OPENING PAGES: Milton Cushman of the Cushman Design Group based his design of Chuck and Jan Ebel's Stowe home on the Vermont barn vernacular of a stone foundation, stepped by two wood-clad rooms of usable space and cupolas. The structure is multi-level post-and-beam, with load-bearing heartwood beams in most areas. Two-story living room walls are reinforced with steel and are designed to withstand 125 mph winds. The house is purposefully narrow, many-windowed, and has multiple porches and decks to blur the distinction between outside and in. Chuck and Jan are very close to their beloved gardens and views from any point inside.

THE WEST ELEVATION, which faces Trapp Family Lodge and Mt. Mansfield, has an old-fashioned sleeping porch (generous beds perfect for snoring in late spring and fall, and roosting in all but deep winter. When it is too cool or too wet to be outside, just inside is a sun-glossed sitting room (and overflow guest room) that is their second favorite reading area.
EBEL’S DREAM

T
decades ago, during a chaotic peri-

od when my life was becoming totally

unstated, a Halal tea bag offered this

Eureka moment: “Life is what happens

when you are planning other things.”

It’s been my mantra ever since.

But some people don’t know it chance, so for me
it’s been mesmerizing to watch a couple, Chuck and
Jan Ebel of Stowe, develop a plan and then set out to
actually accomplish it over a series of years. This
Ebel’s vision? To find a way to move to Stowe while
still working; build their dream house, and then ulti-
ately retire here.

IBM brought the couple to Essex, Vt., where their
plan took root. Jan, a Canadian, had come to Stowe as
a child to ski and camp. She grew to love the area and
soo, with time spent playing golf and skiing, so did
Chuck. But what IBM gave, IBM can also take away.
These dual careers then took them to Florida and
New York. Still, they never lost sight of the dream,
always plotting their return with a conviction that
encouraged them to find and buy the perfect house site.

The site they found, Chuck says with disbelief, “has
privacy within a small community of homes, wonder-
ful views, and an incredibly good location” near the
Mountain Road. (Full disclosure: I was their real estate
broker during this long process and have thoroughly
enjoyed watching their steps to success.)
Bruce’s kitchen and dining rooms are designed and built to last, this was demonstrated by what they did here. The rooms are filled with natural light and are expansive in size. The kitchen is designed to be both functional and aesthetically pleasing. The dining room is equally as impressive, with large windows that provide a view of the surrounding landscape. The rooms are connected by a hallway, which is lined with bookshelves and provides a缓冲 space between the living and dining areas.

EBEL’S DREAM

“We had never built a house from scratch,” says Chuck. “It was hard for us to figure out what the potential of the property was.” Or to envision the specific needs of the house. They wanted a home that was open and light, fit the Vermont landscape, and used local materials. The house needed to expand when their two grown children (and eventual families) visited, but also be livable and comfortable for just the two of them.

Their dilemma was how to give architectural shape to those ideas. After deciding to interview several local architects, fate stepped in when they met Stone architect Milford Cushman. The rapport was immediate. During that first meeting at the site, Cushman articulated his concept of how their house should interact with the setting. The Ebels were struck by his ability to organize disparate elements—“structures, gardens, elevations, vistas”—and to communicate his concepts in vivid word pictures they were able to grasp. He then showed them his design for a ski house that was commissioned by Ski Magazine in 1968 but never built.
Downstairs porch

ON SUMMER EVENINGS when the setting sun is strong, dinner is often served on the screened porch off the dining room.

The first floor guest room (at left) and bedroom could be converted to master bedroom. It has beautiful western view and light, and en suite bath.
THE CUPOLA IS THE DRAMATIC

A brightening touch of the house design. At night it is lit by low-voltage strip lighting designed to last 30,000 hours—no need to worry about replacement—and its windows may be opened electronically on a hot summer day for ventilation and well-designed baffles and circulation keep the house cool all summer.

At left: Cushman's original book: surroundings—some whimsical, some21 outlined to short—yet simple of interest in unexpected places. In counterpart is the sweeping staircase at the entrance hallway is a pass-thru to two through the elevator. It allows the new visitor a glimpse of what is to come, and the chef to see who is coming. Jan treats the area as an ever-changing still life: with a basket of fruit, perhaps flowers, or a arrangement of fine glassware to form a welcoming composition. Right: An iron half-lamp adds a touch of elegance.

JAN'S PASSION IS GARDENING

Before landscape her new home Jan completed a course in master gardening at UVM. Mildred Cushman helped with overall design, Bruce Kline and crew of Montville built the stone walls and islands.

That design became the basis for their home. The exterior motif is Vermont barn, a traditional three-story structure with a stone foundation, two wood-clad middle levels, and cupola on top. The south-facing entrance is softened by having the lowest level below grade, which creates a sweeping horizontal plane with a series of ascending covered decks connecting house to garage on the right and descending levels of gardens on the left.

The Vermont theme carries through to the inside or handsome stairway, charcoal shades of green used for flooring and in the baths and kitchen, and native white pine used for cabinetry, trim, and other flooring. The hallway staircase that spirals up to the cupola has the geometry and space economy of Shaker design. Hubbardton Forge designed all of the wrought-iron lighting fixtures.

The house breeds comfortably with the Ebels' lifestyle. The 2,800 square feet of living space on the first and second floors is their domain. An additional 1,000 square feet on the lower level provides a generous family room, bath, and bedrooms for their adult children. The architecture provides a serene, elegant backdrop for the couple's soft spot for Americana. The house is dotted with an eclectic and whimsical array of items: an antique decoy, funky bird-houses, an old marble game, a painted wooden horse from a long-gone carnival.

The design perfectly bridges the span between the final years of work and retirement. Jan is having too much fun to stop working but is itching to get into the gardens full time. Chuck relishes his recent retirement and while he is getting more involved in local activities, he loves his kitchen, his workshop, and his home’s quiet places to read.

The house is a perfect fit.