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## Home of The Month

3,040 Sq. Feet  
In 2-Level  
House

the lower gar-  
den patio, play-  
pool, the three  
bedrooms and  
a recreation room. Also included  
1,520 square feet on this level  
room, laundry, furnace and  
rooms.

From the family-dining room a sliding glass door opens onto a wide view deck which offers outdoor living space on the upper level. Although it was difficult to fit a television on television and game-storage space, the steep building site, the architect and the builder, the stained mahogany, the stained charcoal tone. The Robert Dightman, performed

📷 1 of 4 | This Oct. 19, 1958, Home of the Month story by Margery R. Phillips in The Seattle Times featured a Normandy Park home designed by Benjamin F. McAdoo Jr.; it recently was renovated by... (Seattle Times archives) **More** ✓

By [Sandy Deneau Dunham](#)

*Pacific NW magazine associate editor*

WHEN YOU TALK to people about the life and legacy of Benjamin F. McAdoo Jr., the first Black architect registered in the state of Washington, one name comes up second only to McAdoo's own: Margery R. Phillips.

Phillips is a legend herself: As The Seattle Times' longtime architecture and design writer, she launched the paper's wildly popular "Home of the Month" program in 1954, public tours and all, with [AIA Seattle](#). McAdoo was among the debut group of featured architects; Phillips wrote about his innovative, inspired work at least 10 times, and the Seattle residence McAdoo designed for George H. Hage in 1956 earned the program's "Home of the Year" honor.

Phillips featured the 3,700-square-foot Bothell home McAdoo designed for his own family three times: in an open-house announcement on May 18, 1958, and in a two-story series in the Sunday magazine in 1962: the upper level on Feb. 18, and the lower on Feb. 25.

Those who mention Phillips when talking about McAdoo credit her "for helping bring Northwest modernism to a broad audience, and providing visibility for emerging modernists — and McAdoo specifically," says University of Washington architecture associate professor Tyler Sprague, who initiated [The Benjamin McAdoo Research Collective](#) in 2021. "She was interested in

expanding the appeal of modern design and making it more accessible to the middle class. She was a prominent voice in celebrating McAdoo's work."

About the Shain home in Seattle, Phillips wrote in 1949, two years into McAdoo's career: "According to authorities, the family's activities should determine the design and plan of a good house. There is no better illustration of this accepted idea than the way in which Benjamin McAdoo, architect, has arranged the house featured today."

Phillips didn't always quote architects as "authorities," but for an October 1958 piece about another McAdoo Home of the Month, in Normandy Park, readers learned his views on stunning views. " 'The building site has a majestic, commanding view of Puget Sound looking toward Tacoma,' the architect said. 'And in the final solution, every room of the two-level house of 1,520 square feet of living area on each floor shares the view.' "

Like you wouldn't pack up your midcentury-modern dream board and tool over in the Thunderbird for a tour.

Architect Sheri Olson considered Phillips' article — and architectural voice — as she modernized that Normandy Park home for its newest owner. "[Phillips] wrote that McAdoo was 'one of Seattle's leading young architects ... [and] is bringing an ever-increasing appreciation for the modern to those who have been hesitant to accept it,' " says Olson. "Of course, his work should have been recognized regardless, but he was up against a lot of prejudice, and I just thought it was so cool how she helped cut through some of that."

On a smaller scale, Phillips' article even reaffirmed some modern-day design decisions, more than 60 years after it was written.

In the Normandy Park kitchen, homeowner Lisa Modisette had worked with refinishers to use a deep charcoal stain on the cabinets, which had been replaced during an earlier remodel. That turned into "a happy accident," Olson says, when they read this in Phillips' 1958 article: "Cabinets are mahogany, stained charcoal."

McAdoo's extraordinary vision endures, as does Phillips' visionary writing.

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