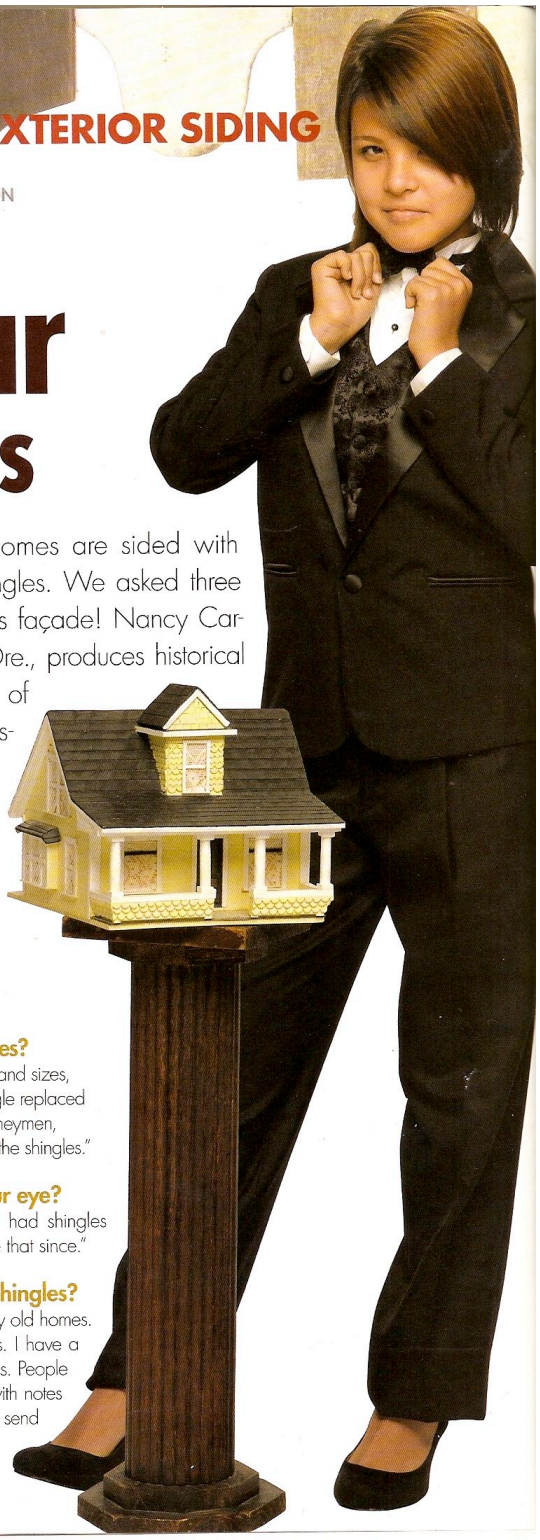
EDITED BY MARGARET FOLEY • PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRUCE WILSON

3 shingular sensations

They *know* wood siding! In Oregon, most homes are sided with wood–from planks to cedar to shakes and shingles. We asked three experts for tips on how to maintain your home's façade! Nancy Carey, the owner of The Cedar Guild in Gates, Ore., produces historical reproduction shingles. Robert Kraft, the owner of Kraft Custom Construction, specializes in historic home renovation and remodels. John Platz, the owner of Pilgrim's Progress Preservation in Boring, Ore., restores buildings for the Forest Service and consults with homeowners on preservation techniques. *Oregon Home* asked them for their side of house wrappings.



1. Nancy Carey, *The Cedar Guild*

Why is it difficult to replace shingle patterns on old homes?

"For two reasons: There used to be a larger variety of shingle shapes and sizes, but styles were standardized in 1931. Most people who need a shingle replaced have a house built before 1931. The other reason is that traveling journeymen, who had their own styles, techniques and idiosyncrasies, often made the shingles."

What are the most unusual shingles to ever catch your eye?

"I saw them on a trip to Maine several years ago. The gables had shingles shaped like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. I've never seen anything like that since."

With clients all over the country, how do you match shingles?

"Many of my clients are in the Northeast, where there are a lot of very old homes. I have a library of research on shingles and a collection of shingles. I have a sample from a church in New Jersey that was built in the early 1700s. People send me drawings, photos and sometimes the shingles themselves with notes and measurements on them. If it's a tricky design, I'll make samples to send to make sure they match."

"The siding is your home's suit, and who wants a bad-fitting suit?"

—Robert Kraft
Kraft Custom Construction

How did you decide to start making reproduction shingles?
"When my husband and I bought our farm in Gates years ago, we wanted to work at home. We had wood, so we began making traditional cedar roofing shakes with a mallet and froe. About 20 years ago, we switched to siding shingles. We've done replications for public restoration projects, but now work mostly with homeowners."

Do you have a favorite shingle?
"The full-cove shingle. It has a half-moon shape cut into the center of its bottom edge."

2. Robert Kraft, *Kraft Custom Construction*

Is it difficult to replace damaged or missing exterior features?
"Anything is doable. Any piece of material that was on a house originally can be replicated. It's often budget-driven, but you can use alternate materials. In fact, sometimes you *need* to, to get the job done."

What's a common mistake people make with siding?
"Sometimes people want to "Victorianize" or "Craftsmanize" a house, so they add a couple of details. What they often don't look at is the *scale* of the material. The devil is in the details, and it starts with scale. There's an architectural language that needs to be understood to get the right look. If you have a shingle-style home, put shingles on it."

Are you partial to any siding?
"I like a sidewall shake. There's a nice cottage feel to that, and it's not as common as a beveled siding. Really, I like *all* styles of siding. Each type has its own language and how it can add to the overall look of a house. It's working with someone who knows the nuances that can make the difference. The siding is your home's suit, and who wants a bad-fitting suit?"

How much planning should go into re-siding a house?
"If you live in an old house and you care about it and want it to look good, do your homework. Any extra dollars and minutes spent in research and design pay for themselves in construction. Those small details make a big difference in the final project."

Is it true you worked on the first *"This Old House"* project in 1979?
"I was a carpenter and the live-in caretaker of the house while we worked on it. The day before I moved in someone broke in and stole my stuff! That experience has come full circle. One of my home renovations is going to be on the show."

3. John Platz, *Pilgrim's Progress Preservation*

Do you ever feel like a detective when working on old buildings?
"Over time, you learn to read buildings. Now, I can look at just about any kind of mark on a building and tell you what kind of tool was used. To me, one of the most exciting things I do is figure out the forensics of that. Once you know what tools were used, you can get back to that particular era. For example, when we have a siding project, we often grind our own profile knives to mimic the historic profile of the siding to cut the right shape onto the wood."

What's the biggest problem in restoring a home to meet historical standards?
"It's often the opposite of new construction. Nine times in 10, materials end up being the bottleneck for the whole job. For instance, old-growth cedar shakes aren't easily available off the shelf, so finding needed materials is a major aspect of those jobs."

You've built or restored buildings using all sorts of historical tools and various techniques. Do you ever use power tools?
"I used power tools to build my own house! On a project, if we have a piece of wood that needs to have a lot of material on it removed, we'll use whatever we can to remove that material the quickest way we can, but we don't go completely to the cut line. We'll finish it off with the historic tools. When you're done, you have the same results, but you've used modern methods to remove a lot of waste."

If you have an old house, is there a limit to the exterior changes you should make?
"The historic patina of a building is always important. Whether or not your home falls under historic guidelines, you should keep the features that define the architecture of the house. Those character-defining features should be preserved no matter what changes you make. Unfortunately, that doesn't always happen, but those features should be considered the sacred grail of the design."

—Margaret Foley

Hire our Shingle Experts!

- **Nancy Carey**, The Cedar Guild, Gates, Ore., 503-897-2541 or cedar-guild.com
- **Robert Kraft**, owner, Kraft Custom Construction, Salem, Ore., 503-364-5842 or kraftcustomconstruction.com
- **John Platz**, Pilgrim's Progress Preservation, Boring, Ore., 503-663-7336.