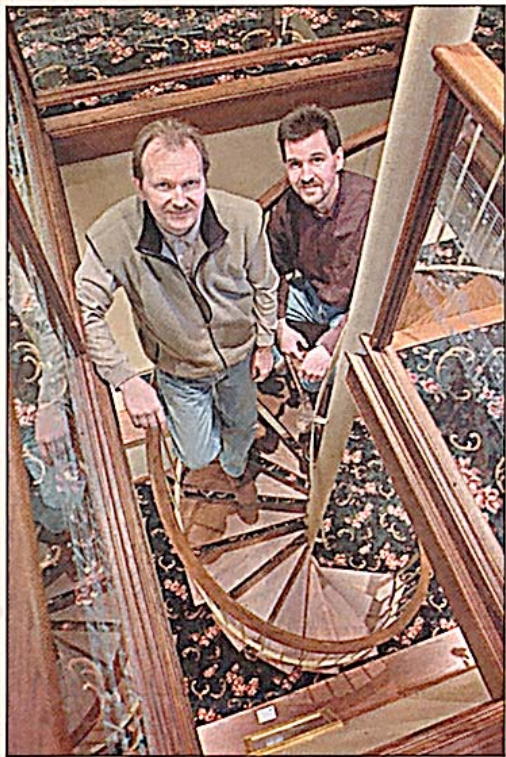


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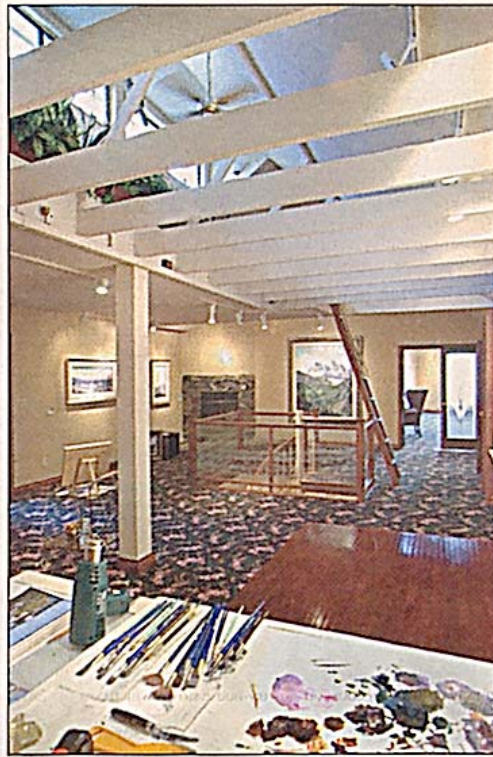
CAPITAL NEWS



PHOTOS BY GORDON BAZZANA



ARTIST ROGER ARDNT (right) with his brother Allen in what was a little farmhouse which they have converted into a sleek and elegant bungalow of grand proportions. The salon provides gallery space for Roger's works as well as space where public events can be held.



This home is where the art is

BY JULIE CONGRAVE
CAPITAL NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Roger and Allen Arndt can point to the spot where the kitchen door once stood. The vanished doorway is the one they shuffled through at dawn each morning when their grandfather called them down to begin another long, hot day of cherry picking or garden weeding.

They remember exactly where their work boots stood waiting in the hall on those long ago and chilly summer mornings. And they know precisely where their grandmother stood at the stove preparing the breakfast that would see them through another morning in the family orchard.

That was then. This is now.

The old farmhouse is still there in the foundation and in

the framework of several rooms. And in the brothers' memories. But what the visitor sees is a serene, contemporary house with an enviable setting, a spectacular view and trim landscaping. The little farmhouse is now a sleek and elegant bungalow of grand proportions.

But this house is not a home. Instead, it's a remarkable studio and salon where Roger creates landscape paintings that sell world-wide while Allen directs the sales and marketing.

Recently, the house has become more public, serving as a destination for events like an Okanagan Music Society concert when seats for more than 50 people were set out in the salon and adjoining slate-tiled foyer. The brothers plan to open the house for many more functions in the future, envisioning elegant affairs

like the concert evening as well as farm-oriented tours and garden events.

In 1986, when the brothers decided that the old farmhouse might make a good studio space, they first envisioned a quick tidy-up and perhaps several thousand dollars in wiring and cosmetic changes.

"Everything was major, though," laughs Allen. "We boarded and re-wired. Twenty thousand dollars later we realized it was serious."

Beginning with the old house whose very building lumber was timber felled on the property many years ago, the brothers expanded the space to 4500 square feet.

"We were always running out of room," says Allen. "Renovations just led to more renovations."

It is difficult to believe that the elegant salon with its

vast fireplace was the tractor shed. Or that the cozy lower level that will become a panelled library was once the bunker-like concrete foundation for their grandfather's garage. Incredible that Roger's airy and serene studio space was once the kitchen where peaches were canned and thousands of farmhouse meals prepared.

An architect came on board at one point, helping the brothers to formalize the design they envisioned. The sustaining image was of a sort of gentlemen's club—an atmosphere based on a love and appreciation of art and music.

Judy Windrem, a local decorator who consulted on colour and design put their vision in words, says Allen.

"She said, 'you want an old boys club where women feel at home,' and she was

right," he says. "She helped us choose colours and finishes for that theme."

Throughout the house there are creative details to charm and delight the eye. The dramatic stairwell enclosure that stands precisely where Grandma's cookstove once stood, illustrates the point. Here, three-foot high glass panels have been etched with the complete score of a favourite classical piece. This imaginative task was "easy" to accomplish the brothers insist.

Details are important to the Arndts. The salon fireplace for instance, was inspired by a photograph in a magazine. Using the apparent height of chairs set before the fireplace in the illustration, they determined the approximate dimensions of the fireplace. Then they reproduced it. A friend hand-carved the

magnificent surround using Honduras mahogany to create a faithful replica of the fireplace in the photograph. Generously sized wing chairs drawn up to the fireplace complete the scene.

Anchored by the massive fireplace, the salon provides gallery space for Roger's works as well as space for public events like the music concert when a grand piano was brought in as well. At Christmas, a fifteen foot tree stands in the high-ceilinged room.

Another artist friend created a second dramatic fireplace for Roger's studio.

With a firm sense of the ambience they want for the house, the Arndts are content to wait for some things that are beyond the budget at the moment. They would like to

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Like a newly planted tree, a house takes time to develop

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use the Honduras mahogany for beams and doors in the studio, but since the wood is not only beautiful but costly, that will have to wait. The space downstairs, slated to become a library with floor to ceiling bookcases, is vacant for now. But they know exactly how it will look and the quality of materials they'll use for the project.

They plan to make the library available for small meetings or private dinners.

"There isn't an artist's

studio like this anywhere," says Allen.

The exterior of the house hints at the serenity and style inside. An arcade approach to the front door features a roofline and pillars reminiscent of early Canadian-railway-station-style.

"We wanted it to feel traditional," Allen says. "Solid. We didn't want a fly by night look."

As they "grow" the house and its surroundings toward the vision, the brothers are content to invest time and much backbreaking effort.

Recently, they moved 40 truckloads of rock to the front of the property, creating a rock garden entry that will soon feature a pond and waterfall. When a half-ton rock looked out of place, they fired up the front-end loader and moved it to a more satisfying spot near the curve of the front steps.

Ultimately, their project will be a work of art that reaches back to encompass the roots of the family farm and orchard. They envision a destination where city dwellers can tour the

orchards, wander through working gardens and visit an on-site market.

This all takes time. Recalling those long-ago mornings of orchard work

with Grandpa, Allen points to the recently replanted cherry orchard to explain their patience with this long-term project.

"It's the way a tree

grows," he says. "You don't pick cherries the first season."

If you live in or know of a house that might make a good story contact Julie at 868-2433 or cosgraves@shaw.ca