

# Editor's letter

## Janet O'Grady on environmental responsibility and great design

HAS THERE EVER BEEN A SUMMER AS CULTURALLY RICH AS THE ONE WE'VE JUST SAVORED? That was the refrain heard at just about every dinner party, gallery opening, and casual gathering of friends in the Valley. For me, the highlights included the Fortune Magazine-Aspen Institute Brainstorm Conference, which brought world leaders in business, technology, design, and government to town (not to mention filled Sardy Field with a few billion dollars worth of private jets); Aspen Institute's Einstein confab, an interdisciplinary soiree that filled town with geniuses celebrating the greatest genius of all; and the Aspen Art Museum's 25th anniversary celebration. Then there was the Aspen Music Festival's Mini-Festival, Forbidden Music: Silenced Voices, which featured works of composers whose who were silenced by oppressive forces.

Our celebration of culture doesn't stop when the leaves turn gold, though. Labor Day weekend, the Jazz Aspen Snowmass festival sends music and rhythm into the air, and in the leisurely last days of September, Aspen Filmfest takes over town. I'm delighted to note that my friend, writer, and Aspen resident Dena Kaye obtained an exclusive interview with Filmfest honoree Michael Douglas, which you'll find on page 36. I think it is one of the best and most insightful interviews with the talented actor that I've ever read.

Fall is also when we pay extra attention to our homes; the sounds of repairmen hammering away on my roof as I write this testify to that. Every year at this time, we feature extensive home and design coverage, and in this issue, *Aspen Magazine* lives up to its reputation for being the first to report trends and champion new ideas. For example, architect Doug Graybeal, whose home graces our cover, recently started his own firm dedicated to environmentally conscious building techniques. His quest with his home, featured on page 44, was to create the footprint of a totally "green" house that is at once luxurious, architecturally stunning, and environmentally friendly. This is the architecture of tomorrow, or should be, whether one builds on Red Mountain or in downvalley's Missouri Heights, where the Graybeals' home is located. Aspen may be blessed with wealth, but it also possesses citizens and visitors who are determined to take responsibility for the earth. If we follow Graybeal's lead, we'll be taking a major step along that road, and hopefully soon our ultimate incentive will be tax breaks. Call it environmental chic; call it part of our cultural richness—either way, it's a trend in the Valley that will last long past this memorable summer.

Janet O'Grady





Longtime Aspen architect Doug Graybeal leans easily against a granite countertop in his new home, discussing elements of the kitchen—cherry cabinetry with Shaker-style doors, a commercial range with a quilted stainless-steel backsplash, a breakfast nook with sweeping mountain views.

He could be talking about any house he helped design, except there is a deliberate subtext: A quarry in North Dakota (rather than Italy) provided the slab granite, a domestic plantation harvested the cherrywood and replanted seedlings, and the south-facing windows were designed to maximize both the view and the solar gain.

This Missouri Heights house is the first project Graybeal has completed since his departure as principal in Cottle Graybeal Yaw Architects to completely devote his time to green architecture. His decision to leave the firm was bittersweet; he helped to grow the prestigious company to 40 architects over its 25-year history. But ultimately, the 52-year-old Graybeal wanted to focus entirely on his passion for green building, and with the support of his partners, he made the decision to leave.

Graybeal's home subtly marries the staples of modern living with green building practices. The result is 3,000 square feet that are at once peaceful, sensible, luxurious, and environmentally friendly. "You might never know this house was green by walking in the front door," says Graybeal, who designed similarly sustainable projects at his former firm, including both the Sanctuary private residences and the new golf clubhouse at the Snowmass Club. According to industry insiders, his environmentally compatible combination of smart design and efficiency is quickly becoming one of Aspen's fastest growing trends in home building. "There has been a big psychological shift," says Stephen Kanipe, chief building official for the City of Aspen, noting the city's program that requires efficiency in the building process. "The idea that the

Opposite Page: Doug Graybeal's new home proves that green building does not have to sacrifice style or design. Graybeal has now dedicated his career entirely to green architecture. This Page: (Left to right) Shower tiles made of recycled glass; Peggy and Doug Graybeal in their greenhouse.

# THE GREEN THEME

BY NICOLE MAGISTRO

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAT SUDMEIER



## GREEN GURUS

Thanks to one of the most progressive (and mandatory) efficiency programs in the country, the City of Aspen is home to a crew of cutting edge architects, designers, and contractors who are conquering the challenges of green building.

Consortium Architects' principal **Rally Dupps** and Devi Development's **Michelle Pauline Lowe** and **Nancy Spears** recently salvaged a 110-year-old Victorian on West Bleeker Street and incorporated healthy home features—from a feng shui floor plan to organic cotton linens. Currently, Lowe and Dupps are working on two more green preservation projects: a Victorian on East Bleeker Street and a multi-family compound on East Hopkins Avenue.

General contractor **Mark Wolfe Webber** of Wolfe Brand Construction keeps busy on environmentally friendly projects downvalley. "This area is a hotbed for green building," he says, "but even on a national scale, builders are putting effort into utilizing more efficient appliances, window units, lumber, and wood products."

Aspen Solar owner **Mike Tierney** has provided solar heating and electric systems to residential and commercial projects—including the Inn at Aspen—since 1982. At the Inn, the outdoor pool and snowmelt system are 70 percent heated by solar power.

Local nonprofit organization **Solar Energy International** of Carbondale leads the national effort to utilize the power of the sun and wind through educational programs, design services, and installation of photovoltaic panels and windmills on homes and commercial buildings.

Creating a natural outdoor environment? Consult with the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies environmental designer **Sarah Chase Shaw** or take a workshop with the Central Rocky Mountain Permaculture Institute's founder **Jerome Osentowski**.

—N.M.



increased cost of green building pays off in efficiency and low energy bills has become a selling point for designers and builders."

Graybeal credits increasing numbers of conscientious home builders, the city's progressive building requirements, and lowering costs of low-impact products for making green design more attractive than ever before. "People who come here appreciate the environment, and they think about life a little more," he says. Still, their desire for luxury traditionally influences their expectations for a home. Graybeal emphasizes to his clients that green building does not have to drive the design—and he uses his own home to showcase how sustainability and creature comforts can work together.

Incorporating energy efficiency and environmental friendliness, Graybeal designed his home to be "responsive to the climate and reflective of the local mountain vernacular."

The architect and his wife, Peggy, took advantage of the sun's exposure and monumental views with a wall of south-facing windows that set Mount Sopris and Capitol Peak inside the frame. March through October, an overhang blocks direct sun from the lower windows and reflects light into

the depths of the living space through upper panes. In the winter months, when the sun hangs low in the southern sky, direct light shines in, helping to heat the living space naturally.

A two-foot-thick cast earth wall—the second in the state of Colorado—acts as an artistic rendering of a sliced riverbank while providing the thermal mass needed to store heat collected in the daytime for the cooler evening hours. The powerful sun also heats the water supply and generates enough power to make the electrical meter run backwards during the day. Projected energy bills for each month total \$25 to \$30.

Perhaps the most simple yet rewarding feature that capitalizes on the sun's energy is the home's greenhouse. Steeply sloping windows create the perfect angle for the sun's rays to penetrate the glass, and a year-round growing season allows for a profusion of organic herbs and vegetables, including exotic varieties, such as artichokes and passion fruit. "People sometimes forget that solar is only one of the items to examine when trying to build green," says Graybeal. Other factors, such as materials, finishes, efficiency of appliances, and the overall health of the occupants are equally important for a sus-



GRAYBEAL EMPHASIZES THAT GREEN BUILDING DOES NOT HAVE TO DRIVE THE DESIGN—AND HE USES HIS OWN HOME TO SHOWCASE HOW SUSTAINABILITY AND CREATURE COMFORTS CAN WORK TOGETHER.

tainable project to succeed.

Graybeal bought state-of-the-art, environmentally friendly appliances for his home, including a Sun Frost Refrigerator, one of the most efficient of its kind on the market. Its four-inch-thick insulated walls make the outer appearance large, but the interior storage holds cool air and moisture better than most other brands. He also chose his Whirlpool Duet side-by-side washer-dryer because it had a high efficiency rating.

An alternative construction method was another key element in creating the Graybeal home. Along with a few relatives and friends, the architect stacked approximately 300 straw bales to form the home’s lower level walls. The bales—only \$1 apiece—saved framing lumber and lessened the impact on the environment.

In addition, general contractor Mark Wolfe Webber of Wolfe Brand Construction used recycled glass, reclaimed Douglas fir, low-VOC (volatile organic compounds) paints,

and water-based stains as finishes. “Honestly, [using green products] can be difficult and the costs greater, but there is a trade-off,” says Webber. “It’s like buying a BMW instead of a Pontiac.”

Additional details—traditionally chalked up to indulgence—weren’t overlooked in Graybeal’s home because he believes they add quality of life. The greenhouse beds are designed at hip height for ergonomically sound gardening, while stereo speakers are wired throughout the home. Principles of feng shui were incorporated into the decor with the help of local expert Susan Hayward, and the couple recently installed a water feature to purify the air and produce white noise. Nooks in the cast earth wall provide space for artwork and sculpture. “People are inspired by the world around them, yet we spend 90 percent of our lives indoors,” says Graybeal. “I am just happy to be able to create spaces that are livable and healthy for all of us.” ♦



**Clockwise from Above:** The east side of the house shows the lime plaster finish on the straw bale walls; the stairs are made out of reclaimed Douglas fir, while the floor is made of bamboo and stained concrete; Kalwall water tubes provide thermal mass in the greenhouse; the kitchen boasts energy efficient lighting, nonformaldehyde cabinetry, and domestic granite countertops; a “truth window” offers a peek into the straw bale walls.