

ARCHITECTURE



PAUL CARTER/The Register-Guard

Architect Nir Pearlson (below left) designed this house for Joy Watson and her husband, Doug. It won honors for residential design in the People's Choice Awards.

# The nature of DESIGN

The best buildings meld people and the environment



BY RANDI BJORNSTAD  
The Register-Guard

Joy Watson and her husband, Doug, probably are every architect's dream clients: When it came time to design their new home overlooking the McKenzie River east of Springfield, she said, "We just got out of the way and let Nir (Pearlson) do it."

The result was something the couple never would have come up with themselves, "and we're more than happy with it," Watson said. "If I had been there putting my two cents in, we wouldn't have gotten this."



The living-dining area of the Watson house along the McKenzie River is dominated by an expanse of glass, exposed beams and concrete flooring.

A lot of other people also appreciated the effort, because during the voting held last month during the Eugene Celebration, the Watson home won the single-family residential prize in the People's Choice Awards, an annual competition sponsored by the Southwestern Oregon chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Pearlson also won the top spot in the commercial category for another of his projects, La Perla Pizzeria Napoletana, a complete redo of the building at 13th and Pearl streets in downtown Eugene that formerly housed the iconic red-and-white striped Farrell's ice cream parlor and served as the birthday party

capital for generations of local children.

You'd never recognize it now. Gone are the dark wood (and vaguely sticky) tabletops, the red-hot walls and the clamoring decor that gave the place a nonstop fever pitch. By contrast, La Perla is spare, sophisticated and subtle, a combination of Pacific Northwest sensibilities and overtones of traditional Italian shapes and colors. It's just what Pearlson was aiming for when he and the building's owners, Beppe Macchi and John "Gianni" Barofsky — who first made their culinary mark with Beppe & Gianni's Trattoria at 19th

Please turn to **ARCHITECTS**, Page E2

BOOK REVIEW

## Let your spine tingle in an alternate universe

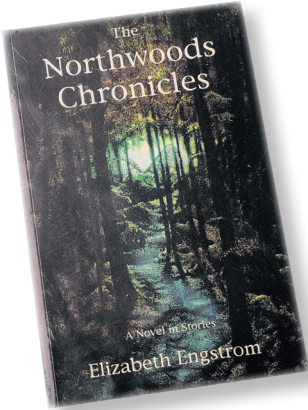
BY RANDI BJORNSTAD  
The Register-Guard

It's not spooky in the normal Halloween tradition, but Eugene author Elizabeth Engstrom's latest book — "The Northwest Chronicles" — is eerie enough to make you step on the accelerator next time you drive through what appears to be a typical small town.

A colleague of mine here at the newspaper, who happens to know Engstrom personally, handed me a copy of the book the other day and suggested I might want to give it a try.

Judging from the way the front cover was curled back, I figured it had already passed through a few hands — and he admitted that was true — which seemed like a good sign.

It starts with a bang in the very first paragraph, narrated by a 73-year-old grandfather in the fictional town of White Pines Junction: "Children disappear in Vargas County. There's no soft or kind way to put it. In days long past, I lost a sister and then my Weesie



and I lost our son. Some live in peace with the specter, some rise up and make accusations, but all of us breathe a sigh of relief when our young'uns reach puberty and we don't have to worry about them no more."

The occasional disappearance of children into a parallel universe, which once in a while intersects with the real one — assuming you still know what's real — is the backbone of this novel, which is told as a series of short stories by

a succession of narrators.

But in a place such as White Pines Junction, where children can be stripped from their families without a trace, you can just about bet that's not all that's going on.

Take Sadie Katherine, a fishing guide who loves her husband, Doc, but who experiences an unexplainable pull every year when a handsome stranger with the bluest eyes she's ever seen hits town and demands her boat and her time. Sadie fights it as best she can, but in the end she can't escape her own alternate reality, and she, too, disappears from White Pines Junction, returning to the world from which she came.

Howard Leppens disappeared too, under strange circumstances, after he and his wife, Louise, started remodeling their retirement house, which they discovered had been built by someone accused of murdering his wife. Howard refused to stay, Louise refused to go, and the problem was "solved" with intervention from yet another

Please turn to **BOOK**, Page E2

LETTER FROM HARRISBURG

## Do the right thing first; the benefits will come later

BY DORCAS SMUCKER  
For The Register-Guard

I've noticed that when my husband's relations gather at Kropf reunions, the ones who have strayed furthest from their Mennonite heritage rhapsodize the most about its value.

I reflected on this during my recent experience of following eastern Iowa's muddy country roads back into my Amish past.

How much of that unique way of life have I lost, I wondered, as I confidently drove our rented Subaru Outback and gushed like a tourist about those adorable Amish children and the quaint navy-blue dresses on the clothesline. And how much have I kept, I also wondered, surprised at how easily I clicked back into discussing gardens and babies and family trees in Pennsyl-

vania German.

My parents lived in the large Amish community of Kalona, Iowa, for a number of years in the 1950s and '60s. Dad taught in the Amish schools; four of us children were born there. Mom and Dad now live in Minnesota but still have many relatives and connections in the Kalona area.

My brother Marcus drives them the seven hours to Kalona now and then for funerals and such, but he seldom has time for the leisurely visiting that Mom and Dad enjoy. So my sister Rebecca and I came up with a plan: We would both fly to Minnesota — she from Virginia, I from Oregon — and we would take Mom and Dad to Iowa, wherever they wanted to go, to do all the visiting they wished.

Please turn to **AMISH**, Page E6