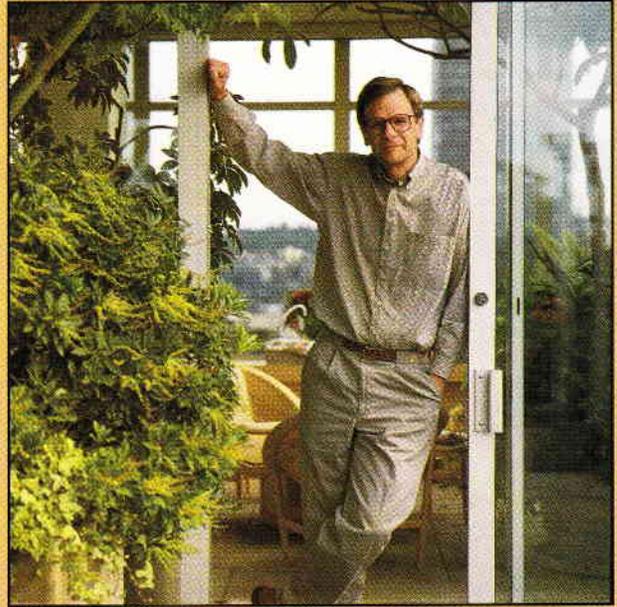


by
Fred
Albert



MEL CURTIS

Turn the Page

Photographs by
Michael Shopenn

Software jungle
behind him,
Paul Brainerd
contemplates
the future in his
downtown
condo

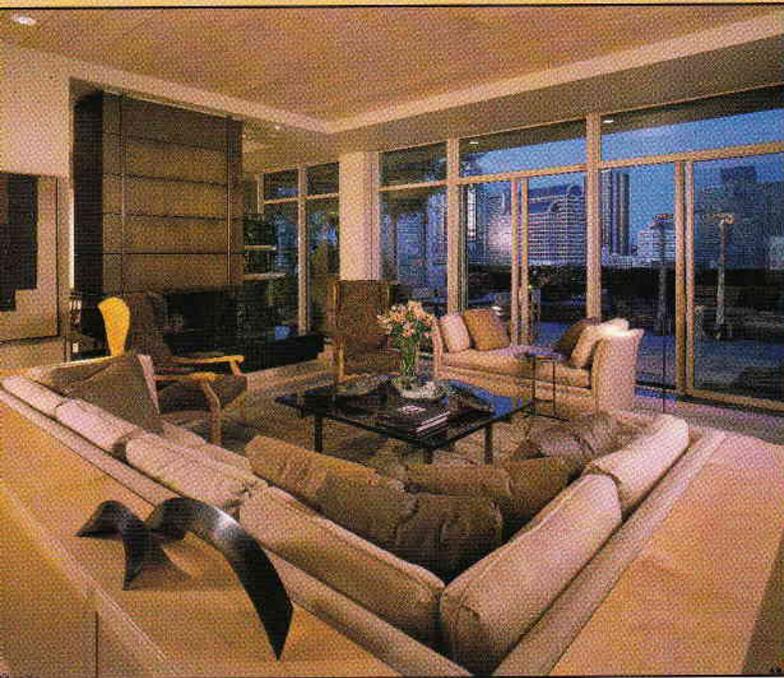
Paul Brainerd opens the door of his Seattle condominium and offers a vague apology. He was up late the night before, hosting a party to celebrate the merger of Aldus Corporation, the company he founded a decade ago, with California's Adobe Systems. The union cinched Brainerd's planned departure from the company and left the one-time journalism student a very wealthy man.

Easing his lanky frame into the living-room sofa, the 47-year-old father of desktop publishing reflects on his retirement and the place he hopes to see more of: his home. After a punishing schedule of 12-hour days, he's looking forward to spending some time in the high-rise haven he shares with his longtime companion, accountant and musician Louise Baldwin.

Brainerd moved into the 4,200-square-foot condominium four years ago, after leasing a succession of smaller units downtown. Invariably, each time he got settled, the owner would decide to sell. "I moved four times in five years, which was getting rather old," Brainerd says. "I felt it was time to find a place and put down roots."



Rare Biedermeier wing chairs grace the condominium owned by Paul Brainerd (opposite) and Louise Baldwin. The custom rug echoes the sandstone pavers on the terrace, while the den at rear offers a cozy refuge from the city's roar.



RELUCTANT TO GIVE up the liveliness of the city or his daily walks to work, Brainerd purchased his present home on the 15th floor of a downtown high-rise. Sophisticated but not pretentious, the condo's neutral palette and solid fabrics provide a passive foil to the contemporary artworks on the wall. The abundance of natural wood imbues the space with a prototypically Northwest character, while the sweeping view of the downtown skyline, waterfront and Elliott Bay adds a cosmopolitan accent. "It was extremely important to me that this space feel very comfortable and warm and inviting," Brainerd says.

Under Brainerd's supervision, the project progressed as efficiently as a software rollout, going from concrete shell to finished product in a brisk 11 months. "He actually called me one day and hired me from the airport," recalls Seattle interior designer Pamela Pearce, who already knew Brainerd through an earlier project. The executive was about to catch a plane for Europe, and he wondered whether Pearce would be willing to interview some architects in his absence. Upon his return, he met the finalists and selected George Suyama, an architect whose graceful handling of space and consummate artistry with wood suited Brainerd's vision of a tranquil urban retreat.

A frequent visitor to Sweden (Aldus had an office there), Brainerd admired that country's furnishings and interiors, and wanted his own home to have some of that same ambience. Studiously avoiding anything that might smack of '50s Danish modern, Suyama and Pearce paired pale woods with natural stone and metal, and overlaid them on a crisply geometric floor plan that uses partitions and grade changes to help define living spaces. "The detailing was really rather sparse for such a large space," says the architect, who let the rich materials provide most of the decorative interest.

Builders KreckowJenningsInc. carried out the design team's vision, softening the ceilings with pale hemlock planks in the main rooms and slatted ribs in the master bedroom and corridor. The slats are echoed in a freestanding divider that sepa-

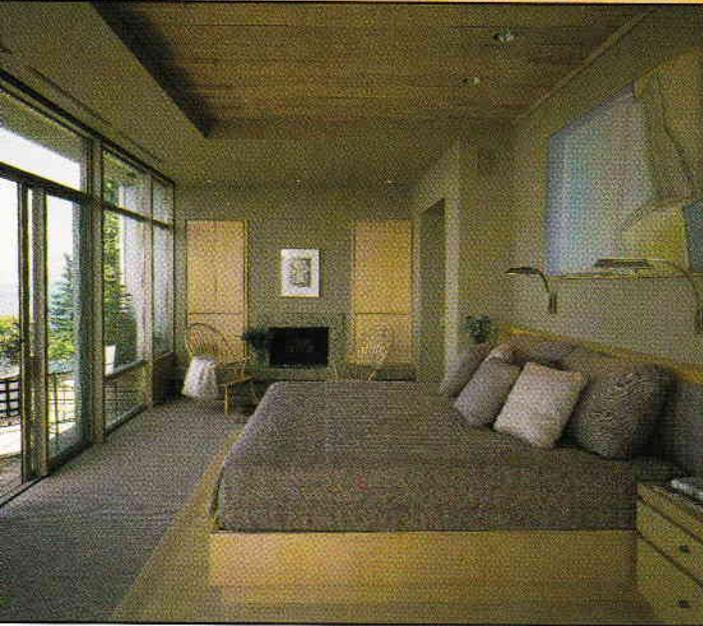
rates the entry hall from the dining room and view beyond. "We wanted something slightly transparent, to provide a foil as you walk in, so you don't actually have contact with the dining room," Suyama says.

The space was designed to work well for large parties but still feel comfortable when Brainerd and Baldwin are alone. The airy living room is dominated by a sectional framed in a maple-and-pearwood surround. The paneled design is repeated on the fireplace flue, a steel sheath plated with brass and acid-etched to a mottled bronze finish. The fireplace screens the living room from the dining room, allowing traffic to flow between the two rooms while keeping them visually separated. The two square tables in the dining room can be joined to seat 12 or pulled apart when the owners are dining alone.

On those occasions, Brainerd and Baldwin usually retire to the den, a cozy, sheltered space just off the living room. Bookcases lining the walls house a host of baskets and carvings, as well as Baldwin's collection of antique musical instruments.

Baldwin, who usually shuns the spotlight, took an active role in the design of the kitchen. The clean-lined space features separate islands for cooking and cleanup, and maple cabinets crowned with sleek granite counters. The kitchen faces a glass-enclosed sun room paved with sandstone and dotted with potted plants. The sandstone continues outside, on the 1,200-square-foot terrace landscaped by R. David Adams Associates, Inc. To get to the terrace, you have to cross over a shallow, granite-lined trough filled with water. The trough

A wood-framed sectional (far left) orients guests to the city skyline. A William Hoppe painting hangs on the slatted screen dividing the entry hall (left) from the dining room. The raised bed (below) overlooks Elliott Bay and a pair of Hans Wegner chairs. Retractable doors unite the kitchen (right) with the neighboring sun room and dining room.



accentuates the transition between the interior and exterior, its stepping stones acting like a bridge between two separate worlds. On sunny days, light reflecting off the water's surface casts shimmering ripples on the ceiling inside.

THE ARCHITECTURE'S SCANDINAVIAN theme is echoed in the furnishings, which include a number of contemporary pieces dating from the 1940s through '70s. "The main thing was to try to find some classics and use them as functional pieces, but also as sculptural pieces," Pearce says. The slinky lounge chairs in the living room and the lithe, slat-backed chairs in the dining room provide a fluid counterpoint to the home's hard-edged geometry. Classic fan-backed chairs by Danish designer Hans Wegner flank the fireplace in the master bedroom. Wegner's traditional style is echoed in the sylphlike writing table and chair across the room, crafted from ash and curly maple by Seattleite Stewart Wurtz.

Pearce tempered the home's modernist leanings with a few choice Biedermeier antiques, including a rare pair of wingback chairs, whose exaggerated proportions and figured finish sug-

gest 1980s Italy rather than 1820s Germany. Discovered at a New York antiques shop after a nationwide search, the pieces were in poor condition, with a splintered arm and no upholstery. "They were asking a small ransom for them," Brainerd admits. "It cost equally as much to make them whole again. But they're beautiful."

Although Brainerd was already a regular visitor to local art galleries, it wasn't until he bought the condo that he began to collect in earnest. With guidance from Pearce and art consultant Yvonne Banks, he assembled a small but choice cross section of pieces by contemporary Northwest painters and glass artists, as well as Native American carvers.

"When we entertain, everyone always wants to have an art tour," Brainerd says. Some items, like Nancy Mee's fused-glass pillars, were commissioned directly from the artist. "It was a fun way to work," Brainerd beams. "You don't get an opportunity to do that often."

Brainerd's biggest passion, however, is photography. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather were all photographers. As a youth, Brainerd toiled in the family's camera shop back in Medford, Oregon, and worked his way through college documenting student protests for the local papers. Today, the corridors leading to his front door and home office are lined with works by Edward Weston, Berenice Abbott, Henri Cartier-Bresson and other masters. "My interest in photography is very broad, in terms of aesthetic and types," observes the homeowner. Noticeably absent are any works by Brainerd himself. "With the computer side of my interests, I haven't had time to go back and pursue much of that," he laments.

WITH ALDUS BEHIND him, Brainerd will serve on the board of Adobe and devote the rest of his time to travel and his new Northwest environmental foundation. "I'm looking forward to having a somewhat better-balanced life," he says. "Maybe I'll even take some photographs." ■

Contributing editor Fred Albert reports regularly on home design for Seattle and Pacific Northwest magazines.