

WHAT WE DO » WHERE WE EAT » HOW WE LIVE

Bainbridge Island

Silver Linings

Folks Art

Bearly There

Hamner Time

Less Is More



WHEN KAREN DACEK FIRST CALLED ARCHITECT MARK OLSEN, SHE TOLD HIM she wanted to build a home. And—by the way—she was on a serious budget. While working as a project manager for Clark Construction in 2015, Dacek had a strong sense of what she wanted but knew from experience that she didn't have the budget for a custom home on the island. She was resigning herself to the idea of buying a generic plan off the internet when her boss, Rachele Turnbull, convinced her to call Olsen first.

Dacek told Olsen that her all-in budget—including the home's design, permitting, construction, cleanup and utilities—was approximately \$380,000. Olsen had just come from a firm working on projects where design-build budgets routinely soared into the millions. Nonetheless, he was intrigued by Dacek's vision for a simple white Vermont-esque farmhouse and decided he couldn't pass up the challenge to create a beautiful, modest home for the single mother of three (Ellie, 17, Eva, 14, and Mooney, 10).

Olsen drew just one floor plan. It was perfect. "Thankfully our ideas aligned," Dacek said.



LESS IS MORE
Karen Dacek had a vision of clean simplicity for her Vermont-style farmhouse by Fletcher Bay. Lots of white, straight lines and a refined touch brought her idea of minimalist perfection to life.



Mother Of invention

SIMPLE NECESSITY FRAMES HOME DESIGN



SENSIBLE SOPHISTICATION
 At 2,300 square feet, the unfussy farmhouse is designed to be lived in. Dacek choose finishes like wide plank spruce floors (made to weather with the home), white pine walls and a simple glass backspalsh in the kitchen.



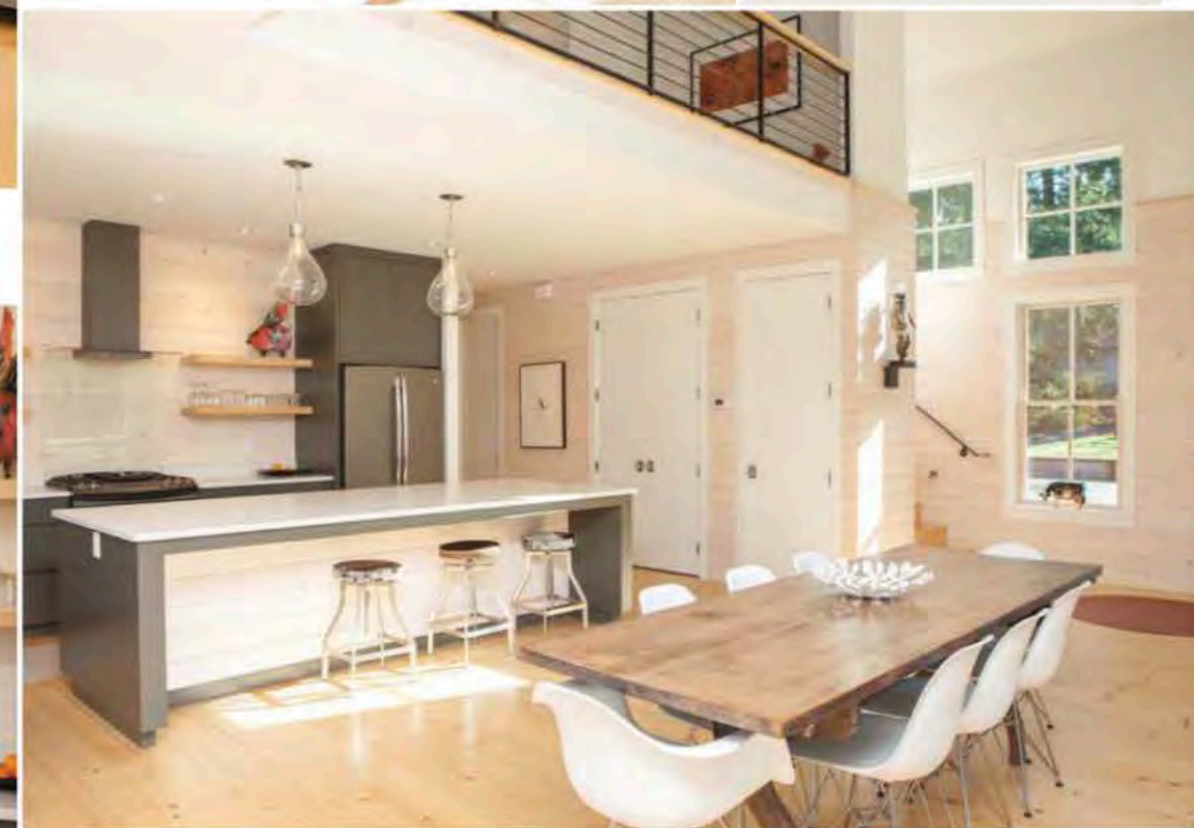
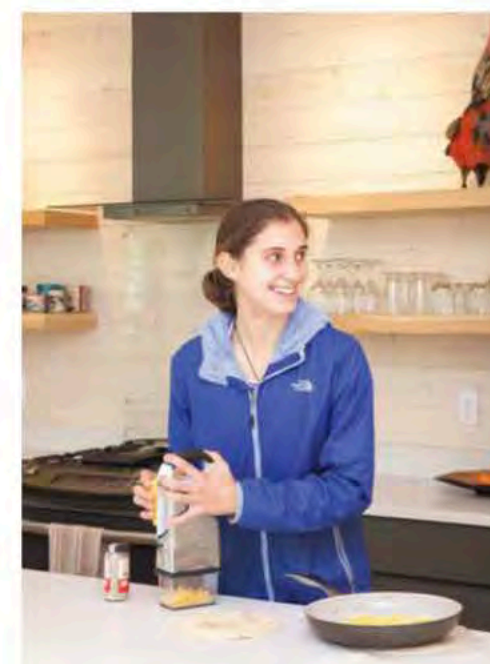
"He was from Rachele's boat," said Dacek, explaining that Olsen and Turnbull knew each other from rowing together, where strong bonds are forged between shellmates. "I basically financed this house on relationships. Were it not for Rachele's encouragement and support, I'm not sure I would have had the courage to do this for myself."

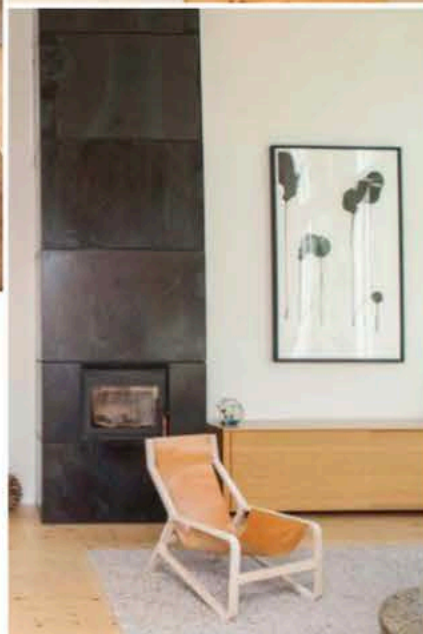
Once Olsen created the plans, he agreed to work on a consultation basis thereafter, something Dacek describes as the all-time greatest bargain. Dacek made most of the calls in the field, reserving Olsen for big decisions so that fees would not break the bank.

Dacek broke ground in August 2015, racing to get the house underway and a roof installed before the end of October, when she knew the rainy season would necessitate the use of heaters and dehumidifiers, something she couldn't afford. The first week in October, Kingston Lumber delivered the home's preassembled stud and plywood walls and by the third week of the month the roof started going on.

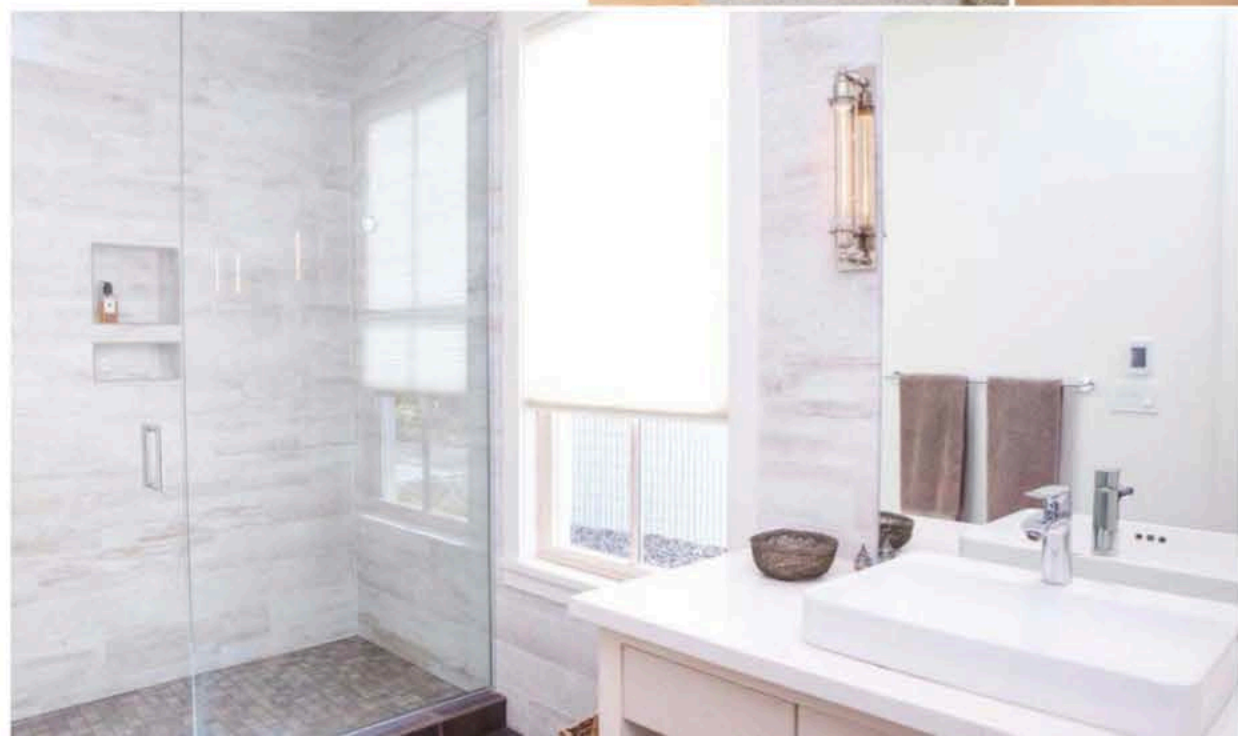
As the home progressed, Dacek would call superintendent friends from Clark—experts she knew in specific construction arenas—to come over after business hours to make sure the house was true. "I paid them in beer, cookies or hugs because that's all I had," she said. "We worked off of trust and they made decisions in my best interest. It was organized chaos."

Dacek also employed subcontractors throughout the process, many of whom were booked out for months but came to work for her because she had treated them well at Clark. In addition to calling in favors, Dacek and her kids did much of the work. "We did everything we physically could," she said, including laying some of the wide-plank spruce floors with cut nails, a job that remarkably came in under \$4,000, including materials. "If a truck was bringing supplies, we unloaded it. If I could pick something up and avoid a delivery fee, I did."





DOUBLE UP One of the home's most striking features is its two-story great room, which is punctuated by a floor-to-ceiling black steel fireplace and flooded with light thanks to the wall of windows. The Dacek tribe (along with dog, Lily) can oft be found all together there, eating, cleaning horse tack or reading.



Dacek even drove a U-Haul to Eugene to pick up her cabinetry. "And Oregon has no sales tax, so for a big ticket item like that, it saves a lot." On her way home she stopped on the side of the highway to buy vintage barnwood she found on Craigslist, shoved it on top of the cabinets and later installed it tongue and groove—after learning to use a chop saw—at the home's entry.

Dacek was sensitive to leaks where project money could be saved or wasted. "Every day, the kids and I would clean up the construction site. Over the life of the project, I spent less than \$600," she said of the chore that can typically run upward of \$2,000 per month.

Choosing finishes in the home was a budgetary balancing act. For example, the kitchen island is the largest piece of Silestone available, a splurge, whereas the kitchen's glass backsplash was just \$80. The floor-to-ceiling black metal fireplace—built around a wood burning stove that heats the home—is a focal point. Dacek found a former shipyard welder from Poulsbo who forged the panels for just \$3,500.

Like all good stories, luck played its part. Dacek had contracted with Chad Gresham to drill her well but after four days of boring, he'd gone 360 feet into the earth and was getting just a trickle. With only two 20-foot lengths of pipe remaining, Dacek said Chad was a bit worried. "If that didn't work, we would have to build a well house with reserve tanks." Finally, at 398 feet, just two feet shy of its reach, the drill hit water, pumping 55 gallons per minute. The well is one of the island's deepest, its pristine water coming all the way from the Olympic mountain range, making its way through aquifers beneath the Puget Sound to the property.



PURE AND SIMPLE Three uncomplicated buildings—the home, the garage and the barn—sit on a truly divine four acres, where horses, motocross cycles, dogs (and eventually sheep!) fit effortlessly. Reclaimed Oregon barnwood at the home's entry (above) is a special touch hand-installed by Dacek.

But no part of Dacek's minimalist dream home would have come to be had she missed out on the land by Fletcher Bay. Originally, Alan Turnbull, husband of Dacek's boss, had found the six-plus-acre plot. They came up with a plan to subdivide it that would give Dacek enough land to support her horse and son Mooney's passion for motocross. Her final cost would come in just below \$300,000.

Although the Turnbulls and Dacek made their offer the day the listing became available, someone had already beaten them to it. Crushed, Dacek drove to the property—at the teary request of Mooney—to say goodbye. While the grieving family walked the land for a final time, they unexpectedly ran into the man who'd snagged their purchase—a very tall, "intimidating" Bob Fraik. Sheepishly, Dacek explained who they were and said that they'd be on their way.

Island residents and conservationists, the neighboring Fraiks knew Dacek was in the building business and feared she had plans for a sprawling development of large, one-acre homes. After Dacek explained the land was just for her, her three kids and a soon-to-be retired horse, Fraik had a change of heart. He told her he'd sell her the land at the price he paid and would hold it until she could get a construction loan. "It's just a really nice story about really nice people—how this island should be," said Dacek. "Bob and [his wife] Bonnie's generosity and vision for this island is largely why we're here today. And now we are very close friends."

Were it not for Olsen's simple design, for the generosity bestowed by Clark Construction's superintendents and subcontractors, for the Turnbulls' support, for for Dacek's elbow grease, meticulous management and stubborn perseverance, for Greshman's 400 feet of bits, or for the Fraik's kindness, the little white farmhouse would not have come to be.

"It was simple," said Dacek of her dream come true. "It just wasn't easy." ■