

Last year there was a birthday party for Polly hosted by Karen Cakebread. Karen opened the party with a question to the 60+ guests, "How many of you here today have worked with Polly on your homes or other spaces?" The hands raised were many. And all of the remarks that followed were summed up, in my view, as "Working with Polly is like doing it exactly how you want it done with Polly leading the way so you get what you want". I could offer so many examples of friends in Saint Helena who took the step of a major renovation or a ground-up build of a new home only because they knew Polly would take care of them. The list of references she can offer you must be very long...

But first, some background:

In 1992 we purchased an acre property one street over from Dean York, on Boyson Lane. The house was merely a cottage. Through a referral we met Polly and over the next few years she expanded and renovated the property for us. Our sweet weekend home (we lived and worked in San Francisco and Silicon Valley) became a dream of a full-time residence. In 1999, based on our excellent experience with Polly's work, we were ready to take the plunge of a tear down and a new \$4M house and guest house build. Two homes on one site, and a half-acre (sorry but I can't be humble here) of one of the BEST gardens in all of Saint Helena. Since that time, we've done several large design and build projects in Stinson Beach, San Francisco, Moss Beach, and now in Occidental. We've worked with other supposed "top tier general contractors" and my recommendation in a nutshell is: "we won't build anything ever again if Polly isn't in charge of it". Polly is currently leading the development of a \$6M build project for us in Occidental, and while I keep saying this one is our last one — I can't be sure. :-)

Your questions:

1. How was the working relationship at the beginning, middle, and end of the project? Would you hire Polly again? Are there portions of the process that are strong suits of hers?

Excellent question. Polly is a rare combination of designer, builder, and respectful friend. The start of the project, middle and end, are all the same. She listens expertly, adds her considerable experience and insight when it's needed, and uniquely wants her clients to have a good time during what is usually a stressful experience. She's thoughtful, skillful, and she communicates – the single most important strength she brings to the table is her ability to communicate – at all phases, the good news and the bad news, she's never shy about telling the truth, and she's an expert at keeping everyone informed. In this regard, it feels like she's "on your team" and has your best interests at heart. She's been very successful, has more repeat business than I can list here, and I believe it's because she approached every build as "it's a small town, and we'll be friends

when this is done, so let's be friends before we start. A Design/Build kind of friend doesn't let friends get screwed in a building project". Strengths: communications, organizational ability, integrity, impeccable execution.

2. Did you have a separate architect - or use Polly's plans and build services in total?

We have always used Polly's services in total. Polly has architecture consultation from area architects who rationalize her work. In several cases we have interfaced with them directly but mostly, Polly works with them behind the scenes.

3. What was the scope of your project, and the elapsed time from beginning of the design process/permitting to completion?

On our current project with Polly, we are at the 50% mark of a 56 acre family and ultimately \$6.8M compound in Occidental with Polly at the helm. It involves structural engineering feats, four buildings, a forest landscape masterpiece Meditation Forest Garden. Considerable infrastructure, hardscape, structural engineering, and massive layers of collaboration with 60+ subcontractors. So off the grid is our property that we had to get PG&E to bring electricity which besides costing an arm and a leg, was a bureaucratic nightmare (thanks for handling it, Polly). Big projects, tons of responsibility, interfacing and managing hundreds of details, keeping the budget, and all around thinking about everything her clients needs. We did it in Saint Helena, a street over from you, and the same kind of HUGE coordination feat. Polly's expert organizational skills are beyond my comprehension.

4. How would you describe the communications between yourselves and Polly?

Excellent. Continual. Text. Email. Phone. Evenings. Weekends. Always on. For best results, go to drinks with Polly in the beginning of the project. Have your check-in progress meetings at a dinner, too. Make it fun and it will be fun. Polly excels in this model.

5. What differentiates Polly Ogden in your opinion compared to other architects/design/build professionals in the area?

Polly has the luxury of being able to spend time with every project. She doesn't do 4 builds at a time. She doesn't need to. This is a HUGE advantage to you. Things happen faster because she is focused. Period. Her reputation with the top

craftspeople and service providers in the build community here is impeccable. Most everyone likes to work with Polly.

6. What are you happiest about in your new home/renovation?

Every property we complete with Polly feels like a home from the first night. There is a lot of care and mindfulness that comes from someone who focuses intently on a project. Polly's focus is one that few builders can honestly say they can afford to give to a project.