

## *Marti Home – 105 Minturn, Oakland, MO 63122*



In 1967, Paul and Audrey Marti had been married seven years and were living on Grant Road in St. Louis County. Paul was an architect with HOK. Their architect friend, Julius Juraczak (a Hungarian), and his wife had built a contemporary home at Berry Rd. and Bismark. Two features of this home especially appealed to the Martis: the balcony and the home's location next to a creek. (Another inspiration for home design had been seen on Martis' Sarasota honeymoon: the Ringling mansion featuring glass and balconies, arranged around the living room.)

Determined to find a lot adjacent to a creek, they marked various creeks on a St. Louis County map. They began driving down streets that dead-ended at creeks. One day they found the Oakland lot, which was an eyesore; it was overgrown, and littered with logs, refuse, cans and trash.

At that time (1968), Mrs. Emily Mika, Mildred Loewau's mother, lived up the hill from this lot and owned most of the property from Westwood Place to Argonne, including this 50 x 150 lot. Paul and Audrey purchased the lot from her for \$2000.00. Paul designed the home.

Construction by Flavion Schwein, contractor, soon began. The contemporary home cost \$29,000 to build. Its exterior is redwood.

Western cedar was originally planned, but there was a lack of good cedar boards, so redwood was used instead, an economical move for Martis since they got it for the same price. Paul describes his design as “simple:” a seven foot by seven foot by seven foot module with a plank and beam structure. To economize, the beams occur every seven feet. Cantilevered overhangs are possible with this construction, as is represented by the roof from the south side that protects the two-story glass wall panels from the summer sun. The large deck platform here was built in the shade of a giant sycamore tree. During construction, children walking by the home called it “Fort Apache.” One day a Brazilian man got out of his car and asked if the structure was going to be a church!

In July 1968, Paul and Audrey, with their two children Dane and Kara, moved into 105 Minturn. Paul planted a dawn redwood tree (“the oldest thing on earth” per Paul) near the deck. It is still healthy and even survived a trash-burning by its base. Martis planted a copper beach tree in front, which remains a beautifully shaped shade tree. Unfortunately, the sycamore no longer exists.

In March of 1970, Paul won the Award of Merit for Excellence in Design given by the AIA, American Institute of Architects.

The year 1971 was an exciting and challenging year for the Martis. *House Beautiful* (HB) agreed to feature Martis’ home in their magazine. This meant waiting for HB to find “just the right furniture” to temporarily furnish their home, while storing their own things. The resulting three-page article (with photos), written by James DeLong, was worth the commotion. It was published in September 1971. Another article appeared in HB’s *Building Manual* for Fall-Winter 1972-73. Most of the following information is credited to these articles.

With the Martis’ small, narrow lot (50 x150) and building budget of \$30,000, they saw that the only way to go was UP. By accentuating the vertical, they were able to fit both lot and budget into a treasure house of upright space and simplicity. The linear channel-grooved California redwood created a clean-lined exterior. Even the downspouts, narrow windows and chimney column became design elements. (Paul’s camera captured this exterior view of his home after a fluffy snow storm in the winter of ’71-’72. He sent the photo to Olympic Stain Co., the stain used on the redwood. They printed it as part of their ad in the March ’72 *Sunset, the Magazine of Western Living*. Paul received \$50.--as photographer, not architect!!)

The two- story living room, a result of sacrificing space in adjoining areas, creates a feeling of volume far exceeding its actual dimensions. A brass standing fireplace with a two-story chimney is a focal point. The room is further enlarged by visual continuity into

adjoining areas—dining room seen through bookshelf-divider, master bedroom through shutters overhead, and the outdoors beyond glass panels. The outdoor deck further extends interior boundaries. The rich, warm, 6-sided quarry tile on the first floor was a luxury made possible by using economical materials elsewhere.

Additional rooms on the first floor are: study, kitchen, bath, utility.

The stairs to the second floor have a story: “Paul, the architect, wanted the stairway to stand free in the shaft of the stair hall; but Audrey, the client, felt it should be enclosed to gain a closet beneath. The client prevailed and Marti admits that ‘that closet sure is handy.’ ”

The upstairs master bedroom enjoys the option of sharing the light-filled upper space of the living room or being instantly shuttered into a retreat of absolute privacy. A tiny, sheltered balcony overlooks the brook that meanders across the rear of the property. A pattern of stained Douglas fir boards span the ceiling. A balcony corridor overlooking the two-story living room connects the second floor areas, which include two more bedrooms and two baths.

Confronted with the challenges of limited space and means, a designer like Paul Marti can still produce a first-rate work of architecture-as-art while satisfying the basic human needs of shelter, comfort and utility. But, as he is quick to point out, there is another factor in the creation of a successful building. “Architects cannot exist in a vacuum,” he says. “They must have a client to respond to and design for. In this case, the client was my wife.”

Together, the Martis faced the decisions that brought their house into being.

***Information compiled by Jean Ann Funk, member of Oakland Historic Preservation Commission. July 7, 2007***

