

A Cake Baker Dishes ❁ Don't Make These Home Office Mistakes

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2001

# OREGON HOME

## JAPANESE MODERN

Great architecture and Asian antiques  
create a serene new home in Yachats

### Family Ties

How a young  
man restored his  
great-grandparents'  
Craftsman

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# Fallingwater West

*Six years ago, Aggie and Dale Garell came to Oregon for a little rest and relaxation. They had no idea they were on the road to a new home in Yachats.*

BY DAVID SHARP

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID PAPA ZIAN

For all its open, light-filled rooms and dazzling vistas, Aggie and Dale Garells' 4,000-square-foot oceanview house in Yachats, Ore., possesses a secret within a secret. Embraced on three sides by the house—and on the fourth by a waterfall-ribboned slope—a Japanese garden so radiates with solitude and peacefulness that it rises to the level of sanctuary. Within that garden, a series of stepping stones ascends the waterfall to a meditation bench placed unobtrusively amid the plantings. From the bench, the Garells have a hawk's-eye view of the tucked-away oasis below, as well as the ever-changing landscape of tide, clouds and fog. The overall effect is that of Fallingwater West, a perfect melding of the built and natural environment reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's Pennsylvania masterpiece.

On the *engawa*—the Japanese-style cedar deck that provides a graceful transition between indoors and out—a nearly 100-year-old bronze Buddha cast in the style of the 14th century “walks,” his left index finger and thumb forming a circle called the “Wheel of Law.” A rushing waterfall produces a soothing orchestra of sound that instantly washes away all stress. Newport, Ore., landscaper Scott Printz of Oregon Coast Gardens, did such a masterful job of constructing the 16-foot-tall waterfall that houseguests assume that they're looking at a mountain stream formed eons ago, not a manmade creation built in three months with 22 tons of weathered basalt.

“Aggie and Dale had a vision for the landscaping they wanted—and they pay great attention to detail,” says Printz. “I knew when I started working on this project that if the garden was to be worthy of the house, I'd have to pay attention to detail, too.” To turn the front yard into a minimalist carpet of moss in the *perfect* shade of green (right), Printz spent eight weeks harvesting Oregon native moss, *polytrichum*, from farmers willing to sell it out of their fields, and replanting the moss—the equivalent of 3,000 flats!—in the Garells' front yard. “It has a soft, subtle beauty that you don't get from Irish or Scotch moss,” he explains. For the Japanese garden's waterfall, he selected each rock from local quarries. Only the basalt with indigenous lichens growing on it made the cut.

*“When I can't find Dale now, he's on the bench up there, meditating,” says Aggie, of the Japanese garden designed and built by Scott Printz of Oregon Coast Gardens. The waterfall's in-pond biological filter recirculates 120 gallons of water a minute.*

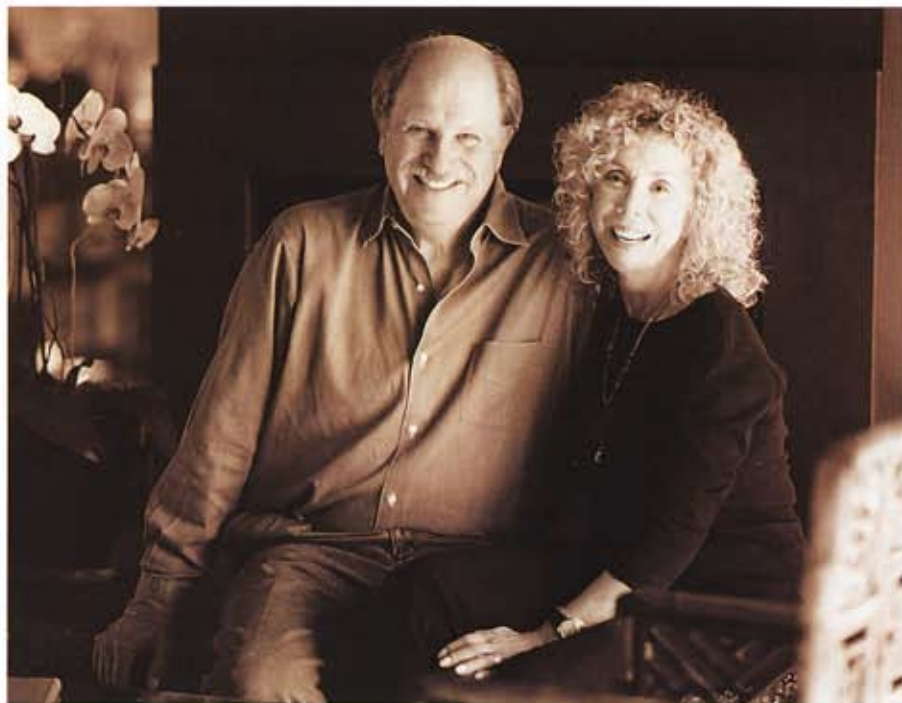


The Garells' homebuilding odyssey—they marvel at the twists of fate that, at times, propelled the project forward and nearly derailed it—began in 1995, during a brief vacation to the Oregon coast.

At the time, Aggie was the director of volunteer services at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, and Dale was chairman of pediatrics at the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California. "We absolutely had no thoughts about moving from Los Angeles," says Aggie. But during that trip, the Garells swung through Yachats and chanced upon a 1/4-acre parcel of land on the market.

Draped in alders and spruce, the property looks out at the Pacific, the Yachats River and Cape Perpetua—a view so transcendently beautiful that it immediately unraveled any intentions the Garells had of merely passing through. "We went back to Southern California and said, 'What are we going to do?'" recalls Dale. "It just clicked. We said, 'We're going to do this.'"

Though their plans would become more ambitious, the Garells initially intended to build a vacation retreat in Yachats while keeping their condo in Venice, Calif., as their home. For the Yachats house to be worthy of its stellar location, the couple resolved that it would have to combine aesthetic excellence with environmental sensitivity, thus defying the conventional wisdom that ecological



"Every once in a while, we stop and wonder, 'Did we really build this house?'" says Dale, with Aggie in the living room of their Yachats, Ore., home, which looks to the Pacific.

architecture is charmless as a shoebox.

To achieve that daring goal, the Garells assembled a team of experts in the summer of 1998 who shared their bold vision. Aggie and Dale had long been impressed by the work of Santa Monica, Calif.-based architect and furniture designer David Hertz, and they enlisted his help. Befitting their love of fine art, the Garells

viewed Hertz more as commissioned artist than as hired gun. "They were very supportive of me as an architect throughout the project, which enabled me to do my best work," says Hertz.

The Garells also needed a local contractor who understood the special challenges of building homes along a coastline pummeled by ocean-driven

## FLOORPLAN

### 1ST FLOOR



### 2ND FLOOR





*"You don't see random-cut slate too much, but David Hertz didn't want plain-cut squares of slate," says Aggie, of the material that leads from the mudroom into the kitchen, where the flooring is bamboo. A mixografia on handmade paper of a female nude by Robert Graham draws your eye to the second floor. A Chinese mother-of-pearl screen hangs on the wall at the top of the stairs.*

rainstorms and winds that can top 100 miles per hour. The couple found their candidate in contractor Paul LaMont, the principal of Newport, Ore.-based Paul C. LaMont Builder, whose track record of constructing homes in the region goes back three decades. "A 1/8-inch gap in the siding or flashing might be acceptable in other parts of the country, but here, the tolerances have to be much tighter to keep the wind from pushing rain into the house," says LaMont. Other members of this ensemble cast would include Andy Stricker, the structural engineer behind Stricker Engineering of Cloverdale, Ore., who made it technically possible to design the home's large expansive window areas; Southern California kitchen designer Don Silver; and landscape designer Printz.

Just as the key players were falling into place, bad luck intervened: Aggie underwent two major surgeries that forced the couple to put their house-building plans on hold. During her difficult recuperation, she drew strength from watching home videos of the Pacific Ocean shot from their Yachats property. "I'd play the tape over and over and say, 'You're going to get through this pain, because you're going to build that house. That's your ocean,'" says Aggie. "It gave me a sense of peacefulness and purpose."

Despite the solace that the video provided, the couple began having second thoughts about proceeding with the project, and put the lot up for sale in January of 1999. "When you don't feel 100%, you feel a little vulnerable, and you start thinking, *Should I move to an area where health care is so far away?*" says Aggie.

As their Realtor fielded inquiries from prospective buyers, the Garells' emotions turned as gloomy as a Yachats fog bank. "For three months we didn't know what was wrong with us," says Aggie. "Then I realized that we were depressed because we'd given up that dream." Recognizing that they loved the land too much to lose it, the couple took the property off the market. "From that moment, we moved forward," she says.

To pay tribute to the site's uniqueness, the Garells and Hertz agreed that the house should blend seamlessly with its coastal setting. "I was struck by the town's vision of long-term sustainability and also by the daily changes that occur



"One day, I walked in and I said, 'I think there's a mistake here—I can't see the ocean!'" says Aggie, of the seascape that looms beyond the windows in the kitchen. "The window had been installed upside down, so the bar was exactly at my line of vision. All they had to do was flip it." The appliances are from BASCO in Portland.

The Garells commissioned Chet Gardner of Chet's Fine Furniture in Vancouver, Wash., to make a coveted maple dining room table, which ingeniously unfolds to seat 20, as well as the dining room chairs and kitchen bar stools, which swivel. The orchid-holding test tube vase is from Scentiments in Venice, Calif. Two hammered copper and bronze temple plaques that date to the late 19th century are from Warren Imports in Laguna Beach, Calif.





*"I wanted windows that would let us see the world," says Aggie of the 29- by 8-foot windows. Retractable shades from Bolliger Window Fashion in Portland can be lowered by remote control. The two Chinese 19th century gentlemen's bamboo armchairs are from Elliot Bay Antiques in Seattle. A 1900 bronze jardiniere holds yellow orchids; a late-19th century Japanese bronze jardiniere contains purple ones. Above the fireplace is "Fishing in Autumn," a watercolor done on silk by Henry Wo Yue-Kee.*



## Concrete Decisions

Concrete isn't just for garage slabs and foundations anymore. Architects and homeowners alike are increasingly choosing concrete for interior flooring, walls, countertops, decks and even furniture. When properly done, architectural concrete can create a sense of quiet beauty that no other material can match. But when improperly done, the results can be an aesthetic and financial nightmare.

"Unfortunately, we get a lot of calls from people who've been told by their contractor, 'Concrete floors . . . I can do that,' and it turns out to be a disaster," says architect David Hertz, an early proponent of architectural concrete and the inventor of a lightweight concrete called Syndecrete. "There's an art to proper finishing, and if it's not done right, things can go terribly wrong." If you want to build with concrete, here's how to avoid ending up between a rock and a hard place:

**Make sure the finish fits your home's ambience.** Hertz first embraced concrete in the early 1980s in response to what he viewed as the excessive use of polished marble and granite. Unlike those glitzier materials, concrete conjures up a mood of low-key naturalness. "I think people are increasingly looking for more of a rustic material in their lives," says Hertz. "Concrete offers a more humble aesthetic than something like granite."

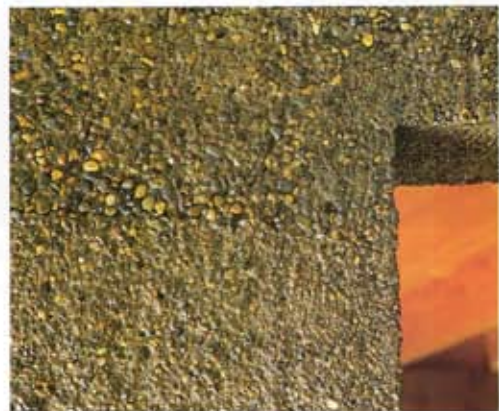
**Color your world.** Don't assume concrete comes in only one color—sidewalk gray. In fact, you can choose from a range of colors and textures, and, like paint schemes, the color of concrete can drastically alter a room's personality. "Because you can color concrete and do a variety of finishes, concrete can work in traditional and contemporary homes," says Hertz.

**Check for quality.** Don't assume that somebody who can pour a foundation is necessarily qualified to pour your living room floor. Seek contractors with ample experience doing projects similar to yours, and *before* cementing the deal, talk with past clients. Better still, go see the results. Signs of faulty concrete include large cracking, flaking, discoloration and uneven finishes.

—D.S.

with the fog coming off the Yachats River and the extreme tides," says Hertz. Amply inspired, the trio decided to emphasize honest, evocative building materials, home-grown craftsmanship and Japanese architectural influences that evolved under similar climatic conditions—a fusion of Pacific Northwest and Asian sensibilities that could be called Pacific Rim.

Hertz came up with a house plan that would allow the Garells to enjoy the natural splendor no matter what the weather. During cold snaps, they could remain cocooned indoors behind a bank of expansive windows and massive, 800-pound sliding-glass doors that offered unrestricted views of the ocean and surrounding woods. (Skillfully installed by LaMont and his crew, the glass doors—despite their formidable weight—slide on rollers with a tug.) On calmer days, the couple could venture onto a roomy concrete patio that juts like a ship's prow toward the Pacific. The patio features a concrete bench and a fire pit for entertaining. And on blustery days, they could retreat to the wind-sheltered



Two sizes of rocks were poured into the concrete to give the walls their riverbed look.

courtyard garden.

The waves, woods and rain are such critical parts of the landscape's moody aesthetic that Hertz elevated them to the status of design features. Early on, he had LaMont's crew construct scaffolding so Hertz could figure out how best to position the home's footprint to the ocean view. "We rotated the house a bit to maximize the views from each room facing the ocean," says Dale.

To make sure the house didn't turn



## Remote Control

Constructing or remodeling a home in Oregon while living in another state may seem like quite a stretch, geographically speaking. As Aggie and Dale Garell discovered, the following strategies can help bridge the distance:


**Learn the ground rules.** Landslides, forest fires, floods, earthquakes—you buy into a potentially turbulent landscape when you buy into Oregon. To guard against unforeseen dangers, the Garells hired a geologist and structural engineer to inspect the property prior to construction. To make sure their home could endure the punishing coastal weather, they also went with the most experienced and respected local contractor they could find. "Even if he's busy for the next six months or even a year, find the contractor with the best reputation," says Aggie. "The person who's building your house is someone you must trust implicitly."

**Take field trips.** Despite the cost and hassle of travel, there's no substitute for the occasional site visit to get to know your contractor and check on the progress of construction. To make the most of each trip, the Garells arranged back-to-back meetings ahead of time with subcontractors and suppliers.

On several occasions, the Garells and their architect, David Hertz, even flew together from Los Angeles to Portland so they could devote the travel time to discussing the project and establishing a rapport. "Rather than having an architect for an hour in an office or on a site, where there are a lot of preoccupations, we had David from 6 a.m. Thursday until we dropped him off at 6 p.m. on Sunday," says Dale. "He got to know us very well, and we got to know him."

**Get wired.** To stay plugged in with the project, make sure you and your architect and builder can easily communicate—by phone, fax and e-mail. "Technology makes it easier to build a home from a distance, because if there's a question about something, we could take a digital picture and e-mail it," says Hertz. "You could even—though we didn't on this project—use a real-time camera to watch the construction over the Internet."

—D.S.



"This is Chisler's work," says Dale of the antique-looking Japanese pulls newly cast by Daniel Chisler, which adorn the under-staircase tansu that Corvallis Cabinets constructed.

its back on the subtle beauty of the surrounding woods, he also took great care in deciding where to position the inland-facing windows. "One time David stood where the shower would be and said, 'We need to put a window in every shower so you can look up and see the trees,'" Aggie recalls. "That makes all the difference."

To capture the enchanting quality of the coastal downpours, Hertz decided to forego traditional rain gutters in favor of scuppers—tapered copper funnels that focus the rainwater into ribbony spillways. "I designed the water flow to become a sculptural element, so the experience of water wasn't hidden but really expressed," says Hertz.

The natural environment also inspired the choice of concrete as one of the principal building materials, used to create the deck and 18-inch-thick walls. Though often associated with impersonal industrial buildings, concrete—when skillfully prepared—can also conjure up a riverbed-like sense of tranquility and permanence. "David wanted the concrete to look very organic," says LaMont. "When we were pouring some of the concrete walls, we'd actually stop the pour from one truck, pull up a second truck that was loaded with smaller rocks, and continue the pour. That created a layering of textures in the wall that gave it a geologic look. It's very subtle, but it comes across in the overall feel of the house."

Along with meeting a high aesthetic standard, the contemporary house also had to satisfy important practical concerns. In case of age-related physical limitations they might experience later in life, Aggie and Dale asked Hertz to include accessibility features such as a ramp leading to the second floor and washer-dryer facilities upstairs as well as on the main floor.

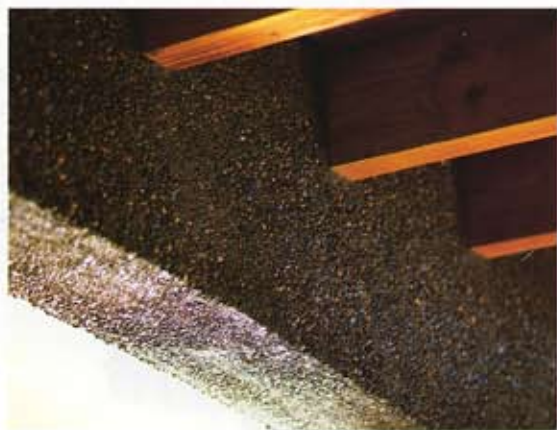
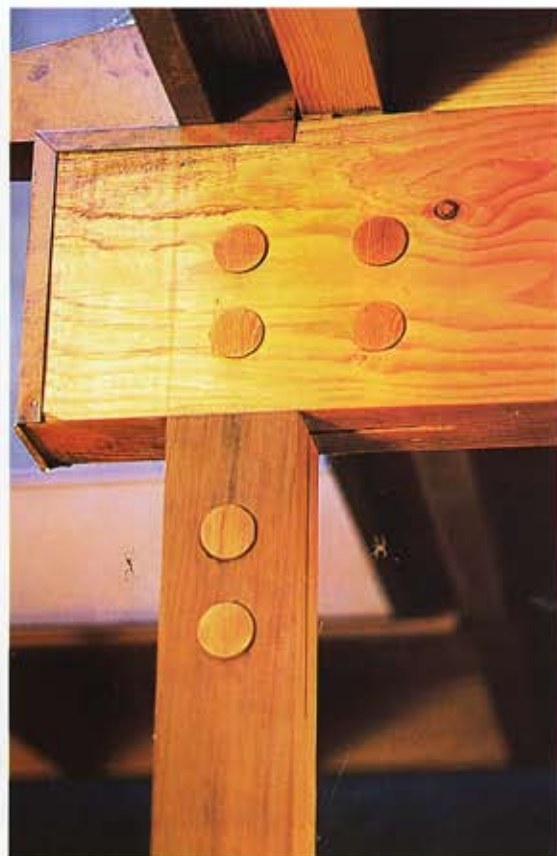
To make sure that house guests could

enjoy their visit without sacrificing their sense of privacy, Hertz positioned the guest room away from other parts of the house—and even outfitted it with a sauna. To provide a clear view of the ocean, the Garells decided against a centrally located front door and foyer—preferring instead an unobtrusive mudroom doorway as their main entrance.

Moreover, they opted for Bolliger window shades that retract into soffits

rather than traditional drapes, which would've partially blocked the view. Designer Don Silver shrewdly positioned all of the kitchen cabinetry below the countertops to keep the windows unobstructed. Silver also incorporated plenty of kitchen workspaces so family and friends could join in on the cooking. "It gets away from the era where the woman of the house is in the kitchen and is totally isolated," says Aggie.

## The Look Defined



Attention to detail—as seen in the craftsmanship of everything from the ceiling beams to the concrete walls—echoes from room to room in the Garells' new home. A sprinkling of Buddhas, such as this 100-year-old statue that draws your eye to the engawa, add serenity to the space.



*From the master bath, views of the forest and the ocean combine with limestone finishes for a luxurious spa-like look. The monochromatic bedding is from Golden Goose in Medocino, Calif. The tansu jewelry box is by Evert Sodergren, a fourth-generation furnituremaker.*

Even before the house went up, the Garells felt an appreciation of the site as a place of great beauty and serenity that must've been appreciated by people who walked the land in the past. "Because we're overlooking the mouth of the Yachats River, I felt sure that Native Americans had used and honored this land and that we should be very respectful of its place in nature, too," says Dale.

Far from making themselves scarce when construction began, the Garells

returned to Yachats once a month to meet with LaMont and various subcontractors to participate in key decisions. The couple did a staggering amount of homework both before and after those meetings. When Hertz suggested installing environmentally sustainable bamboo flooring, the Garells wanted to know how bamboo held up to foot traffic, so they travelled to far-flung public buildings where bamboo was used as flooring—the Valley Library at Oregon State

University in Corvallis, Ore., and Macy's in San Francisco. "In Macy's, I saw a scuff mark on the floor, took out a Kleenex and started to rub off the scuff mark," Aggie says. "Five minutes later, security comes and says, 'Lady, why are you cleaning the floor! You're supposed to be looking at the crystal!'" Impressed by bamboo's attractiveness and durability, the Garells gave the go-ahead.

They also doggedly tracked down Oregon craftspeople who could create

the home's finishing touches. "We made every attempt to use local building supplies and materials because we wanted this to be an Oregon home," says Dale.

The builders climbed their own learning curve in executing Hertz's cutting-edge plan. "Because of the uniqueness of the construction, I think the project pushed everybody to the limit," says Dale. "Putting such large sliding windows in place was something new for the glass people here. We owe an awful lot to Paul for maintaining a quiet stability and not saying, 'We can't do that.'"

Indeed, to show their gratitude to the crew who turned their vacant lot into an architectural showcase, Aggie and Dale welcomed them—and their families—back to celebrate the completion of the home. More than 100 guests showed up, including Hertz, LaMont, Printz, their structural engineer, numerous craftspeople—even their banker who gave them the loan. "During the construction, they became our friends," says Dale.

What started as a vacation retreat has become the Garells' permanent home. After weighing the cost of maintaining two residences, the couple sold their condo and followed their hearts to the Oregon coast. Since moving north, the Garells' passion for Yachats has blossomed. "This is just magical to me, watching the changing ocean and weather," says Dale. "I've even started photographing the clouds. In Southern California, we didn't get many clouds."

Their house is all the more special because it looks out at the same stretch of the Pacific that bolstered Aggie's spirits during the difficult weeks following her surgeries. Reflecting on the unlikely circumstances, hard choices and talented individuals that turned that earlier video image into the real thing, Aggie concludes, "It was meant to be." ☞

*"This is the room that David positioned so carefully to maximize the view," says Dale, of the master bedroom. The lucite sculpture "Memoirs" is by Federick Hart. The lead and brass primitive figure "Man with Window to his Soul" by Connie Mississippipi, hangs above the fireplace. "I saw it on an art tour years ago," recalls Aggie, "and when I called the artist afterward, she said, 'You have blonde, curly hair, don't you?' I asked her how she knew that, and she said, 'Every artist knows when someone falls in love with one of her pieces.'"*





# idea market

## No-Fuss Furniture for Patios

What's the point of having a patio with a world-class view if you have to play furniture mover every time you want to dine *al fresco*? When Aggie and Dale Garell were building their new home in Yachats, Ore., Aggie asked their architect, David Hertz, to design an outdoor table that would make the patio entertaining friendly 24-7.

"The weather on the Oregon coast is ever-changing, so I didn't want Dale to have to go back and forth to the garage getting out patio furniture and putting it away when it looked like high winds were going to blow through," says Aggie. "David thought an immovable outdoor table was a great idea, and wanted to design it." The 3- by 6-foot poured-in-place

concrete table that the Santa Monica, Calif.-based architect designed—and that Newport builder Paul LaMont created—replicates the organic look of the concrete work that appears throughout the Garells' home (see the rest of it in "Fallingwater West," which begins on p. 46). One 19-inch-tall bench and two ultra-heavy armchairs ("It took us six months to find chairs heavy enough that wouldn't blow into the windows,") can seat eight, a good thing since the Garells love to have their family—which includes eight grandchildren—and friends drop by.

"Now, when the weather turns beautiful, Dale and I can drink our coffee out there or eat lunch on the patio and we don't have to balance our plates on our laps," says Aggie.

*For product information, see the Resource Guide on p. 80.*

