON



The main living area is a three-sided, glass-enclosed space. PHOTO COURTESY CAST ARCHITECTURE

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The owners' goal was to "saturate" the living space with natural light. PHOTO COURTESY CAST ARCHITECTURE

the design was kept to a single story.

"We wanted to take in as much of the beautiful surroundings as possible," Theisen said. "We wanted to be able to see Goat Peak, Lucky Jim Bluff, the aspens."

Another goal was to make the place comfortable and welcoming for visitors. "We want to be able to say 'make yourself at home,' and mean it," Theisen said. "We wanted people to know where to look for the silverware."

Ample accommodations

For a relatively small house, the 1,400-square-foot place they call "The Ranchero" can indeed handle a lot of folks.

The west end of the house is one undivided space—living room, dining area and kitchen. At the other end is the master bedroom, with big windows and eastern light. There's not a window covering anywhere. In between is a "bunk room" that sleeps four. Each bunk has its own window looking out at the meadow. Guests have a separate bath. A small office provides private space for working.

A separate, 200-square-foot building houses a sauna, a ski waxing room, and gear storage space, plus a covered storage area for firewood.

The predominant construction materials are meant to last. The floors are concrete with radiant heat.

For durability, exterior cladding materials became interior finishes: the ceilings and bathroom walls are white composite aluminum panels; the interior walls in the bedrooms and great room are a combination of hot rolled steel and Minerit panels made of fiber cement panels embedded with color. None of it ever needs to be re-painted.

The exterior materials are steel panels, concrete, steel columns and black metal roof and trim.

"There's not a square inch of bare wood anywhere," Hammer said—which helps keep out insects and other critters. Hammer said he thinks the home has a "humble grace."



The Goat Wall dominates the view from the master bedroom. PHOTO BY DON NELSON

The contractor was Phil Dietz of Lost River Construction. Orkand, Theisen and Hammer all praised Dietz's role in the collaborative process.

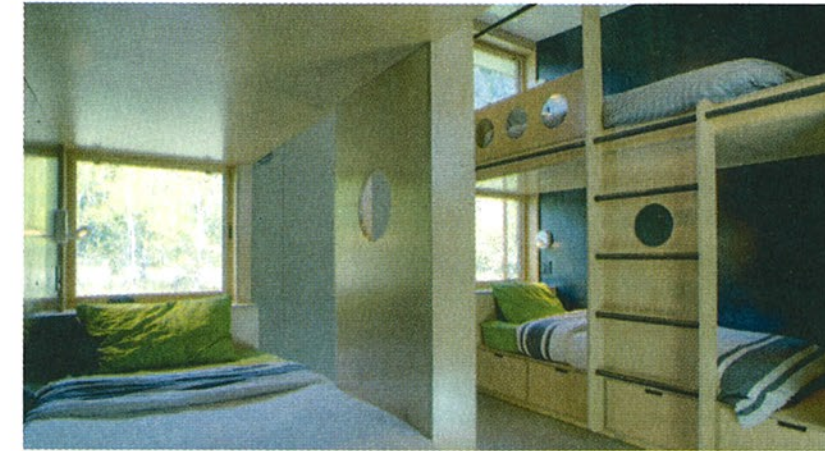
Seattle is still home, where Theisen is a marketing consultant

and Orkand does online training for small businesses. But they find their way to the Mazama meadow and their "bomb-proof" refuge as often as possible.

"It functions perfectly for us," Orkand said. "It's just a joy." ♦

The east-facing master bedroom is flooded with natural light. PHOTO BY DON NELSON

Four can sleep comfortably in the bunk room. PHOTO COURTESY CAST ARCHITECTURE



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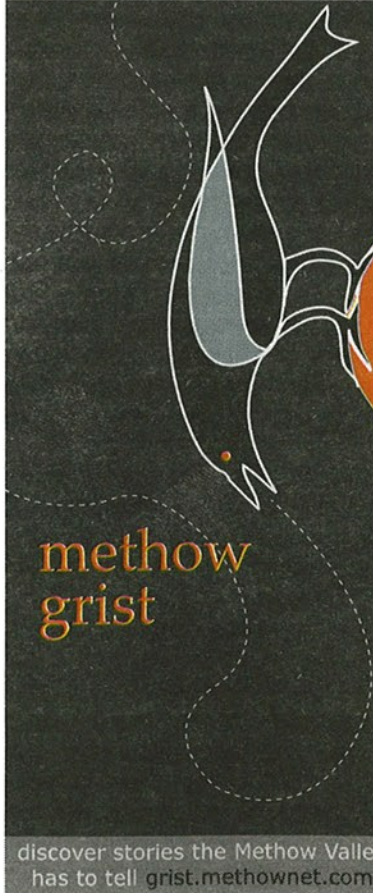
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