

**Bill and Joyce Carpenter
Craglough House
Tabernash, Colorado
Answers to Questions Posed by *Dream Builders***

Why did you build in this property or this community?

I am a professor at the University of South Florida. In 1982, I took a 15 month sabbatical leave from USF to work at a government research lab in Boulder, Colorado. During that year, Joyce and I and our three children began skiing at the Winter Park Resort. We fell in love with the Winter Park area. The area was less developed than many of the other ski areas in the state which gave it a charm that we liked. Also, because it was not as developed, we were able to afford to buy some land there. Dennis Saffell (now a prominent realtor in the Grand County area, but then a young realtor just beginning to establish himself) showed us a 40 acre piece of land along the Fraser River. The land was one mile up a death defying forest service road with utilities a mile away. However, the land had the Fraser River, beautiful views of the mountains, part of a meadow, and a seasonal stream. We thought this was the site on which we wanted to build.

It took us several years to pay for the land and save some money to build a house. Then, one day we decided to have a picnic on a rock outcropping on neighboring land also for sale by Dennis Saffell. The views from that outcropping were outstanding. It was then that I decided that this was the place to build a house. I asked my 8 year old son, "Stefan, should we build now or buy this land." He replied, "Dad, you can always build a house but you can't always get more land." Thus based on the wisdom of an 8 year old, we bought 30 more acres from Dennis. This purchase gave us 3/4 mile of river frontage, all of the lovely 20-30 acre meadow along the river, lots of "mountain goat land", and the rock outcropping that rises several hundred feet above the meadow where the house now sits.

What kind of home were you looking for when you decided to custom build?

Lord Armstrong was a British industrialist who made a fortune manufacturing munitions for use in the Boer War and World War I. He built a magnificent house named Cragside, in the moors of Northumberland in northern England in an area that was felt at that time to be unbuildable. I taught for 3 years in northern England and Joyce is from that area. As a small girl living in the industrial town of Wallsend, Joyce had visited Cragside and dreamed of living one day in such a house. She introduced me to Lord Armstrong's beautiful house and grounds and it became our joint fantasy to build a home fashioned after Cragside. When we talked with our architect, David Elfring, we requested that he build us a house in the style of Cragside.

When the architect first showed you his plans, how did you react?

David Elfring is a wonderful architect. He listened carefully to what we wanted. He also had studied in England and was familiar with the style of architecture we wanted. When he did the preliminary drawings, they were exactly in the style that we desired. Originally, we were looking for a modest house around 3000 sq. feet. His house was around 5000 sq. ft. but we loved it so much that we proceeded. We made changes and additions during construction and several years later made another addition to the house. The house is now around 9000 sq. ft. and we love it all.

Were you prepared for the challenges of the build?

Absolutely not. We had never built a house before and had no idea of the problems of building in an undeveloped area in the mountains. Fortunately, we had a skilled and experienced builder, Bill Vickroy, who overcame a great number of difficulties.

If we had proceeded in a logical fashion, we would have improved the forest service road to the house site, then brought in electricity and the phone, drilled the well, and then begun construction on the house. However, we did not proceed in this fashion! I had assumed that there would be no problem with improving the forest service road. In addition since I could see a power pole in the meadow across the river, I had also assumed that there would be no difficulty in getting power and a phone line to the house. Thus based on these assumption, we proceeded with construction with neither an improved road nor an electricity supply. The following paragraphs describe the problems which arose from my misguided assumptions:

- **Forest service road:** It took over a year to get government permission to improve the road. Finally, permission was granted on the condition that an archaeologist be present during grading to ensure that no Native American artifacts, if present, were disturbed. Grading uncovered a Native American camp site which required radioactive dating of fire mound ashes and subsequent rerouting of the road. Unbelievably, Bill Vickroy, the builder, managed to transport building materials up the road prior to improvement.
- **Electricity:** As it happened, the owner of the meadow across the river would not give us right-of-way to tap into the electricity pole on his property. Thus, we had to bring power for several miles along Highway 84 and the forest service road to the property, a process which required obtaining right-of-ways from numerous home owners and the Bureau of Land Management. I don't think we would have ever obtained power if we hadn't had the help of Dennis Saffell, who sold us the land. With his help we got permission from the Bureau of Land Management and all home-owners but one to bring in power. The one reluctant homeowner objected to our plan because he disliked the sight of power poles and we therefore agreed to bury the power line within viewing distance of his property. During these negotiations, Bill Vickroy was building the house using only the power of generators. As we had no power to pump water from the well, the stone masons were forced to get water from the stream at the bottom of the hill with which to mix their mortar.
- **Phone:** It took four years and considerable expense to get a land telephone. In the interim, we used a cellular phone system. Unfortunately however, the area has terrible reception and the cellular phones were a great frustration, even with the antenna which we installed on the roof. The saga of the effort it took to get a phone to the house would take several pages so I will not detail it here.

Did you help choose the materials?

Yes. We chose all of the materials for the house. As a partial list we selected

- plumbing fixtures
- bathroom and kitchen tiles

- floor finishes
- lights
- kitchen and bathroom cabinets
- framing around windows and doors
- fireplace mantels from Afghanistan door and window surrounds
- stonework
- plaster finish
- Joyce furnished the house herself without the help of a designer

Did you supervise the build or make a lot of visits to the site?

No. We live in Florida and I was working during the several years of construction. David Elfring, the architect, supervised construction. We were fortunate that the contractor, Bill Vickroy, does quality work. Bill and David have worked together on the construction of other custom homes and have great respect for each others' work. We had complete confidence in their integrity and ability to carry out the project.

How did you and the builder work together on the home?

Very well. We worked together as a team. Fortunately, Bill Vickroy has a sense of humor and listens well. He wanted to give us what we wanted and likes quality as much as we do. I have heard stories of owners and builders hating each other by the end of construction. This situation did not happen to us. We became friends with our builder.

Was the final product a success?

Definitely. We are very pleased.

What makes your home unique?

There are a number of features that make the house unique.

- The house is situated on 70 wilderness acres and is bounded by state and national forest and the Fraser River. It is situated on a rock outcropping several hundred feet above a large meadow. However, one can see the town of Tabernash from the house so that the house does not feel isolated. We are able to hike, mountain bike, cross country ski, snowshoe, and fish right from the house. From the house, we have seen deer, elk, foxes, coyotes, bear, porcupine, marmot, badger, chipmunks beyond measure, and in the summer humming birds at the feeders. For several years two coyotes raised their young not more than 100 yards from the house and when my friend and I played our recorders, the pups accompanied us with their howling.
- Even though the house is new, it appears as if it has been there for many years. One day when I was talking with a delivery man, he asked me how was it to live in one of the original houses in the valley.
- David Elfring, the architect, did a wonderful job of making the house harmonize with its surroundings.
- I wanted the house to convey a sense of strength and solidarity to match the rock outcroppings nearby. Thus, much of the house's exterior walls are of stone and the balconies are held up by massive stone pillars.
- The house has 4 fireplaces. There is a stone fireplace in the caretaker's apartment. The

massive stone fireplace in the upstairs living room is crafted with natural lichen covered rocks forming a sunburst design. The fireplace in the lower living room has a mantle made from an antique carved Afghanistan door surround. The mantle is carved with elephants, griffins, and mythical birds and these designs are reflected in the Arts and Crafts tile work of the hearth and surrounds. The mantel for the fireplace in the master bedroom suite was created from an antique triple arched Afghanistan window frame. The tile work of the hearth is Art Nouveau.

- Two of the principal activities of our family and friends when in the home are socializing while preparing food and eating. The kitchen was designed to accommodate many people at work. The kitchen is a wonderful gathering place. It is a comfortable mix of modern equipment and British turn of the century design utilizing stone walls, beamed ceiling, and alder cabinets. The kitchen is large, light and airy, and affords wonderful views of the valley and the peaks beyond.
- The dining room connects to the kitchen by a pass-through made from an antique Peruvian door. The entrance to the dining room is through double arches, the floor is a lattice of 100 year old Southern pine planking and saltillo tile, the ceiling is supported by massive rough hued beams, and the chandeliers are from an old mansion in Seattle. The dining room table which seats 12 and the dining room chairs were custom made in Southwestern style. The back wall of the dining room is formed from French doors which open onto a balcony with a marvelous view of the valley. When the doors are open, it feels like one is eating outdoors. The dining room has the feeling of a Mexican hacienda.
- I jokingly told David Elfring, the architect, that I wanted to look at the mountains when I took a bath. He took me at my word and provided a huge bathtub with tub to ceiling windows so that I can survey all of the countryside. Privacy while bathing is not an issue where we live.

What are your favorite parts of the house?

- Kitchen: Joyce is a gourmet cook and all of our family and friends love to eat. Naturally then, the kitchen is a vital part of the household activities. It is equipped with 4 ovens and an 8 burner Viking stove. A dominant feature of the kitchen is a 10 ft. antique Irish servants' table where family and friends help in food preparation, eat, and spend hours in discussion.
- Studio: We felt that it was important that there should be an area where people could indulge in messy activities such as painting and pottery. Thus, we created a large studio with skylights and floor to ceiling windows. The athletes in the family use it as a workout room and, when we are at the house for longer periods of time, Joyce grows her tomatoes there.
- Pool room and spa room: Probably the favorite area for the younger members of the family are the pool room and the spa room.
- Living room: There is usually someone in residence in the upper living room. It is not unusual, at any time of the day, to find someone reading or napping by the fireside.

How do you use the space?

Joyce is British and grew up in a home where rooms had doors to preserve heat and delineate space. The house reflects her British culture in that, although the house has an open feel with high ceilings and large rooms, it is possible to close off all rooms to create privacy and quiet.

- Recognizing the needs of different age groups, the house has two living rooms each with a fireplace. The main floor living room is designed for reading, conversing, doing jigsaw puzzles, and family games. The lower floor living room is designed for watching TV and videos. Having two living rooms insures that, even with a large group of people, there is a place for all to engage in their chosen activity, either alone or in the company of others.
- To enhance the feeling of privacy, each bedroom has its own bathroom and is large enough to accommodate an easy chair and table.
- The master suite occupies the entire top floor and consists of a bedroom, sitting room, study, grand bathroom, and walk in closet. We are able to relax and work in this area even when the house is full of guests.

What are your favorite features?

The house is designed so that one can join with others yet find privacy when ever one needs it. Joyce used carefully chosen furnishings to create a different character for each of the rooms so we frequently find our guests studying the details of a room and asking "Where did that come from?" We particularly like to look at our collection of objects on the living room bookshelves because they remind me of our travels and life together. It is easy to lose oneself in the views of the mountains, meadow, stream, and canyon visible from the rooms and to become fascinated by the constantly changing weather patterns as they move through the valley.

What do the neighbors say about the house?

We have no immediate neighbors but our friends tell us that the house is referred to as the "castle."

How do you feel when you "come home" after a trip?

We remain astonished by the beauty of the house and its views. A sense of peace permeates the house and this tranquility induces an immediate feeling of relaxation. It is hard to be unhappy in this house.

Why is this home a special place to you?

The house is special to us because we had always wanted to live in the mountains and because we chose together the home site, the house concept, and the furnishings. Because our family and friends are very important to us, we wanted a place where we could all gather together and, as we hoped, this home has proven to be such a place. It is difficult to describe how much fun and laughter has occurred in this house.