

# Mountainhomestyle

ASPEN | SNOWMASS

VAIL | BEAVER CREEK

TELLURIDE

MIDSUMMER 2008

## RIVERSIDE LIVING

ON THE WATER  
IN OLD SNOWMASS

ANTIQUE ROADTRIP  
FROM ASPEN TO TELLURIDE

CONDOMANIA  
THREE TOWNS, THREE STYLES

TOWNIE BIKES  
HOW WE ROLL







An outdoor seating area centered around a firepit—one of several design elements meant to maximize rivertime.

## A River (Almost) Runs Through It

It doesn't get much more riverside than this Old Snowmass home.

Story by Alison Berkley | Photos by Aspen Architectural Photography



# WOW FACTOR

**G**ary and Amy Feldman don't take sides, especially when it comes to deciding who gets to sleep facing the window in the master bedroom of their riverfront home. Instead, they take turns. "It's like waking up on a boat," Amy Feldman says of sleeping

window-side. "Sometimes it's hard to tell if it's the river that's moving or the house."

It's not just in the master bedroom, though. Situated on a steep, wooded bank (the lot slants up to 30 degrees) a mere 10 feet from the Roaring Fork River on Lower River Road in Old Snowmass, the

three-level design is virtually suspended above the water among the branches, like a modern interpretation of a treehouse.

"In this house you can see and hear the river from every room," Gary says. "You could say a river runs through it." That's particularly true of the second level, where the





# W O W F A C T O R



This page: The architects' use of unusual angles—such as the custom slanted windows seen here—were inspired by the home's steep lot. Previous page: Brazilian Palladio countertops and slate floors add references to nature to the interior's modern design.

kitchen, living room and dining room are located. Features like floor-to-ceiling window walls, tilted windows and a cantilevered third story loft bring the river into the elevated space.

Kayaks and river rafts cruise by all summer long; fish take up residence in the eddies along the shore. Two rainbow trout in particular have been affectionately dubbed Ben and Jerry. The last two Christmases, a bald eagle has found its perch in the tree in the Feldmans' riparian backyard and herds of elk can't be missed as they ford the river. During spring runoff, the river churns by with such dizzying power and ferocity it feels like the house could almost get swept away in its chocolate-colored waters.

But it was the Feldmans who were swept away when they found the property in the spring of 2003. It was one of the few home sites lower than the highway, so noise was not an issue. The 1960s-era home sat right next to the river, although, Gary says, "when we first came to see it, it was a shoebox." And so they set their sights on building a new home on the lot. **> 52**



Because it was built on the foundation of a preexisting structure, the home was exempt from rules requiring that new homes be pushed back 50-100 feet from the river.

## Fish take up residence in the eddies along the shore. A bald eagle found its perch in the tree in the Feldmans' riparian backyard.

But there was a catch, and it had nothing to do with fish. In 2006, the county began requiring that new homes be pushed back 50-100 feet from the river—unless they're built on an existing foundation. As a real estate broker who has lived in the valley for 25 years, Gary had the educated foresight to recognize the hidden value of the original house, despite its condition, sitting where it did.

"Of all the premium real estate in Aspen, riverfront is in shortest supply," he says, "especially riverfront that's this close to the river."

Gary posed the challenge of designing a new home to fit the original founda-

tion to architects David Johnston and John Hufker of David Johnston Architects. The tight building envelope posed a unique quandary, but it also resulted in a category-defying design.

"Had David and John not come up with this really cool design, we might not have done it," Feldman says. "When we saw what they came up with, we were blown away."

The architects used cantilevered masses throughout the second story to expand the size of the house without violating codes. The result was a kitchen that extends eight feet from the original footprint and a dramatic entryway bridge suspended in the trees.





Cantilevered above the rushing water, the dining room and its abundance of window space bring the river into the home most dramatically.

“The design was largely dictated by the constraints we were faced with,” Hufker says. “Angled cantilevers were put where they are because it was literally the only place we could go beyond the foundation. That’s also why we have a bridge to the entry rather than a retaining wall. The resulting design was unique because it was created from the site rather than on it.”

Hufker says the steep lot also inspired other angles throughout the design, like the custom slanted windows and off-camber rooflines. The wood, glass and

stone exterior allowed the space to be modern without clashing with its natural surroundings. That’s carried through the interior with slate floors, Brazilian Palladio granite countertops (a unique cut consisting of large multi-colored stones that mirror the river bottom), and, of course, some fish-themed art. Amy Feldman worked with interior designer Robyn Scott to come up with some of the more detailed touches, like a railing for the stairway and loft that is the same as the one on the bridge entryway, creating a seamlessness between indoors and out. > 56



# W O W F A C T O R



Bridges and decks allow for movement in—and occasionally above—the trees, further connecting the home to its natural surroundings.

The third floor is used as a media and family room and features yet another double-cantilevered loft that looms over the river without any sense of its surrounding banks and gives the feel of the observation deck of a boat. The lowest level features the master bedroom and Feldman's beloved tequila bar and an ample slate terrace furnished with a fire pit and plush outdoor furniture for comfortable river viewing.

Every year, the couple throws a "Tequila on Fork-th" party on the Fourth of July with a live band that opened up last year with—surprise—"Proud Mary" ("rolling, rolling, rolling on the river"). There is one drawback, though. Says Amy, "You don't want to wake up with a hang-over. That's the closest you're ever going to feel to being sea sick on land." ■