



The Ferriby house on Howard Road sports bay windows and a cantilevered deck. (Staff photos by Harry Mauthe)

Ferriby's house built on solid communication

By SUSAN AVERILL

FARMINGTON HILLS—Dale Ferriby's house has to be one of the most unusual in Oakland County. In the first place, he built it. But more than that, he built it with communication in mind.

On the surface, that means more open spaces with fewer walls and partitions. Every room has at least two doors opening into other areas. Even the bedroom lofts have peekholes into the living room.

On a more subtle level, it means communication and integration into the environment.

Foundations were nestled into a hilly area on Howard Road, right in the middle of a stand of long-needed pine trees. No bulldozer ever touched the land.

"THE HOUSE follows the contours of the ground. It makes interesting spaces," Ferriby said, standing in the dining room and pointing to the family room, half-a-level below. In the far end, a portion of the room had been dropped into a soft-carpeted yellow nest lined with carpeted seats heated by an unfinished fireplace.

He looked up into the living room, immediately above the family room. The floor, a ceiling for the room below, was about chest-level, and carpeted just comfortably enough to lean on.

"We built as close as we could into the trees. We didn't have to pull any of them at all, and some of them are within two feet of the house," he said.

Aesthetic purposes aside, the proximity to the trees is useful in the winter when they cut the snow and wind and provide a type of insulation.

In the summer, they help cool by shading the house. It wasn't by accident that the morning light is able to flow into the breakfast nook.

FERRIBY built windows into every room in the house, and positioned the building so that every side receives approximately the same amount of light.

Planks from a 100-year-old barn add texture to the living room walls. The wood was cut from his own property and the barn was built across the road.

Wanted attic space was converted into lofts for his sons. Carpeting from

each loft spills down the wall into the bedroom.

Anything from television sets to games may be hoisted up the wooden ladder and carried into the loft. It's great as a play area, Ferriby said, because guests can't see the traditional playtime disarray.

A small window in each of the lofts provides a vantage point for anyone wishing to survey the living room before venturing into public view.

FERRIBY ALSO built a cantilevered balcony (one without direct supports to the ground) which he said has held 20 people at one time.

After working on the house for a year and a half, the Ferriby family moved in. Work is by no means finished yet, and Ferriby estimates he has more than a year to go before the finishing touches are added.

Building the house himself has saved him nearly half the cost, he estimated, even though the plumbing and heating were done professionally.

Ferriby divides his time between the house and teaching design at Lawrence Institute of Technology. He is also a freelance architect for residential and commercial buildings.



Dale Ferriby relaxes in the living room of the house that he built.

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