

## Jessica's House

Father and daughter work together to realize the restorative nature of good design.

BY LESLIE BOWMAN



by the dream to build something meaningful. a structure that will Gordon house is just that. Designed by her father, John Gordon, the handsome, handicap-accessible home is sited on 18 acres of the addition so that I would grow out of fields and woods adjacent to her parents' it," Gordon says. Still, she adds, "It was house in Bucksport. Gordon's home is the scary to think of living alone." In 2003, place she imagines living the rest of a full after a three-week intensive rehab program and productive life. Walking into this at the Shepherd Center in Atlanta, Georgia, stunning 1,700-square-foot homestead, you quickly understand why.

The practical and required modifica- independent living a try. tions for the home of a quadriplegic are so naturally designed into the structure, that a tour of its unique features is required to closely together to conceive, draft, model, truly appreciate the adaptations. Gordon's and select all fixtures and detailing. Sited injuries from a car accident in 1999 claimed the life of her dear friend and left the design team also wanted to make sure with limited use of her arms and hands. traffic noise.

ost architects are driven (The spinal cord injury is technically classified as a C6/C7.)

Gordon, after more than eight weeks in intensive care and four months of rehabilimake a difference in tation, moved into a small addition her the world. The Jessica parents had built onto their home. While equipped with all the features for accessibility, it was tight. "Dad purposely designed which Gordon attended with her younger sister, Elissa, she came back ready to give

During the home design process, father and daughter, architect and client, worked close to the main highway in Bucksport, her paralyzed from the mid chest down that the structure was configured to buffer \$ around a courtyard and formed by three simple gabled structures. A garage stands on one end, living space is in the middle, and bedrooms are at the other end. The bedroom wing, which is tilted in plan by 10 degrees, takes advantage of sun and views. It also has a wide hallway with a 15foot desk workspace so that Gordon can access her computers and video editing

The resulting floor plan is organized

In "Jessica's House," form is never sacrificed for function. Outside, a 26-foot-tall tower complements the home's uniquely sided and colored sections. This contemporary approach, which adds elements of fun and spirit to purely practical design considerations, is echoed inside with brightly colored walls and fanciful decoration.

equipment. (She is a multimedia artist.)

Gordon loves to cook and entertain, and hosts family gatherings at least once a week. Her kitchen consists of back wall cabinets and a 30-inch-high countertop for cooking, food prep, and storage. The 34-inch island accommodates wheelchair access below the sink and next to the dishwasher. During the design process all appliances were carefully researched and selected with the help of Dunnetts of

Bangor, where the Gordons made numerous visits. All counter surfaces are granite, and all drawers and cabinets feature wide stainless steel pulls. A frontloading washer and dryer were raised for

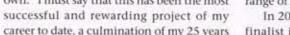




includes a 4-foot by 6-foot tile shower, features ample room at the toilet and Gordon's limited ability to regulate her own body heat would pose special prob-

lems when considering the heating systems. The floor contains in-slab radiant heat throughout and is covered with a laminate of a cherrywood appearance. The temperature is evenly controlled and the surface was chosen to provide both visual warmth and ease of wheelchair movement. Additional heat sources are a gas fireplace in the living room and a radiant-heat ceiling in the bedroom.

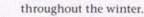
While John Gordon, a principal at Gordon Stanley Architecture in Bar Harbor, had been designing and building houses since 1982, this project was in a league of its



says. He and his daughter generously share tional building, "the barn." Housing recrewhat they learned in designing and building ational and physical therapy equipment, as dent, she says, she has come to realize the this home, including hosting visits from well as a sauna and greenhouse, the space value of living in Maine. "People are more individuals and groups interested in adap- has expanded the living space of the entire friendly, more in touch with reality and tive design. Jessica Gordon also is active family while providing for Gordon's with Alpha One in Bangor, a statewide orga-specific needs. An athlete all her life, this nization with a mission to provide indepen- workout space helps her train for quad

own. "I must say that this has been the most range of disabilities.

In 2006, this home was recognized as a career to date, a culmination of my 25 years finalist in the AIA Maine design awards. of studying and practicing architecture," he Today, it shares the grounds with an addident living services for people with a wide rugby, which she plays at various locations pendently in a home she loves.



Before the accident in 1999, Gordon could not wait to get out of Maine after graduating from high school. But through this process of becoming more indepenthe things that really matter in life."

John Gordon is happy to have his oldest daughter both close by, and living inde-



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