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Methow Valley 'Miner's Refuge' captures the spirit of place

By Rebecca Teagarden

photographed by Benjamin Benschneider

THE HOUSE has a view that brings "God Bless America" up on the mental iPod: the "from the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans, white with foam" part. Out front, before a backdrop of purple mountains and azure skies, is an ocean of field grass bowing in great golden waves under the morning breeze.

But the delight of "Miner's Refuge" begins half a mile away across that meadow with what appears to be a rusty mine shaft rising from the earth at the base of a piney mountain.

Talk about connection to place.

"It all started out this color," says Bill Gaylord, tapping the silver Toyota 4-Runner in the driveway. He is explaining the recent evolution of the shaft-inspired entrance to the Mazama vacation home he shares with his wife, Lindy, and co-owners Amy and Mark Worthington.

Before the Methow Valley became the land of fine vacation homes, it was mining country. Silver, iron, bauxite, copper. Miner's Refuge acknowledges this heritage right at the front door.

"There's a great trail we send friends off to that leads to an old copper mine," Bill says.

Bill, a partner at the architect firm GGLO, and Lindy, trained as an interior architect, love the design of their new getaway place. But they did not create it.

"We really couldn't get off the dime when it came to building our own house," Bill says. "For two years I sketched all these ideas; towers, etc. In the end, we



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The bright orange Womb Chair, Noguchi coffee table and chocolate leather sofas lend a contemporary feel to the getaway home. "The Nest," tucked behind the living room, is a cozy place to hang out and provides extra sleeping quarters. It is co-owner Bill Gaylord's favorite part of the home. His wife, Lindy, is particularly fond of the heated concrete floors.



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The house is tucked into the tree line, minimizing its impact on the adjacent meadow, part of the 120 miles of nordic ski trails in the Methow Valley. The rusted-metal shell was meant to match the pine bark of surrounding forests. See more of architects Ray and Mary Johnston's work at www.johnstonarchitects.com.

realized all of these structures should fit into the land. Plus, I was concerned about being the architect for the four of us."

So Bill called his friends and sometimes Twisp neighbors, Seattle architects Ray and Mary Johnston, to do what the group could not: Meld the ideas of four strong individuals into one cohesive, contemporary home. A home connected to place; industrial and comfortable; peaceful and exciting. A home that treads as delicately on the land as possible.

So, in an exchange of ideas between Bill and Lindy and Amy and Mark and Ray and Mary, Miner's Refuge was born in 2008. In Recla Metal, plywood, fir, concrete, steel and glass at 1,750 square feet.

The Gaylords like the idea of sharing responsibility for a second home. That's why Lindy approached Amy with the idea, as someone she had enjoyed working with as a principal at Seneca Group, a development-management company.

Their differences and similarities fit perfectly.

Mark, an attorney, and Amy are 15 years younger than the Gaylords. The Gaylords have a daughter of grown-up age. The Worthingtons have a new baby.

"Amy's extremely organized. I like that," Bill says. "They take care of everything electronic. We like gardening."

"I did the lighting," Lindy says. "And Amy and I did the furniture."

"If Bill and I did it ourselves, we'd still be arguing," she says laughing, kind of.

The Gaylords credit Mark with one of their favorite spaces in the home: The Nest. This room, a few blackened-steel steps up from the great room, is just that: a space for books and games, and lined with upholstered twin mattresses for napping, watching TV, reading, a second cup of coffee on a snowy morning, a glass of wine at sunset, extra guests.

Out back is a shower and a two-story closet for all things fun in this land of many trails: cross-country skis, bikes, backpacks, snowshoes.



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Miner's Refuge, a glowing ember at dusk, is tucked into Goat Wall along Flagg Mountain. The two couples who share the home converge on Miner's Refuge, which was finished in 2008, for Memorial Day weekend and the annual homeowners' meeting.

"The thing with houses is," Bill says, "it's always a partnership."

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"The fir ceiling in the living room dives down to form the back wall of the kitchen," Ray Johnston says. "It also wraps the back wall of the Nest" at the other end of the living room. The home was built by North Cascades Construction.



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The kitchen is a great spot for family gatherings or for being alone with the view: "I feel like I can just sit here and look out, and there's this window onto the world," says Mark Worthington. "It feels like you are a part of what's going on outside."

Mining the past

The Shafer Museum in Winthrop offers a fascinating glimpse into the Methow Valley's history and advertises one of the best mining-machinery displays in the West. www.shafermuseum.com.

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