INFINITE RINGS IN LITTLE SPACE.

The Dream-house of Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Thomas.

GENERAL

Design of the house is best described as "Modern Rustic". It must be warm and friendly, nestled in the trees, and looking as if it belonged there. Brick, stone, wood and glass are favored, but there are no preconceptions in this field as long as the house fits into the landscape. To match the natural slope of the terrain different levels and terraces will undoubtedly be used in the landscaping, and the house may be on different levels in spite of the fact that we generally look down at too many stairs. Convenience and practicalities—or practicality—are of prime importance. The impossible we hope for is a design that gives maximum usable space and a feeling of expansion in a small house—

with eight or nine rooms. One that allows for a complete variety of living for changing moods without being "oppressive" as a "big" house or creating an overpowering work problem. Two preferences will help in this direction; we like rooms that can open up into each other for the expansive feeling and dislike halls as such. Any space which exists only as a thoroughfare feels wasted to me. I prefer a house built around a core to minimize the circulation to one whose extrusions are reached only through long corridors. Further I like a feeling of compactness—of everything having a reason for its being there, whether because of design or of use, as in storage walls and closet partitions.

Accordingly, I would prefer to list "activity centers" rather than actual rooms, leaving the arrangement and enclosure of these areas up to you. Here I will only list the contemplated extent of the activities which seem to justify separate areas, but for the sake of convenience, will designate them by their more traditional names.

GARAGE

An actual garage is favored over the carport so often advocated, although the door itself could be on the list of things to be left off until we can afford it. I prefer to have a direct entrance from garage to service porch and also to workshop, but the building can be separate from house if connecting walk is well covered. Leave ample room to walk between and around car when door is closed—how about a covered area in front to park under while opening doors or getting out of car in rainy weather?

what outside entrance door is large enough to move by itself, or conveniently?

BACK BATH

Stall shower, toilet and basin. Compact, plenty of light, with room around shower for dressing—places to hang clothes. This bath will get the dirtiest—should be designed to be easily cleaned. Should be close to back door or some outside entrance, (for coming in from garden), workshop and kitchen. Passage should be arranged so I can get from there to dressing room without running through front room.

check sig. + me + back closet.

SERVING PORCH

This is actually the laundry and sewing end of an area which extends on to include the kitchen and dining. Sounds odd on paper but they can all be put neatly under one roof—

we believe. The Post-War house on Fileshire has a combined kitchen and service porch which is wonderfully satisfactory. In any event, this area should belong to the house rather than being either a back porch or a cold, white laboratory—should be a comfortable
place to work. In addition to Bendix, young etc.—as finances allow, there should be a table and sink for flower arranging, and space to set down supplies before taking them into the kitchen. Also sewing equipment, vegetable bin, food storage and possibly a deep freeze unit, as well as the usual broom and gage closet. Finally, there should be a minimum of steps to negotiate while carrying the laundry out to the drying yard. (Incidentally, where are we going to put a drying yard on that site?)

KITCHEN

Middle section of this area, still warm and cheerful, is the kitchen. See Mrs. Thomas for actual dimensions and arrangement. Generally it should be small enough for convenient working—company won't gather in the kitchen with the dining area connected. We propose to separate kitchen and dining by a bar-height counter, but admit that a sliding panel to completely separate the two at times might be a worthy addition. If so, the kitchen must be arranged to be a comfortable room by itself when shut off. Please take care of ventilation and getting rid of fish and cauliflower smells! In relation to the rest of the house, it should be placed so the Mrs. can get to the bedroom without going through the front rooms when I unexpectedly bring guests home. One big problem in trying to get laundry, kitchen and dining all under one roof is the preservation of cupboard space—we want all we can get.

DINING

Gay, friendly, warm, informal room—more of a lounge or sun-porch than what we usually call a dining room. Small fireplace for indoor barbecues, table height, collapsible table that expands to seat maximum of 8—only keep six chairs in room most of the time. Storage space for dishes, china, barbecue pottery. Maybe some of these dishes should be stored elsewhere—be sure there is room for them. Wide doors opening onto patio. Patio at this point should be covered, with screened windows looking out on it to give effect of eating outside—we like to eat out but don't like bugs in our food. Watch cave construction for bird's nests and hornets—keep it simple.

LIVING ROOM

In contrast to most contemporary designs which try to make the living room part of the patio or the outside, we prefer to have this feeling in the dining lounge and keep the "living room" an oversized den, with all the protected, secluded feeling of a den. The windows should have a dramatic view but probably the distant view across the valley rather than the intimacy of the woods around the house. (The front part of the lot will probably be landscaped to look pretty good in time too!) Room will have two focal points and three main activities: fireplace for conversation groups, music corner around piano and phonograph, and favorite chair and good light near bookshelves for reading. Room would be large enough to seat only 6 comfortably, but 8 comfortably means comfortably, only 2 to a sofa. Probably 9 or 10 could be seated in it. Getting away from a small room, isn't it? Especially if we try to leave room for that future instrument like an electric organ or a novichord. Piano will be the small grand—music corner will also include besides phonograph and records, spreading space for looking through albums or reading about the music. Room should be arranged, or house wired, so that music played here can be heard throughout main part of house and outside as well. Separate speakers probably best for this. Try as we may, we can think of no way to get two pianos together for special occasions other than having this room connect with the studio. But we also feel that we will use both rooms properly more often if they are adjacent and connected with something like wide sliding doors. There will probably be times when we would want to use them both anyway. This will be the "nice" living room but we don't want it formal in any way—more on the cozy side to encourage conversation and relaxation.
STUDIO

This is the real "living" room—the all-purpose work room!! Large, serviceable—could have beamed ceiling, big fireplace—feeling of a mountain lodge. Floor will have to be durable—something that will take anything from drums to paint and varnish which I can't seem to keep from spilling. Next to living room is the second piano and the recording equipment. General music "work" area—leave room for old pump organ or any other servicey thing I might want. Another section would accommodate drawing, painting and small crafts. Sink and cupboards should be near this. Also BIG table, which could be a ping-pong table, and could be one we would use for big family dinners. There might even be a room for weaving in here. Somewhere there should be a secluded corner for a writing and business desk—some place to figure out income tax and how to pay for this house!! Need a big storage space for supplies—large sheets of drawing paper, art materials, scrap files, wrapping paper, boxes, string and all that junk! I save. Maybe some of this along with the sink could be behind large cupboard doors for making the place look good without really cleaning it up! Especially good since room will be used for parties and games. Shelf space for knick-knacks and mementos, wall space for pictures and display boards. Additional storage space for card games, table games, musical instruments—maybe even extra chairs. There's an eight-piece orchestra that will hold jam sessions here.

WORK SHOP

There are only two reasons for separating this from the "studio". One is that I want a few simple power tools and want to do some work in clay that is too messy for a room that we would have parties in, and the other is that there is some possibility that as the family takes over the studio eventually, this will probably become my last retreat for seclusion and privacy. Perhaps all my drawing materials will end up down here. We should keep this horrible thought in mind. Whether it is part of the garage, or part of the studio, or a separate room connected with either, or completely by itself is left up to your rational judgment as a parent. As a bachelor, I always thought of it as an extension of the studio, but now I'm open to argument. One amateur carpenter suggests that a window placed at the end of the work-bench will allow long planks to be fed into a saw without the necessity of having a room forty feet long.

ENTRY HALL

This is more of a two-way protection for people at the door and people in the living room that an actual hall. A closet-height partition would be sufficient. Arriving guests should be able to retreat to the bathroom or powder room, (probably the guest room) before interrupting things in the living room. I would hope that we won't have to create a separate area for this since I don't like halls—any trick ideas?

MASTER BEDROOM

Median sized room—twin bed, chaise lounge and one extra chair. Room should be large enough to allow for occasional shifting of furniture arrangement, addition of padded back-rests, larger night stands as we grow older and need more things to put us to sleep, but generally small, since wardrobes and bureaus will be in dressing room. Can have nice windows looking into trees and could have door going out onto patio.
DRESSING ROOM

Since this space requires careful measurements to fit everything in most conveniently, we can go into it at greater length whenever you're ready. Right now we just list general desires. The line naturally wants a dressing table, three-way mirror, full-length mirror, plenty of closet space—more hanging space than shelf space. I want a shelf arrangement for toilet articles etc. and a place to shave—I use an electric razor—a chair to sit on, convenient place to shine shoes, easy access to clothes. I like the idea of a separate wash basin in the dressing room, but it would not be needed if the bath itself were private to the master bedroom. Expense will enter into this. I understand that a window in the wardrobe closet minimizes moth hazard but maybe something will be done with D.B.T. to aid this condition.

BATH

If we can afford a separate bath for the master bedroom, it would not have to be spacious because of the dressing room taking over some of the usual functions. I like a combination shower and tub with the tub running diagonally so you have a place to sit. It also gives more room in the shower which I like. Wash basin must have counter arrangement with shelf and counter room.

2 MORE BEDROOMS

Here's where your flexible planning comes in. We need a three-bedroom house, but can't tell you yet whether the other bedrooms are for a girl and boy, 2 boys, or three boys and four girls or one girl and six guests. Whatever the combination, they need closets, ventilation, and a bath. You can give us some ideas on this. This would be the bath used by guests, since there probably won't be a powder room. One of the bedrooms will certainly be set aside for guests to start with anyway.

DON'T FORGET THESE:

- Linen closet. Some extra blankets might possibly be kept near the various beds, but it is much handier to have everything in one centrally located place. Good idea is to have a bread-board deal to pile things on as you put them in or take them out of closet.

- Storage space for vases and, shall we say, objets d'art?

- Furnace and ample water heater—maybe two. Hate to run out of hot water!

- Bar. This could be on back wall of kitchen, or connected with flower sink on service porch, or in cabinet near the sink in the studio. No particular reason for having complete area devoted to it, such as actual bar and stools—just convenient place to mix drinks without conflicting with kitchen activities.

- Closet for sport clothes. Many of these are not used often enough to justify space in the regular wardrobe closet or they are not kept clean enough to mix in with good
clothes—for instance—tennis shoes, nice smelly riding boots and breeches.

Storage space—maybe in garage—for garden tools. Also space for patio furniture in winter. This area might also take luggage and cartons.

Outside flood lights.

Check room arrangement for insulation. I like the place quiet—especially watch out for bathroom sounds.

Arrange living room so people can sit out there while you’re eating without seeing you. Like salesmen who call while you’re eating.

In bedroom, check on maximum view of trees from room and bed—maybe need short savers on that side. Also check for low windows—does view go up or down from that spot. Remember the view from the bed is important.

Try to have laundry on same level as clothesline.

Space can be conserved by having desks or work tables on hinges, which swing out of cupboards instead of using room-space continuously for little-used piece of furniture.

Friends advise sliding doors throughout house, with obvious exceptions of Front and Back door. Saves space, more convenient, more practical, allows for more flexible arrangements and living.

Friends are divided on radiating heating—certainly worth much consideration. Check thoroughly on this—advantages are almost overwhelming.

Friends finally advise careful thought on benefits of the 4 ft. module. Investigate this too. Certainly gives spacious designs—very comfortable to live with. Does it really save money? Or is the 3 ft. module more economic? Most friends completely sold on the 4 ft. door.

Economy! Almost everyone has some idea of where money can be saved—how to get more house or living space for the money invested. This is of prime importance to me. I am completely unimpressed with goosiness and jin-cracks. I want comfort, room, good design, pleasing and satisfying space relationships, interesting balance of textures, clever ideas and hard thinking—as represented in work severe, practical arrangements and flexible living. To me, all the lasting designs of real beauty have evolved from this type of thinking and this approach to the problem.