

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2009

© 2009, Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

Views Plus Totem Pole

Novell chairman's Aspen home reflects his diverse pursuits.

By [NANCY KEATES](#)

Aspen, Colo.



Owen McGoldrick

The driveway cost \$1 million, but it allowed this view.

To build his driveway, Rick Crandall had workers import a million pounds of moss rock from Utah and spend six months erecting a 28-foot-high retaining wall that hugs his steep hillside, a process that took six months and \$1 million.

In short, it was a challenge—exactly what the longtime computer executive likes. Chairman of [Novell Inc.](#), the open-source server software company, Mr. Crandall tackled the construction of his 8,250-square-foot home with the same patience and means he applies to his other idiosyncratic interests. "Part of appreciating something is to really get into the nuances behind it," says Mr. Crandall, who flew to New York to inspect the volcanic rock he'd located to create his kitchen counters. "If you don't have time for something, don't do it at all."

The home's steep hilltop location affords the living room a 70-mile panorama encompassing the four Aspen ski hills as well as three Colorado "fourteeners" (peaks higher than 14,000 feet). Architect Charles Cunniffe designed the home, completed in

2006 for about another \$7 million, to have mountain views from every room and to accommodate Mr. Crandall's collections.

Mountain Views and a Totem Pole

[View Slideshow](#)



Aspen Architectural Photography

The decor is heavy on the "Mountain Zen" look—lots of natural materials with a hint of Asian design—and the home's scale in some areas (a 12-foot-tall front door, 24-foot-tall ceilings) creates an effect more suggestive of a luxury hotel than a residence for two. The main floor, with its master suite, office and kitchen and living areas, has cherry floors, mahogany ceilings and lots of wood-framed glass windows. Art from Papua New Guinea is in the hall; the medicine cabinets in the powder rooms are made from old wooden bridal windows from China.

Mr. Crandall, 66, created the lighting, heating, audio, TV and a security system that can take close-ups of the ski hills to check conditions. "I'd probably blow the house up if I pushed the wrong button," jokes financial guru and neighbor David Dreman. "This is a guy with a lot of different interests."

The Home Front

It takes more than \$8 million to stand out at here at Starwood, Aspen's gated community whose residents include David Dreman and Robert Wagner. The neighborhood served as inspiration for John Denver's 1971 tune "Starwood in Aspen." What particularly distinguishes Mr. Crandall's home is the imprints it bears of his many curiosities. "I'm fascinated by inventors," he explains, adding that like himself, inventors ignore conventions and treat obstacles as challenges.

Next to the wine cellar, the ceiling was arched for the custom-carved "Crandall Family" totem pole, created by an artist who carved every figure to represent some element of Mr. Crandall's life. In the study there's a 1885 Wooten desk, an intricately constructed black walnut secretary with dozens of small compartments originally made for Emperor Pedro II of Brazil. Next to the desk is Mr. Crandall's collection of canes, each of which has an alternative function, be it a hidden six-shot .22 pistol or a Samurai sword.



Jason Dewey for The Wall Street Journal

The couple at the entrance

One of Mr. Crandall's favorites is in the media room: a rare "banjorchestra," a cabinet automatic piano mixed with banjo plus drums and traps, all playing the music of early ragtime and dance banjo bands from a perforated roll. Nobody knows how many banjorchestras, made in the early 1900s, were ever produced; Mr. Crandall, fascinated by the creativity represented by such instruments, read that the banjorchestra was a very desired but rare collectible. He spent two years searching before tracking down this model in a back room at Knotts Berry Farm. He had it restored and then wrote a 10-page essay entitled "Englehardt Banjorchestra" (for the company that made it) about its origins and his adventures finding it.

"It always needs tuning," says Mr. Crandall, opening the case and tweaking the tuning knobs at the top of the banjo. He slipped a nickel in and "Cryin' for the Carolines" kicked in. He's written a two-volume set about the history of cash registers and also displays an early 1900s slot machine (the kind that dispenses packs of gum to skirt anti-gambling laws).

His wife, Pamela Levy, says Mr. Crandall is "incredibly dogmatic and focused. He grabs on to something like a bull and doesn't let go until it's done."

Starwood hasn't been immune from the luxury downturn: A 7,940-square foot five-bedroom here is now on sale for \$6.5 million, far less than its original asking. Mr. Crandall has no plans to move. "I can't imagine selling it. Where would I go?" he says.

For the Dogs

While Rick Crandall was focused on his Aspen retreat, wife Pamela Levy purchased a 6,000-square-foot home near Vancouver, Wash., devoted to her passion for dog breeding and showing.

[View Full Image](#)



coming



Formally known as "Chateau Emishtu," named after the three dogs Ms. Levy owned at the time, Emme, Misha and Tucker, the French Chateau-style residence is also dubbed the "Dog House" as it is often home base for Ms. Levy's eight Australian terriers. The dogs have the run of their "side" of the home, separated from the rest by gates, and the home is decorated with dog paintings, sculptures, ceramic works, photos, ribbons from dog shows—items that wouldn't fit in the Asian-themed Aspen home. Mr. Crandall "rarely comes here," says Ms. Levy, who lives at the home (her room is on the dog side) several months of the year. She purchased the home in 2003 for \$825,000 while in the area for a dog show.

Ms. Levy's focus has paid off. She began showing eight years ago; her dogs have since won their breed category at Westminster three times.

Write to Nancy Keates at nancy.keates@wsj.com