

industrial strength house

Design will bring outdoors in

By **NATHAN WHALEN**
Staff Reporter

Driving down Race Road on Central Whidbey Island, one will see thick woods combined with houses of all shapes and sizes scattered throughout the area.

Nestled between the road and the water, a small group of construction workers are busy building a house complete with metal I-beams and concrete columns.

Workers from North Central Drywall were busy this week putting up the drywall for the 2,300 square-foot home.

It is destined to be retirement home of Paul Menzel, a philosophy professor at Pacific Lutheran University, and his wife, Susan Blank.

Their home will have a full view of Saratoga Passage, allow them to show off their art, and is energy efficient. "One thing was to bring the outside in," Menzel said of the windows that face the Passage and wrap around part of the house.

Bret Drager, principal architect for Drager Gould Architects in Tacoma, said the house will have an industrial feel that will be different than most other houses. The idea is a primitive hut with with Bermuda roof," Drager said. The house looks like three squares - one for the living area, one that makes up an adjoining tower, and one for the garage.

The layout of the squares make Menzel's backyard look like a courtyard. He hopes that when the midday sun hits his property, the windows will help heat the courtyard.

Walking into the house one will see a fireplace that sets the entry apart from the living area. Drager said that the house allows for artwork to be displayed, which is a nice touch for Susan who is an art teacher, who also plans to retire this year. We wanted to provide an unpretentious format for art," Menzel said.

The two-story "tower" almost looks separate from the house but is connected by a hallway and stairs. The tower's second story will contain a guest bedroom and the first story will contain an art studio, which will be conducive to working in their home. "When you have a work space like that, you need a sense of getting away," Drager said.

While the house combines an industrial look in a wooded setting, it is also



Nathan Whalen/staff photo

A North Central Drywall employee works on a house (the Blank-Menzel Home) on Race Road that will be finished by the end of summer.

an environmentally sound structure. "We're using as much recycled product as possible." said Ted Clifton, owner of Clifton View Homes, who has been building on Whidbey Island for 15 years.

When trees were cleared to make room for the home, it was decided to use them in the construction of the home. The wood from the trees can be found in the house's trim, finished floors and in the bookshelves to be installed. Menzel said he hired someone with a portable sawmill come onto his property to cut up the trees.

He added that the steel used in the I-beams also comes from recycled material.

The home will be energy efficient, thanks in large part to a geothermal heating system in the concrete floors. Menzel said the system will use approximately one-fourth of the electricity typically needed to heat a house of that size. He added that the money saved from electricity usage should pay off that investment in several years.

Construction workers should have the house finished by the end of July and Menzel hopes to be moved in by the fall.

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