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San Juan Getaway

A STUNNING HOME-AWAY-FROM-HOME

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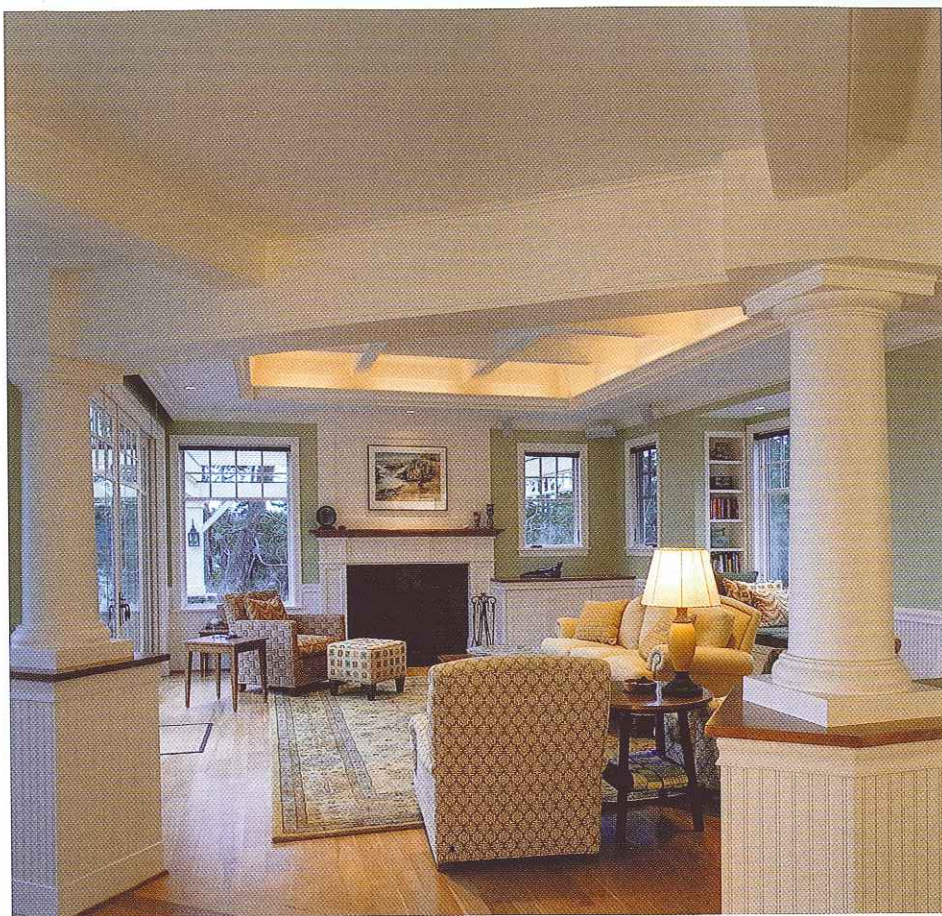


San Juan Getaway

A STUNNING HOME-AWAY-FROM-HOME NATURALLY NESTLED
IN PUGET SOUND SERENITY

By John Kirkland/Photography by Don Larkin





Growing up in Oregon, Gary Mitchell spent summers with the family of his best friend at their rustic cabin in the Cascades. The cabin, located on Forest Service land near the remote town of Brietenbush, was an idyllic retreat the boys used as a home base for hiking adventures, fishing and exploring.

If ever there was a setting for a perfect boyhood, this was it.

Years passed, and Mitchell became a successful high tech executive in Redmond. But despite his professional accomplishments, his thoughts were never far from those halcyon days in the Oregon woods — a kind of Northwest Neverland.

That was especially true as Mitchell and his wife had children of their own:

two girls and a boy. Then, through what Mitchell calls “the magic of the Internet,” he came across a property on Lopez Island, in the Puget Sound San Juan island chain.

“We fell instantly in love,” he said.

The property that caught their eye was a waterfront lot surrounded by tall windswept conifers, hiking trails, and panoramic views of Puget Sound. On the lot sat an old, dilapidated home. The home itself didn’t strike their fancy, but the location was perfect. Not only was the home site just what they had been looking for, but the island as a whole looked like it would be the perfect home away from home: congenial, bike friendly, and just far enough away from Redmond to feel like a true retreat.

Opening spread: Standing in harmony with the earth, sky and water, this Lopez Island home is the fulfillment of an idyllic dream by its owner, who spent his youth hiking in the Oregon woods.

Above: Architect Don Larkin and interior designer Autumn Donovan used pillars and niches to define spaces in an otherwise wide-open layout.

Right: A box-beam ceiling gives the home a stately feel, while the soft color palette makes it homey and comfortable.







The Mitchells toyed briefly with the idea of fixing up the old run-down home, but it soon became apparent that the best solution would be to tear it down and start fresh. The project could have incurred long months of permitting, but they alleviated that hassle by confining the home to the existing foundation.

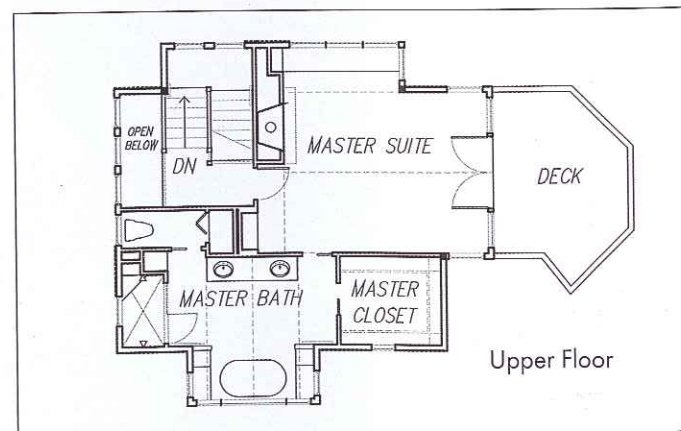
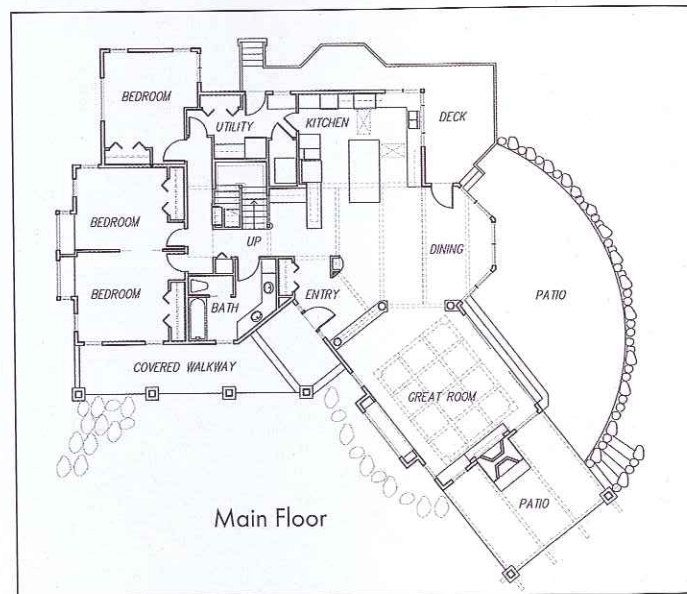
To design the project, they brought in the team of architect Don Larkin and interior designer Autumn Donovan, both of whom had worked with Tenhulzen Remodeling, Inc., when the Mitchells hired them to work on their Redmond residence. The two now work together as an independent team. The builder was Spud Grimes, a Lopez Island native.

"Our first concern was to have as low an impact on the site as possible — which is an advantage of building on the existing footprint," Larkin said. "We also wanted to take advantage of the terrific view and getting lots of natural light — in essence bringing the outdoors in."

But ostentation was out. The Mitchells wanted a gentle, unobtrusive cottage style home befitting the natural setting and the laid-back feel of the island. Larkin's design was the perfect fit: a comfortable, human-scale home that blends in with the natural landscape. He and Donovan focused on quality rather than quantity, taking their cues from the "Not So Big House" approach of author Sarah Susanka.

"That philosophy is very important to me, and I try to incorporate it into everything I do," Larkin said.

Above: Views of Puget Sound are everywhere from the entry, the kitchen and the dining room. The cook island features a seafoam green granite countertop and wrought iron pendants.





Above: Wainscoting, small-paned windows and a clawfoot tub make the master bath feel as if it could have been built a century ago.

Below: Nickel fixtures and wall sconces add to the antique atmosphere of the master bath. In the guest bath, designer Autumn Donovan included tiles with fossil imprints.

Well thought-out details in the materials and the ways in which they were used are around every corner. Larkin and Donovan incorporated bead-boarded wainscoting throughout the home, designed distinctive staircase banisters and mill posts, installed ornamental wrought iron pendants above the cook island, and included a box beam ceiling in the kitchen and great room for a stately, traditional feel. An art niche stands alone like a pillar where two wings of the house come together, defining the entry and providing a place for the eye to stop as it takes in the scope of the rest of the house.

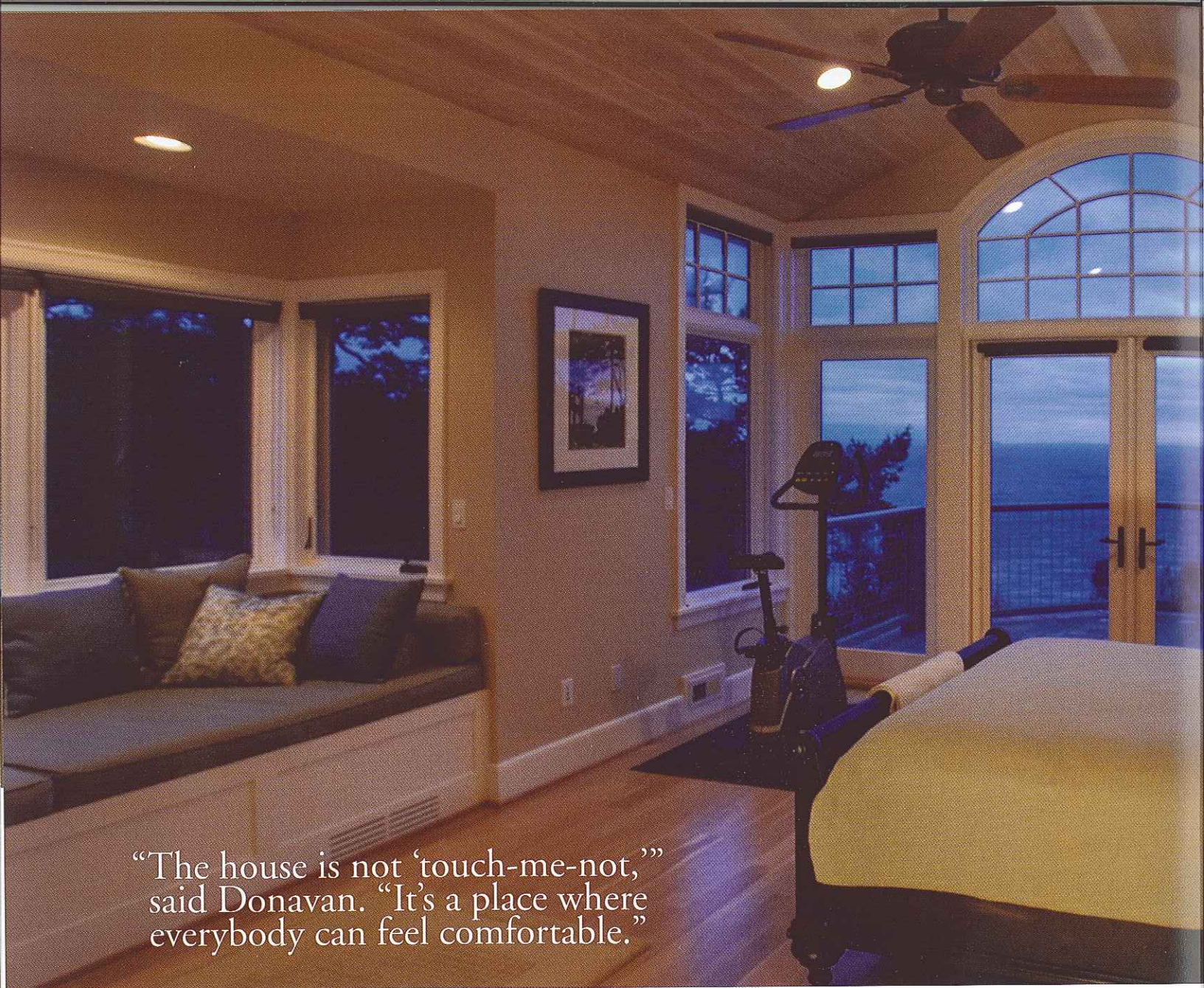
Donovan chose colors and materials that reflect the spirit of the island. The guest bathroom has tiles embedded with fossil pieces. The kitchen countertops are done in sea foam green granite that complements the soft mossy green of the main floor walls. The exterior is green with butter cream accents, and the shakes that form the siding under the gabled peaks are done in a natural stain.

"The original idea was for this to be a cottage house with the feeling of being on the coast. There was meaning in everything we put into the design," Donovan said.

The overall layout takes into consideration not just the human traffic flow, but the light and climate of the location.

"When I first arrived on the site, it was raining like crazy.

We got soaking wet. As a result of that first impression, I knew we were going to design a covered porch with a detached garage," Larkin said.



"The house is not 'touch-me-not,'" said Donovan. "It's a place where everybody can feel comfortable."



Above: The master bedroom is the only upper floor room in the house. With its window seat and private deck, it is an ideal private retreat.

Below: The family's two girls are best friends. Pocket doors connecting their bedrooms give them the option of sharing a room or having their own space.



The resulting porch runs the entire side of the house, supported by an arcade of columns. Visitors can pull their car up to the house and be assured of a dry walk up to the house. Once inside the front door, they are wowed by a view of the sound and the tree-dappled light coming in from three sides.

Within these spaces are nurturing touches that enhance the feeling of hominess. Built-in bookcases and a window seat in the great room offer a quiet, comfortable place to relax. Other window seats are built into the upstairs bedrooms, including the master, which has a cathedral ceiling, a fireplace, and French doors leading to a private deck. The Mitchell's two young girls are best friends and wanted to share a room. Larkin designed two bedrooms side by side, connected by a six-foot pocket door so that when they get older and want more privacy, they can have it. The Mitchell's son has his own room with a view to the water and the starry nighttime sky.

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|---------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|
| Builder: Russet Construction | 360-468-3647 | |
| Square Feet: 2935 sq ft | | |
| Bedrooms: Three | | |
| Baths: Two | | |
| Architect: Don Larkin, Architect PLLC | 425-466-4097 | larkinarchitecture@yahoo.com |
| Interior Designer: | | |
| Autumn Donovan Design LLC | 206-795-1088 | autumndonovandesign@hotmail.com |

HOME VENDOR LIST

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|---|----------------|----------------------------------|
| Appliances: Anderson Appliances | 1-800-500-0002 | www.andersonappliance.com |
| Cabinets: Omega Cabinetry | | www.omegacab.com |
| Carpets: Autumn Donovan Design LLC | 206-795-1088 | www.autumndonovandesign.com |
| Closet Systems: Emerald City Closets | 360-378-6960 | www.emeraldcc.com |
| Countertops: Architectural Stone Works | 206-768-8305 | |
| Interior Doors: Frank Lumber | 206-362-2311 | www.franklumberthedoorestore.com |
| Exterior Doors: Classic Window Products | 425-822-2378 | www.classicwindowproducts.com |
| Exterior Doors: Frank Lumber | 206-362-2311 | www.franklumberthedoorestore.com |
| Furniture: Ethan Allen | 425-641-3133 | www.ethanallen.com |
| Garage Doors: Gale Services | 1-800-423-7819 | |
| Lamps: Ethan Allen | 425-641-3133 | www.ethanallen.com |
| Light Fixtures: Seattle Lighting | 206-622-4736 | www.SeattleLighting.com |
| Marble & Granite: Architectural Stone Works | 206-768-8305 | |
| Mirrors & Shower Doors: Simmonds Glass | 1-800-598-0909 | www.simmondsglass.com |
| Roof: Metal: | | |
| Spencer Roofing of Sedro Wolley | 360-854-9041 | |
| Security Systems: | | |
| Security System Contractors | 360-305-0311 | |
| Sky Lights: Velux | | www.veluxusa.com |
| Stone work: "Tony Rodeghier, Masonry" | 360-385-1985 | |
| Tile: Statements tile | 206-762-8181 | www.statements tile.com |
| Vacuum System: Central Systems | 1-888-475-2423 | www.easyllo.com |
| Windows: Classic Window Products | 425-822-2378 | www.classicwindowproducts.com |
| Window Treatments: Pacific Window Coverings | 425-644-9524 | www.pacificwindowcoverings.com |

"The house is not 'touch-me-not,'" said Donovan. "It's a place where everybody can feel comfortable."

That includes plenty of guests. The Mitchells love to invite friends and family to the island, and in good weather they spend as much time as possible outside — especially on the home's spacious deck with outdoor fireplace. Visitors to the Mitchell home can look forward to sea kayaking, hiking, archery, or just kicking back and enjoying the quiet.

The remoteness of the island, necessitating many long ferry trips to complete the job, made this a two-year project. But the time spent was well worth it.

"We had a vision of our kids growing up here in the summers, but we also get out here whenever we can during the school year," Mitchell said. "When they're here they get to experience the stewardship of a beautiful environment." ♦