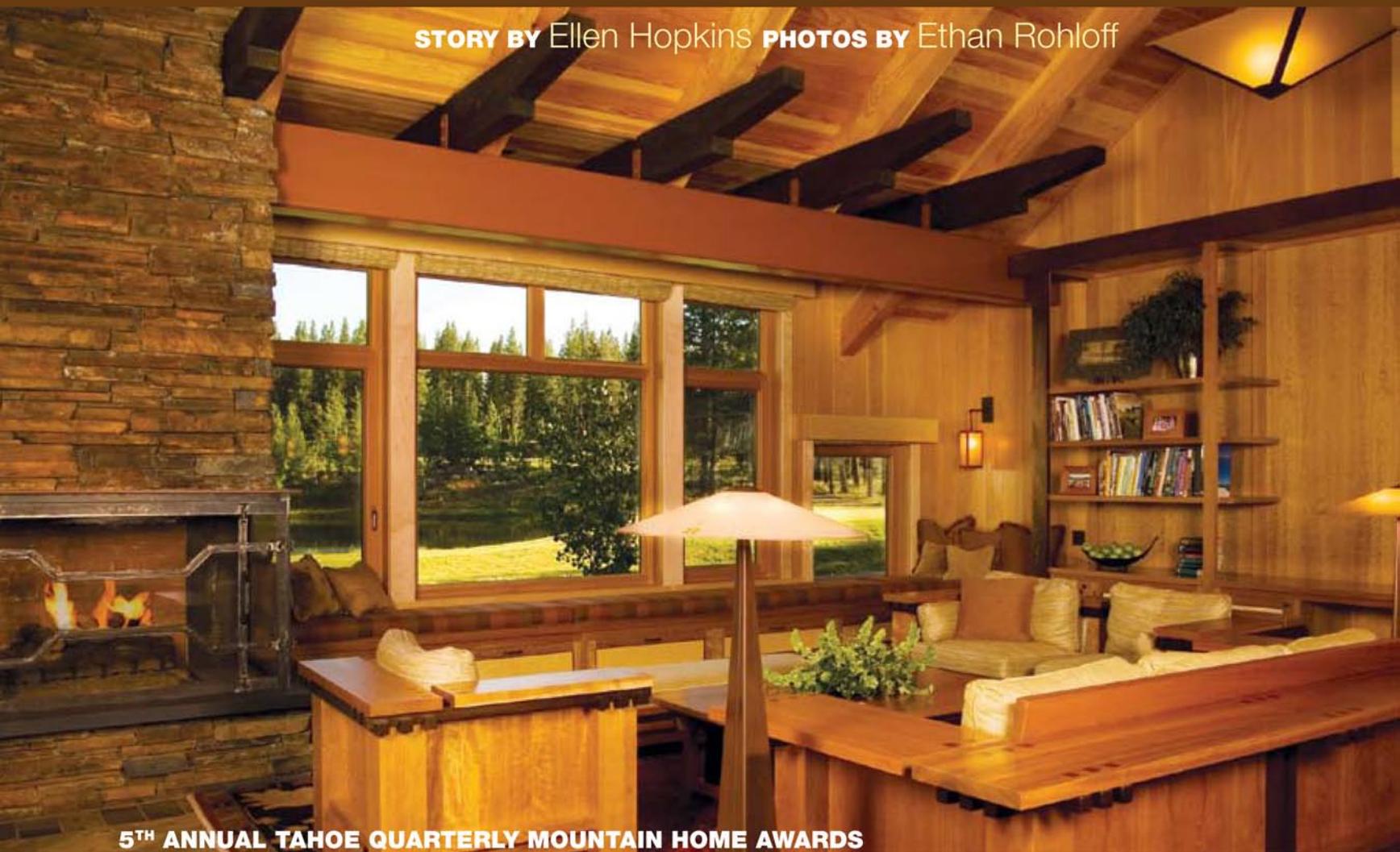


arts & crafts masterpiece

Divine in the. Details

STORY BY Ellen Hopkins PHOTOS BY Ethan Rohloff



5TH ANNUAL TAHOE QUARTERLY MOUNTAIN HOME AWARDS

ARCHITECT: Scott Ryan and David Horan, Ryan Group Architects

BUILDER: Tony Hardy Construction **INTERIOR DESIGN:** Ryan Group Architects



The House at Lake Douglas pulls elements from Arts and Crafts-style architecture yet creates a mountain modern aesthetic all its own.



LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Silvertip Landscape SQUARE FEET: 6,000
YEAR COMPLETED: 2006



Cork flooring and exposed structural supports complement the warm palette of the upstairs guest suite.

The house stretches horizontally, low to the ground, yet maintains a Tahoe vernacular.

As a longtime Truckee architectural firm, Ryan Group Architects is no stranger to challenges. Weather. Slope. Erosion. Stringent building restrictions. The combination of these hurdles and others poses design and building problems relatively unique to the area. But for Ryan Group, the House at Lake Douglas presented a special difficulty.

"The just over a half-acre building site was relatively devoid of mature trees. In fact, there was exactly one 28-inch pine," says Ryan Group principal and project architect David Horan. "The trick was how to build a site-appropriate 6,000 square foot home that wouldn't stand out like it didn't belong there."

"There" is the adjacent 200-yard uphill third hole on Lahontan Golf Club's par-3 course and nearby water retention

basin, now affectionately dubbed "Lake Douglas."

The lot's owners wanted a house reminiscent of Greene & Greene American Arts and Crafts-style architecture and referred to the iconic Gamble House throughout design and construction. But most importantly, they wanted a home suitable for family living. "We didn't think much of architectural titles," says the owner, "but focused more on the basics of the style: the variety and richness of materials, the detailing and how the home fits into the land."

The homeowners, who prefer to remain anonymous, introduced themselves to the Ryan Group in the year 2000. Horan describes them as family-oriented people who love Tahoe. "Everything [the owner] touches, he's good at," says Horan. "He's an avid golfer and an epic snow skier who's heavily involved in the Squaw

Valley master's ski racing program."

The connection between the family and Ryan Group was immediate, but the initial timing was wrong. "When we first met, our firm couldn't start on the project right away," Horan says. "The owners decided to wait awhile, rather than find another firm." The wait was worth it for both. "It was, quite simply, an honor to work with them. They were patient, flexible about schedules and willing to let us explore ideas."

Tony Hardy Construction was chosen to build. Construction began in 2003 under the watchful eye of foreman Tracy Hartenstein. "Tracy was written into the agreement early on," says Horan. "We'd worked with him on several projects before, and there was a certain level of detail—woodworking, joinery, et cetera—that we knew he could accomplish." It was a two-and-a-half-year project, and the

contractor's ninth build in Lahontan, says Tony Hardy Construction president Tony Hardy. "We believe that the connection between architect and owner is critical," he says, "so we have a foreman on-site from groundbreaking to finish."

Outside, the house makes generous use of Sierra antique basalt with the parallel lines of ashlar patterning. The flat, rectangular stones reflect the home's horizontal emphasis, and were carefully laid by Truckee mason Paul Johansen of Johansen Masonry. Horan says the patterning works well for the overall concept. "With every Ryan Group project, we try to find the golden thread to weave throughout. Here, there's a play between how the horizontal interacts with the vertical elements. It's simple geometry, and very effective."

But the home's geometry is perceived mostly on the subconscious level, unlike the play between stone, wood and steel, which Horan says is one of the most unique aspects of the project. "Look at the size of the house, and how it's broken up with spans of beams. In Arts and Crafts-style homes, you don't usually see a lot of steel, but in this house, there's a fair amount exposed. It's very expressive of what we were trying to accomplish. We took the roots—the massing, scale, warmth and materials—of the Arts and Crafts style and weaved them with what we affectionately call 'mountain modern.'"

The resulting aesthetic of exposed steel not only gives the home a modern twist but further drives the horizontal theme. With steel being a thinner structural element than wood, the architects were able to most simply express the structure and capitalize on views, Horan says.

Five significantly different outdoor living spaces capture the sun at different times of day, and offer varied vistas, including a magnificent view of Lookout Mountain and Northstar-at-Tahoe. An open fire pit and exterior fireplace utilize the same ashlar patterning on chimneys, columns and walls, to stunning effect. Steel posts and beams weave effortlessly with wood elements, including shake siding on some walls.

Bob and Cathy Crawford of Truckee's Silvertip Landscape provided the



Even the staircase—vertical by nature—adopts the horizontal motif.

landscape design. “Bob, Cathy and I would go from the golf course to the house, appropriately placing the trees,” Horan says. “Our goal was to accent the architecture without overwhelming it or the views.”

Inside, the focal point is the incredibly detailed staircase connecting the two floors. Clerestory lighting all around adds an air of graciousness and draws the eye immediately. “The staircase is the heart of this home. You’d almost like to hang out on it. It is ‘staircase as a stage,’ as described by Christopher Alexander in his book *A Pattern Language*,” says Horan, who adds that his firm often gives the book to clients so that they can pick patterns and themes to inspire the design.

From this central masterpiece, one

is drawn to the home’s upper level, where the main living areas take advantage of the views. Upstairs are the kitchen, great room, guest bedroom, master bedroom and office. All boast a beautiful juxtaposition of glass, wood, contrasting tile and bronze-clad windows. Downstairs, two bedrooms, a media room and a sleeping alcove echo the second floor detailing.

“Overall, the house has simple geometries, with strong, sheltering roof lines,” says Horan. “And although it has a fair amount of places, they don’t feel fussy. The details really stand out.”

Horan says that while he was the main project designer, every member of Ryan Group participated in some way. “We are most definitely a team. We all have

strengths that we lend to each and every project.” Namely, he credits partner Scott Ryan. “Scott and I collaborate on all our designs. He is the big thinker.”

Through the course of the project, the owners became close with Horan, who skied and golfed with them. “We had a very productive, open and consistent relationship,” says the owner. Horan, too, adds that the collaborative effort cannot be underestimated. “With any project, there are three major things: time, money and quality. When I asked them to rank the three, they told me, ‘Easy: Quality. Quality. Quality.’ These are some of the finest people I’ve worked with in my career, and I’m grateful to have had them as clients—and friends.”

The home’s main living areas are on the second floor to take advantage of the views.



Five outdoor spaces—each with a different name inspired by its view—capture the sun at various times of the day.