

A photograph of a modern interior space. The ceiling is made of curved wooden planks. In the foreground, a grey corduroy sofa sits on a dark, slatted coffee table. In the background, a dining table with black chairs is set with a bowl of lemons. A kitchen area with a stainless steel refrigerator and wooden cabinetry is visible. Large windows on the right side offer a view of the outdoors. The overall atmosphere is warm and contemporary.

Haven in

CURVED AROUND ITS SITE, Carl and Marge Bunch's home unfolds gradually as you walk from end to end.

From the moment I saw the homes designed by William Turnbull, Jr., at Sea Ranch, Calif., I knew I wanted him to design a house for me. This, however, was in the 1960s. I was fresh out of law school, and I should

have realized I wasn't ready—nor could I afford—to have this well-regarded architect build my dream home.

Still, young and undaunted, I called his firm and was fortunate enough to get Bill Turnbull on the phone. We met, visited some sites, and discussed our ideas for house designs. It went no further than that, but I was hooked. I never deviated from the notion that I wanted to live in a Turnbull house. It just took me 35 years to get there.

Quality of design, quality of life

Turnbull, along with a number of other architects, broke new ground with the development of Sea Ranch, a condominium community on the California coast about 100 miles north of San Francisco (see sidebar, p. 32). What impressed me from the start—and what Sea Ranch ultimately became known for—was the architects' attitude toward placing structures in the landscape and the shedlike design they developed that allowed the buildings to blend into their surroundings.

Those qualities were still foremost in my mind when I made my second call to Turnbull, in the mid-1990s. By then I had purchased some land in the Mayacamas Mountains of Napa County—rugged hillside above the wine country, thick with live oaks, madrones, firs, and manzanita bushes. It wasn't seacoast, but it had the same rough, uneven quality, and I knew any house Bill

BY CARL BUNCH



LONG VALLEY VIEWS
Most of the windows face downhill (left) to views of the Napa Valley. The uphill side of the house, where the entrance is, faces two garages and a guest house and has few windows (below).

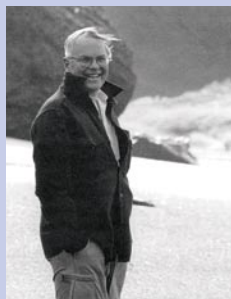


the Hills

A simple house wraps around a hillside, blending with its surroundings while embracing the view

SEA RANCH STYLE

Located 100 miles north of San Francisco, Sea Ranch was developed in the 1960s as a coastal community whose homes were designed to accommodate rather than dominate the dramatic natural landscape. The architectural firm of MLTW (Charles Moore, Donlyn Lyndon, William Turnbull, Jr., and Richard Whitaker) designed the first cluster of condominiums on the site. The square, shedlike buildings took their cues from the fall of the land rather than from architectural convention, with redwood exteriors left to weather naturally and windows placed to take advantage of the views rather than adhere to a preconceived configuration.



William Turnbull, Jr.

Those stylistic elements along with the Sea Ranch philosophy of development in partnership with the land would exert a strong influence on residential architecture into the 1970s as similar shedlike structures cropped up on wooded lots across the country. In 1991, the MLTW-designed Condominium One was awarded the American Institute of Architects' Twenty-Five Year Award for a single structure of enduring architectural excellence.

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Condominium One set the tone for the Sea Ranch development.



NO OBSTACLES
There are few doors to divide the Bunch's 2,500-square-foot home, allowing the interior spaces and beamed ceiling to read as one continuous space. Above, the dining room segues seamlessly into the main living area.

designed would be just right for the property. More than anything, I wanted a house built of simple materials that reflected the Sea Ranch ideals—one that blended into the landscape and took advantage of the marvelous vista of the surrounding hills and valleys.

Our needs, the architect's blueprint

Beyond that, my wife, Marge, and I had minimal requirements for our new house, and we had such confidence in Bill's work that we gave him carte blanche. We wanted a simple, single-story, one-bedroom house that was easy to maintain and could be left unattended for long periods of time while we traveled. As it turned out, the bank wanted two bedrooms, so we



READER'S RETREAT
An Eames chair snuggled against a bookcase (above) gives this reading area a sense of seclusion, even though it's part of the living room. At left, the accordionlike arrangement of windows on the downhill side of the house allows views in all directions.

added a downstairs bedroom and bath. We also wanted a Japanese influence. I've always appreciated that serene minimalism and use of natural materials. It was an aesthetic that seemed to fit naturally with Bill's simple approach.

The house Bill designed for us embraced all these requirements. Its simple, one-room-deep design wraps around a small but steep knoll on the property. Its exterior is plain, unpainted cedar. The house has 54 windows, most of which open to magnificent views of the countryside below.

Letting the landscape dictate

Not surprisingly, Bill's approach to designing our home began with finding the best site on the property. I had suggested a south-facing site on the eastern slope, where

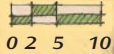
PART OF THE SCENERY *As he did with other homes, architect William Turnbull designed the Bunch house to nestle into the hillside, a quality emphasized by the live oak emerging from the living room deck.*



FAR-REACHING VIEWS

Architect William Turnbull, Jr., designed the Bunch house to wrap around the hillside on which it is perched, maximizing picturesque downslope views by locating most of its 54 windows on that side. There, the steep hillside drops away, allowing far-reaching views despite the surrounding trees. The Bunches initially planned to include only the level shown, but they added a lower-level bedroom and bath at the request of their bank.

Scale in ft.



the house would get daytime sun and where we could enjoy long valley views from our windows. Bill, noting the slope of the hill as well as the surrounding firs and madrones, suggested we wait six months and revisit the site in December. His instinct was right—the steepness of the wooded property kept our sunny summer site cloaked in shadow during the fall and winter. We decided then to position the house on a part of the slope that was more out in the open. This was a smart move—the new site gets more sun later in the year—and more economical too, in that it placed the house closer to an existing driveway and power sources as well as to a pool and little guesthouse already on the property.

Situated on a knoll, our house was designed to wrap around the hill, making it appear to be just another part of the landscape. This natural quality is emphasized by the mature oak that was left to grow through the deck off the living room (bottom photo, p. 33). Since there was virtually no other level ground on the property, we flattened a small area behind the house to create a court-

The solution to building was to make and zig-zag it

yard between it and two small garages set into the hill, one of which contains a workshop and laundry.

The uphill, or entry, side of the house has few windows, but the downhill side, which looks out over the surrounding hills, has accordion-pleated walls whose windows allow expansive views and let light in from nearly every angle (top left photo, p. 33). Bill's solution to building on the steep site was to make the house just one room deep and zig-zag it around the hill.

Although we had anticipated having picture windows like those on Sea Ranch houses, Bill placed divided-light sashes in the windows throughout, in keeping with the Napa Valley farmhouse style he had embraced in the years since. Those homes, modeled on farm buildings, are notable for their sheltering roofs, more traditional windows, and beamed ceilings. The windows were fine with us—we thought it would be nice to have more of a rustic wine-country look, and it was one of the ways we were willing to depart from our Sea Ranch ideal.

“We liked the simplicity of Bill Turnbull’s designs and thought this quality would fit well on our property.” — Carl Bunch



A WELCOME GREETING



on the steep site the house just one room deep around the hill.

Another departure was the beamed ceiling we wanted. Crafted with 2x10 Douglas fir rafters, the ceiling shifts with each angle in the roof, lending an almost sculptural quality to the interior. It takes advantage of the open floor plan, playing out its pattern uninterrupted from one end of the house to the other.

Incorporating a Japanese influence

Bill's design approach offered some of the aesthetic of Japanese design, bringing our home a sense of peace and quiet. We enhanced that by adding touches of our own. For example, we used pocket doors for most of the interior entryways to save space and emphasize the Japanese characteristics of the house. The pocket door to the master bedroom, painted an elegant red (photo, pp. 36–37), is an idea I picked up from a book on contemporary Japanese house design. For the walls, we used drywall painted white to maximize interior

Visitors are greeted by a modern interpretation of the Japanese *tokonoma*, or display alcove. Constructed as a large cabinet, it not only fulfills its traditional role as a showcase for art but also provides storage for coats and boots (above right). Beneath the display shelf, a metal-lined cabinet with doors on both sides (below left) shortens the trip between the outdoors and the wood-burning stove on the opposite side. Compartments on the living room side conceal stereo equipment (below right).



Japanese design elements provide a sense of peace and quiet.



THE COOK'S VIEW *The Bunches felt concrete countertops worked well with the design of the house and installed them in the kitchen and master bath. Carl especially appreciates their 38-inch height. Marge's son built the Douglas fir cabinetry.*

light and keep with a clean, contemporary look. We're pleased with the contrast between the white walls, the cherry floors, and the fir-beamed ceiling.

We also wanted a cedar soaking tub, or *ofuro* (top photo, facing page), in the master bedroom, and an updated version of the Japanese *tokonoma*, or display niche, to hold floral arrangements in the entry (photos, p. 35). These were our ideas, which Bill incorporated into the house design.

Bill placed the *tokonoma* directly inside the front door, where it initially hides the view of the hills and valley to anyone entering. The beautiful scene unfolds only as you move around the cabinetlike unit and into the living area. The way the view is revealed is one of our favorite aspects of the house.

All the more cherished

I wish Bill Turnbull could share the great satisfaction he brought us with the design for our house. But he lost his



battle with cancer the day before the plans for the house were submitted to the Napa County planning department. Our house means so much more to us because it is one of Bill's last—and to us, most enduring—designs.

Finally, building the house was one of the most gratifying experiences of our lives. We were fortunate in hiring Sawyer Construction, a father-and-son team that had an intuitive understanding of what we were looking for and great rapport with the design sensibility and materials that went into its construction.

We have the house of our dreams, designed by an architect who understood the importance of the land he built on and the materials he used, and constructed by a contractor who carried out his ideal—and ours—of a house as a place of enjoyment and refuge. **▣**

Carl Bunch is a lawyer for the City of San Francisco.

For more information, see Resources, page 82.



DEEP RELAXATION Divided from the rest of the house by a Japanese-inspired pocket door, the master bedroom is an oasis of calm. A soaking tub set in a window-clad cove (in foreground and top right) is one of Carl and Marge's favorite features.

STONE, METAL, WATER Solid, unadorned materials give the master bath a tranquil simplicity (right).



DESIGN FOR SERENITY

The simple restfulness of the Bunch home is nowhere more evident than in the master bedroom, where traditional comforts and thoughtful design provide a unique place to start—and end—the day. Here's what makes it so appealing:

A separate peace. Though the master bedroom suite is located on the home's main level, it is set apart, at the end of a 20-foot-long hallway. Initial plans called for windows along the hallway's length, but Carl opted instead for solid walls. "We wanted the sense of privacy and mystery that came with having part of the hallway enclosed," he explains.

Lots of light. With windows facing south and east, the bedroom is flooded with morning light, a feature that delights this early-rising couple. What's more, the show varies as the year progresses and the sun shifts around the house. "We love to watch the light change in the morning. It's beautiful," Carl says.

Natural surroundings. Large windows make the trees and sky outside part of the interior landscape. "Even when it's storming and I'm lying in bed, the views are wonderful," Marge says. "Before I even get out of bed, I'm looking at all this nature."

A place to sit, perchance to dream. The L-shaped window seat is a place where Marge can stretch out with a book—maybe even catch an afternoon nap. It's also handy for putting on shoes and provides storage under its hinged lid.

Something special. With a traditional Japanese soaking tub just steps from the bed, a deep soak can easily segue to a deep sleep. "You soak, then just fall into bed afterwards," Marge says. "It's so relaxing, and it makes it a lot easier to fall asleep."