

"The round house" is designed by owner



LIKE A GIANT mushroom, the sharp home, north of Acton, is a symphony in the round designed by owner Lionel Sharp.



FURNITURE has no corners to worry about in the Sharp's circular living room. Joyce Sharp shares a newspaper story with daughter Melissa and dog Tanya.

by Jennifer Barr
"Two houses down from the round house, that's where I live", - directions to our place are easy. I mean, how many round houses do you know?

When Lionel and Joyce Sharp began their residence in the round two years ago neighbours were fascinated by the building process and teased Lionel about his "wigwam." Now that the house is nearing completion, it blends with the surrounding property beautifully and is a credit to its designer, who happens to be Lionel Sharp.

Of course, it helps that Lionel is also an architect and president of his own Toronto business, Omni Plan Design Group Limited. Architects seem prone to designing unusual residences although Lionel feels it's a most sensible plan.

It certainly works. The flowing circular interior plan makes maximum use of floor space.

"There's no corners to worry about," Lionel says. The living room with 25 foot cathedral ceiling and central columnar fireplace takes up half the interior space and provides more drama per cubic inch than Ontario Place, the CN Tower and the Eaton Centre combined.

The remaining rooms, bedrooms, kitchen, bathrooms and service rooms of the remaining half are crowned by a mezzanine. Up a unique circular staircase, the study and lounge on the mezzanine overlook the living

room separated by a closed balcony. Only the guest room and bath are walled upstairs.

The house reflects the nature-loving instincts of its family. Huge picture windows overlook the bush and fields while indoors flourish a large variety of plants, shrubs, and even a tree (actually a rubber plant excited by the space and light.)

The whole is open, airy, bright and extremely comfortable.

In 1976, the Sharp family, then living in Oakville, decided to look for some land in the country. The decision was based on the fact that their previously convenient suburban home was no longer suitable for the family's changing interests. Mirek, now 22, and Marlow, 20, were environmentalists—Mirek will be graduating this year from University of Waterloo with a degree in Man-Environment studies. Helena, 16, and Milissa, 15, were becoming interested in horses and general outdoor life.

It was agreed the move would be a family decision and any unhappiness would bring them back to suburbia. Fortunately, this does not seem necessary.

Joyce Sharp, who is office manager for Century 21 - Penney, a real estate office in Oakville, zeroed in on a twelve acre parcel of land north of Acton and the house came out of the planning stages.

Lionel has long been interested in Quaker type circular barns built a century ago in Eastern Ontario although the original concept for the house was freerform. It became circular for ease of construction. Originally designed as a cottage for the Sharps' Muskoka property, the house had to grow and become a residence.

Always fascinated by Cordwood construction, Lionel wanted his house to be built of mortar and 12 inch log sections laid with ends facing the inner and outer walls, a pioneer method of construction.

The basement, fashioned this way, is a maze of circular supporting walls making fascinating catacombs for youngsters playing hide and seek. Unfortunately, the cordwood construction took more research, better seasoned logs and too much time. Having only six months before they had to live in their house, the Sharps revised the plans for frame construction, the changes being made over a weekend.

It was decided to use cedar siding outside and a combination of wood and fabric indoors to achieve the desired texture, variety and softness.

Family built
The house was mostly "Sharp built" with Mirek and Marlow camping on the property the entire first summer while they struggled with basement foundation.

Melissa, Helena, Mirek's wife Gwen, friends and relatives helped Joyce and Lionel on the weekends. Local professionals were called in for the skilled jobs such as roofing, plumbing, electricity and fine carpentry.

The three thousand square foot house is surprisingly easy to heat. Heat rises to the mezzanine and the uncluttered space allows air movement to be efficient. The Sharps also find the house cooler than their previous home on Lake Ontario.

The interior is still a family project proving that a good house is never finished.

Nearly seven hundred baby trees have been planted in the open property in front of the house and some landscaping has been done although Lionel says they have no intention of imitating a "suburban lot."

A garage is being built with a connecting canopy to the house to "anchor it and stop it revolving."

The round house may not suit everybody but it was built by the Sharps for the

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DRAMATIC circular staircase complements the total circular design of the Sharp residence north of Acton.



HELENA SHARP does her homework in the dining room of the family's round house. The walls are done in soft pine.

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CORDWOOD construction is a feature of the Sharps' home. Lionel Sharp stands in front of one of the basement walls.

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