

# Building a Ski House

***A magazine article tipped off the Ebel family to their dream ski-house design.***

**Edited by Joseph Healy / Photography by Carolyn Bates**

**I**F YOU EVER DOUBTED THE POWER of the printed word, consider how the Ebel family came to build their house in Stowe. *Ski Magazine* had asked Cushman Design Group of Stowe to design the “Mountain Home of the Year” with the following criteria: the house had to be on a very steep slope, feel rugged, and accommodate skiers. When the resulting article ran in the magazine in 1998, Jan and Chuck Ebel read it and clipped it out as a possible design for a future home. After the Ebels bought land in Stowe, they called none other than the Cushman Design Group ([www.cushman-design.com](http://www.cushman-design.com)), based on the appeal of the *Ski* house. “We sought to achieve a comfortable home with a solid feel that emulated the beauty of the surrounding Vermont pine forest and mountainous terrain,” said Jan Ebel. To do so, they had the Cushman group modify the magazine-project house.

The Ebels liked the original basic concept of the design, though they wanted their house to be smaller and more compact and to include gardening as an activity. The relationship of the rooms on the main floor stayed intact from the original design, and the house was built on a very steep slope—only the entrance and the garages and driveway are on flat land.

The idea of a cupola that acts like a lantern, giving light to each interior floor, also stayed from the original concept: the light cascades down the stairway to the library and entryway. A library and second bathroom are at the south end with views of the grounds of the famous Trapp Family Lodge. The north end has an “introspective” master bedroom with a fireplace, windows opening out onto the vaulted ceiling of the great room, and windows for ventilation. The design of the house uses a lot of “trans-

parency,” according to Milford Cushman of the Cushman Design Group, by having narrow elements in the house, allowing light on both sides of the house to enter the rooms. No part of the house is too far from daylight: you can feel the outdoors inside and you can see the long and short views of the surrounding mountains. The screen porch, though only a one-season porch, has interior windows and doors, allowing those inside to feel as if they’re on the porch, even in the winter.

The house has no attic, which allows the master-bedroom suite to have peaked ceilings but could compromise storage space. To solve that problem, Cushman designed the lower level to have the majority of the storage for the house.

**For more photos of the Ebel house, please turn to page 75. ←**



The landscaping of the Ebel home was designed by The Gardener's Path of Stowe. Oversize boulders were used in the landscape design to provide spaces for terraces, steps, planting beds, and to help tie the natural, exposed ledge to the house.

## At Home in Vermont

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**The Ebel House:** “The fireplaces are a focal point in all three levels of the house. Although each of the three fireplaces is contained in the same vertical, fieldstone structure, each fireplace has a different look and feel due to the size, door selection, and mantels. The fireplace in the lower level is more casual with no mantel, a relatively large opening, self-contained box for wood storage, and rustic bow screen,” said Jan Ebel. “The fireplace on the main floor separates, yet connects, the main dining area to the living area through a large double-sided opening with more formal glass and wrought-iron doors. And, finally, the fireplace in the master bedroom has a much smaller opening with glass and wrought iron doors for a more cozy feel.” The hinged fireplace screen and glass door were made by Richard Spreda, a blacksmith in Stowe.



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**The Ebel House:** “We wanted to repeat certain design aspects throughout the house to create a sense of continuity,” said Jan Ebel. For example, the floor to ceiling cabinets in the mudroom are similar in design and the same color as the floor to ceiling cabinets in the guest bedroom on the main floor. The eight-foot french doors leading into the screened porch are repeated on the lower level leading to the patio.”

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**The Ebel House:** The materials used in the house were intended to reflect the Vermont landscape. “We used natural pine for the floors, doors and trim all stained in an antique finish. To create the floors we used the traditional variable-width pine. We used green and gray natural slate for all the countertops and tiled areas of the house—bathrooms, entries, and kitchen,” said Jan Ebel. ▼

