



INTRODUCTION

Every happy family is alike, but every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way, so states Tolstoy in Anna Karenina.

I have not determined if there are more, happy than unhappy families, but I'm pleased to say I was a member of the former. Not until my teens did I realize that ours was a special family. Not that we were wealthy, au contraire, but we were rich with warm feelings toward one another. Simply stated, we looked after and loved each other, as I believe families should, but often do not.

As with most of us, I have had some good years and some dismal years. The good years have overshadowed the latter, and along the way, I have met some interesting people.

Living and studying architecture with the world's greatest architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, was the most memorable and the most effortless to relate, because it was such a wonderful experience. I only wish circumstances had allowed me to stay longer at Taliesin.

I do not write as a teacher of architecture, but rather as a chronicler of interesting events spent with the apprentices at Taliesin.

Naturally, there was life before and after Taliesin, and many of those I met became good friends. In part, this is a statement on their behalf, as some are no longer with us. I also wish to honor my parents, my wife, and my brother.

The incident that served as the impetus for this endeavor was the discovery of an old family photo album, and a group of architectural photos taken years ago.

To paraphrase Tolstoy on marriage, I was married twice, and if these unions were categorized based on happy or unhappy, I would say my first was a practice marriage. The second, to Barbara, was absolute heaven on earth.

My father and brother were matchless. I couldn't have asked for a better mother; I had the best. I couldn't have asked for a better wife; I had the best.



CHAPTER FOUR :: ON MY OWN

CHRISTMAS 1953

The coming months brought mixed emotions, as I agonized over my decision to leave Mr. Wright and return home. Still, I was delighted to be on familiar ground again, and my mother was happy to have me home for Christmas.

I was scurrying around, buying gifts for the family and Mary Lou, when my brother announced we should have Christmas dinner at his house. Not only would this be easier for Mom, who was still working, as memories of our dad would not be as strong at Harry's home, and I was very pleased with his decision.

After the holidays, I contacted an architect friend for interim work. Soon, I was drawing plans for a small grandmother's cottage to be constructed on a large estate in Los Altos. Upon finishing those drawings, I did various jobs for him until the spring of 1954 when I began work on Cabaña Tanglewood.

CABAÑA TANGLEWOOD

My first building commission arrived "on a silver platter," (so to speak,) from my very good friend, James Moore, whom I had known since junior high school. What Jim wanted to build was an inexpensive, two-bedroom, weekend and vacation cabin. Before leaving Taliesin, I had viewed the site in the Santa Cruz Mountains

and had done most of the working drawings in my tent at night. Jim offered that if I assisted with the construction, I could use the cabin on occasion, sort of an "early-model time-share."

The site had a marvelous view of a few miles to the south looking towards a ridge of redwoods. Due to the sloping ground and extensive vegetation, if the front part of the cabin were cut into the hill, neighboring houses



My good friend, Jim Moore,
Willow Glen, CA
:: 1943

RIGHT AND BELOW
"Cabaña Tanglewood"
for James Moore.
Poured Masonry and
redwood. Santa Cruz
Mountains, CA :: 1954





"Cabaña Tanglewood" Living room and dining area with kitchen beyond :: 1954

would not be visible. A few pine trees could be seen, but a large portion of land was overgrown with manzanita. The first time we walked the site, machetes were used to clear our way. In doing so, I realized that much of this rugged land would need clearing to accommodate the septic tank drain field.

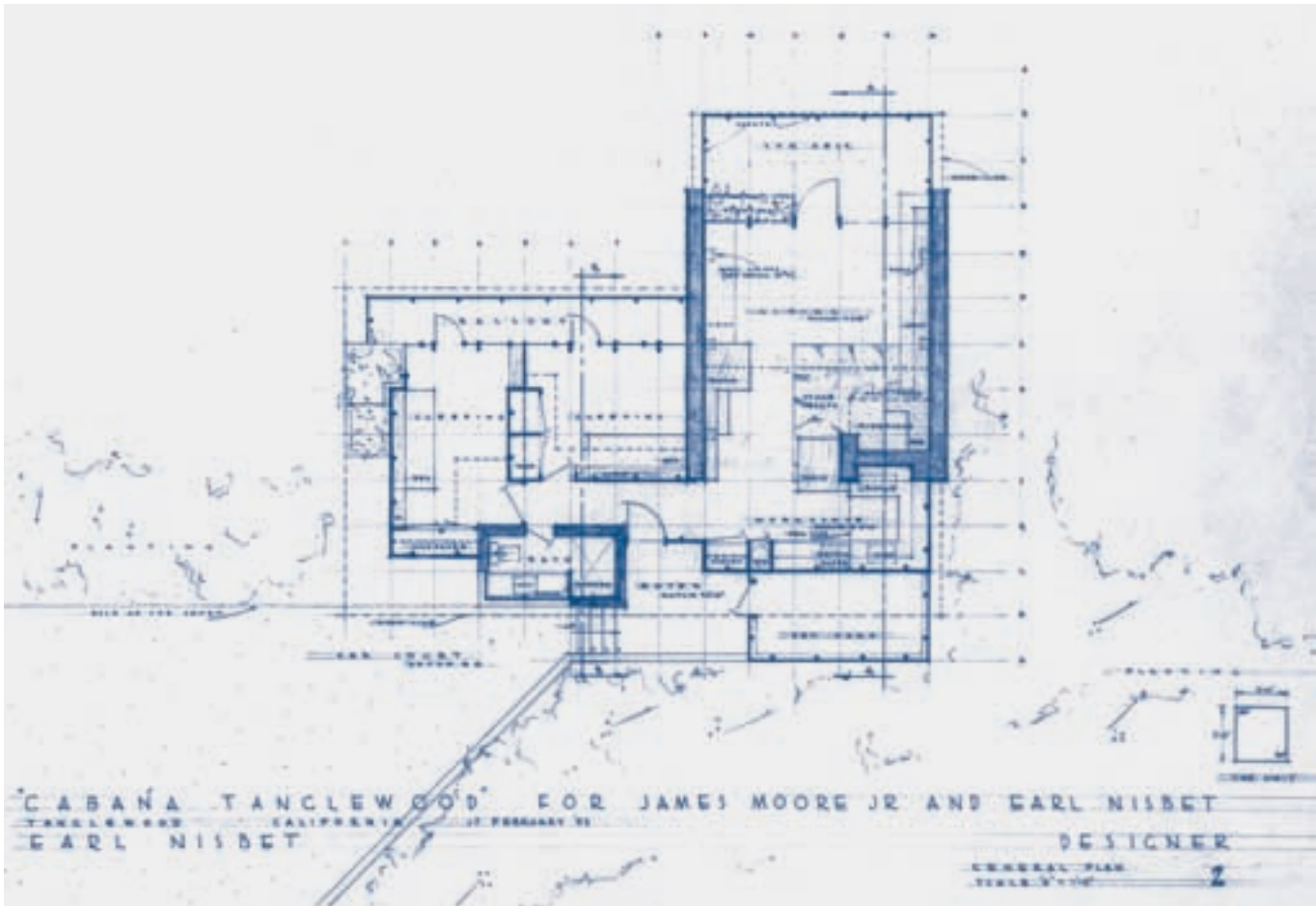
Because of the extraordinary amount of manzanita compared to the small cabin, I named it "Cabaña Tanglewood." The living room's poured masonry walls were oriented to collect heat from the sun during the day and to radiate heat into the cabin at night.

We discovered a rock quarry about a mile away where we could hand-select some of the



PHOTO: MAY NISBET

Photo of author by his mother while supervising "Cabaña Tanglewood" :: 1954



"Cabaña Tanglewood",
 Santa Cruz, CA. General
 plan :: 1953

rocks to be used for the poured masonry. From a mutual friend's sawmill, (with a very good price), we obtained straight-grained redwood to be used for walls, shelves, doors, posts and furniture.

Much privacy was obtained by cutting the massive fireplace wall, workspace, dry yard, and entrance walls into the hillside while making it easy to look out—except from the bathroom. There, the windows were perforated into patterns one might see looking through pines or redwood trees. Because the bathroom faced the street, car court, and entrance, the window glass was sandblasted for privacy, which also contributed to creating a room similar to a lantern when lit in the evening.

The living room contained built-in seats along each wall with metal planters behind each seat. Special wall lights that shone up, down, and through were built in for reading. Lighting for mood illumination was installed on the walls. Poured stone masonry used for the fireplace also wrapped through to the workspace, where it vented the kitchen stove. A small table was built next to the fireplace to accommodate four diners.

All of the wood walls were of single-wall construction, lapped one inch outwardly for every ten inches vertically, allowing rain to run off to the ground. Both bedrooms had virtually the same view, as did the living room, and the fenestration was job-built with perforated

FACING PAGE, TOP
 "Cabaña Tanglewood"
 for James Moore.
 View from Southeast.
 Santa Cruz Mountains
 :: 1953

FACING PAGE, BOTTOM
 "Cabaña Tanglewood"
 View from Southwest
 :: 1953



VIEW FROM SOUTHWEST

CABANA TANGLEWOOD FOR JAMES MOORE JR AND EARL NISBET
 TANGLEWOOD CALIFORNIA 25 FEBRUARY 31
 EARL NISBET DESIGNER



VIEW FROM SOUTHWEST

CABANA TANGLEWOOD FOR JAMES MOORE JR AND EARL NISBET
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