

**A Maury Island home elegantly changes
its perspective, thanks to a boatload
of contributors**

CONNECTIONS ARE ESSENTIAL

when you live on an island.

There's getting there in the first place, of course (it takes a ferry ride and a drive to reach sweetly remote Maury Island, connected to Vashon by a skinny isthmus), but the concept also holds true when you're creating a one-of-a-kind place to live on an island.

Even on an island, it turns out, no man is one.

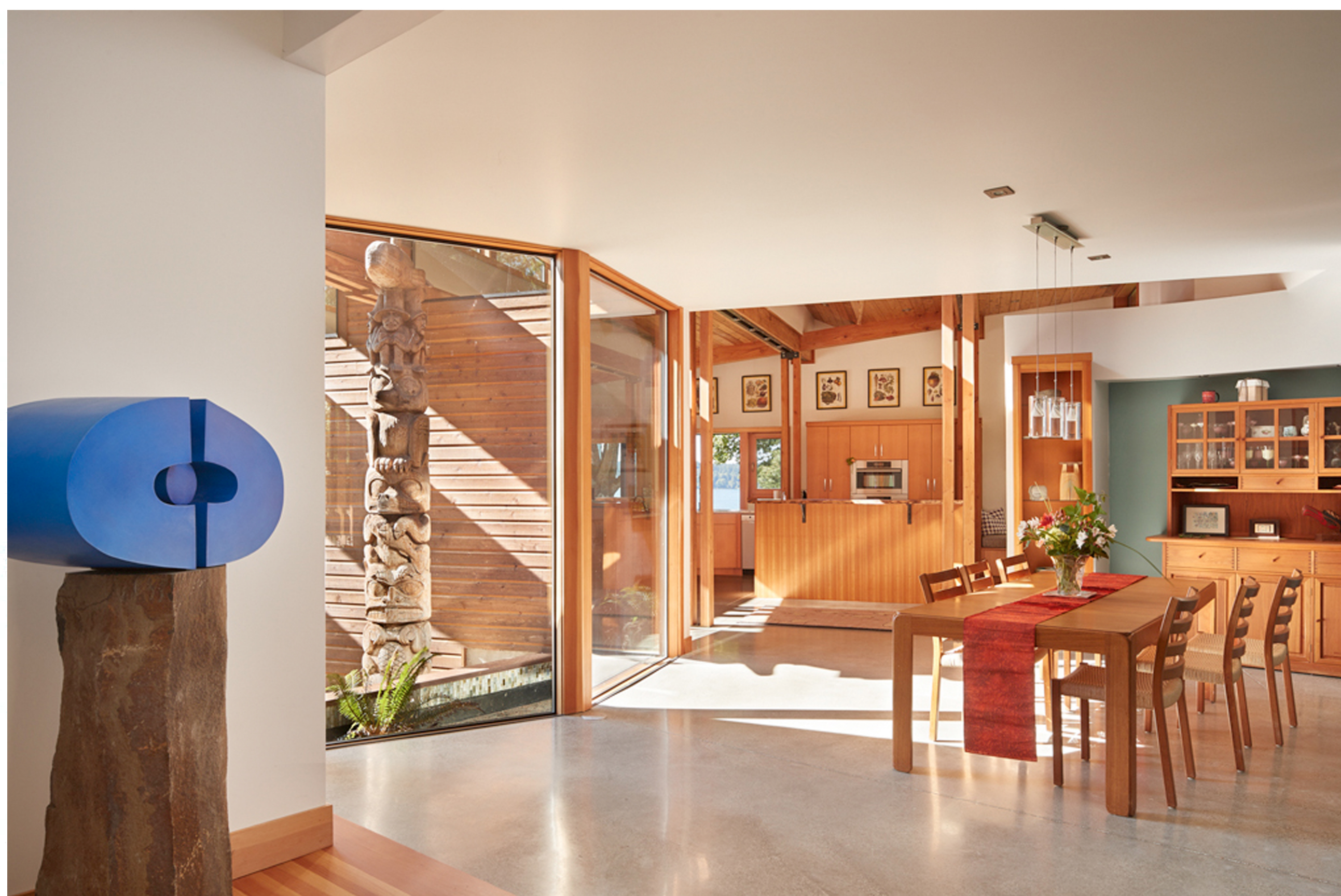
For Alan and Jan Frost, connections with a boatload of skilled contributors helped shape a uniquely shaped home whose wooden waves reach out to tranquil waters, and whose elegant details reflect people and work the Frosts know and admire — and all the things they learned.

Alan already knew how to find real estate. He discovered this special 1.8-acre bluff site on Quartermaster Harbor and instantly recognized potential in its dark, dank 1970s house, unfortunately snuggled right against the shade-throwing tree line.

Jan already knew the value of a hobby. As a cardiologist, she found high-pressure release in knitting, weaving, pottery and docent work — then she retired, and the Frosts decided to remodel and add on to that dark, dank 1970s house. And *then*, she discovered designing, decorating and a whole new sphere of decision-making. ►

BY SANDY DENEAU DUNHAM

PHOTOS BY BENJAMIN BENSCHNEIDER



REMOTE BUT CONNECTED



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Neither of them knew architect Bob Swain (Robert Edson Swain Architecture + Design) until Jan picked up “The Barefoot Home” by Marc Vassallo at a bookstore in Corvallis, Ore., where the Frosts used to live, and picked three of its profiled architects to interview.

“When Bob came, he was the only one to walk the grounds with us,” Jan says. “He said, ‘Put up your fingers like this (splayed)’ — and just like that, he had devised a plan to obscure the “eh” view of suburbia across the harbor (with a carefully sited new fireplace) and enhance the “ah” view of soothing Jensen Point Park (by reorienting the entire layout).

“This home has a remarkable setting,” Swain says. “Our design responds with appropriate exotic forms, and frames each vista. The feeling is you ►

The exterior of Alan and Jan Frost’s home was “totally transformed,” Swain says, with low-maintenance cedar; rusted steel; and Alaskan yellow cedar on selected decks, doors and trim. “Alan chose the type of siding: curved shiplap cedar,” Jan says. “And LS Cedar Company on Vashon had two pallets of Alaskan yellow cedar, and I said, ‘I want it all.’ ”



Swain responded to the coastal setting of the Frosts’ Maury Island home (built by Cascade Pacific Construction) with “exotic forms” and “sweeping ‘waves’ of monitors and clerestories.” All the monitors drain to one point to the northwest, he says, and a separate connecting roof transitions to a reflecting pool.

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Clerestories bring in "abundant sunlight," Swain says, illuminating the kitchen's terrazzo countertops. "We had seen terrazzo on floors," Jan says, "and Bob said, 'Why not have it up where you can see it?'"

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have these spectacular views, but we had to edit the view and rotate the house for better light and views."

Connection number one set everything else in motion: Add 850 square feet with a new living room, dining room and kitchen (while recladding the whole exterior and refinishing what was already there). Bring in light. Maximize those views. And,

because Alan is an orchardist and forester and Jan was a botany major: Prioritize native wood and natural materials.

Other, more personal, connections came into play next: Jan's brother did the electrical work. A friend handled the cabinetry. Alan recruited the angle-iron fabricator. One of Jan's former patients scored posts and beams from Hull-Oakes Lumber ►

The tub in the cedar-floored master bathroom might sit right next to a big window, but it's "very private," Swain says. Plus: It overlooks a lovely vine maple. The home's fusion-rich architecture, he says, is site-responsive, reflects elements of Native tradition, and mixes Asian and European influences.



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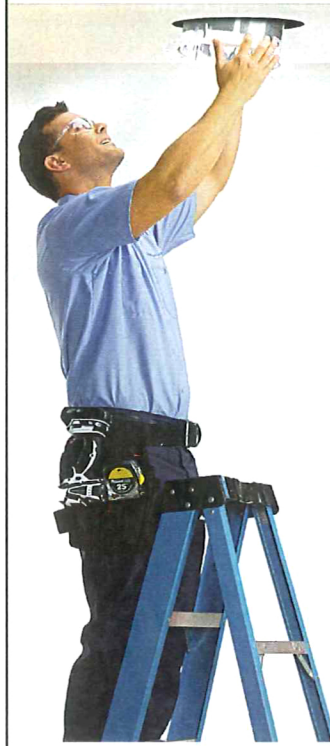


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Company, a national historic site near Corvallis. The windows behind the kitchen sink came from HH Windows & Doors, a Seattle company owned by a friend's friend's husband. Entry pieces are by Vashon Island and Corvallis artists.

"We wanted to support the people around here," Jan says. "It was really a big participation by everyone."

In the process, Jan picked up a few more hobbies. She worked with an art student from Layne Goldsmith's University of Washington art commission project, who designed rugs; did not ▶



Swain used three types of windows in the Frosts' home: "Most of the big windows are low-maintenance and coated in aluminum; only the operable ones have wood," he says. "What we move through, touch are tactile; the big, bold, open connections are different."

Swain reoriented the whole home for better light and views, and sited the fireplace (of salvaged Chinese stone, Indonesian lava basalt and Venetian plaster, with a Yangtze River limestone firebox) specifically to block views of houses across Quartermaster Harbor.



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In the living area, Swain "purposely became very expressive about structure, with columns articulated by ramps and decks, and posts that echo the indoor/outdoor connection."



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work with an interior designer to select their own beautiful furnishings; designed the brackets under the bar top in the kitchen, along with the nook and console tables; and crafted the shower curtain in the "dog bath" powder room, where the Frosts' yellow lab spiffs up.

"It was quite a process for me to learn about how things are made," Jan says. "I really had fun sourcing things."

Outside, Swain totally transformed the exterior, adding low-maintenance rusted steel and cedar. Inside, from the first step, the entry leads wandering eyes directly to a don't-miss-this presence: a 16-foot, 6-inch-tall totem pole. (Connection alert: Alan once leased a house on his Arlington orchard to a carver, who traded the totem pole for rent.)

Down the hallway — past the studio where Jan keeps "as much yarn as a store would have" —

Swain says, "Little treats remind you you're living in a beautiful place. There's a view of the whole house. The most important thing about living in a home is seeing it from the inside — most are boxes — but here you move through and don't feel like you're in a box looking out a window."

Swain "purposely became very expressive about structure," he says: The indoor-outdoor connection clicks through echoing posts, sunlight-capturing clerestories and skylights that "are like watching clouds and sky."

Every detail has a connection, and every connection has meaning.

"The house has life," Swain says. "It's not from a catalog. There are stories." ☐

Sandy Deneau Dunham writes about architecture and design for Pacific NW magazine. Reach her at sdunham@seattletimes.com or 206-464-2252. Benjamin Benschneider is a magazine staff photographer.



"Bob is not a huge fan of window seats," Jan says. (Laughs Swain: "She was a cardiologist, thinking between doing a stent: 'I think I need more window seats.'") But she is a fan, for good reason: "On Vashon, there are occasions when the ferry lines are so long, you don't want guests to wait three hours. The window seats are in case people need to sleep here." Three of them turn into twin beds.

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