BY DAVE HOLBROOK

Shingling in Slo-Mo

Two years ago, on a previous Cregg Sweeney Artisan Builders job, I swore I was shingling my final roof … until Cregg dangled this project, which was too cool to pass up. There was nothing ordinary about this decidedly architectural, oceanfront house, to be clad entirely in Alaskan yellow cedar shingles.

Cedar wall and roof shingles are typically installed with a standard 5-inch (or so) exposure, with window, door, fascia, and corner trim providing ready boundaries that allow the work to be completed in sections, and relatively quickly. In this case, however, the architects dispensed with all exterior trim, calling for every course to be continuous, from wall across roof and back again on the far side, with woven corners, rakes, and hips. Built-in gutters replaced roof overhangs. In addition, wall courses were called out at a mere 2 1/2-inch exposure **(1)**. Well, easier drawn than done. At 2 1/2 inches, each course overlays portions of six prior courses, constituting an unusually thick buildup. Stacked this deep, the pileup grew concave, requiring us to press each shingle hard into position while nailing. Otherwise, the nailer would often blow the brittle shingle apart.

Another peculiar requirement was to make sure the eaves line was equal to the plane of the interior ceiling, calling for beveled shingle butts and precise layout **(2)**.

To ensure that the wall courses wrapped end-to-end true around the house, we relied on laser lines, targeting a story pole with a common reference line. Transitioning to the roof slope, the courses widened geometrically, to between 3 3/4 and 4 inches. However, since each roof course "inherited" and continued its adjacent wall course, no section of roof could advance beyond the highest completed wall section, so all areas had to come up in unison **(3)**. Wall corners and roof hips were woven **(4)**, using white Gorilla glue (it's waterproof and foams less and cures faster than the original formula), Collins clamps, and near-invisible stainless-steel pin-nails for reinforcement.

We used white or yellow chalk lines for every course, and, to avoid leaving nail holes when tacking up a guide strip, we hung it from thin aluminum flashing tabs, tacked with stainless staples above the exposure line. After a course is completed, the strip is driven downward, tearing the tabs free from the staples. It's a neat trick.

There was simply nothing fast about the job; space here doesn't allow inclusion of all the complications we encountered. I'd liken it to something between weaving a monster basket and installing scales on a really big fish. It's taken more than three months from base to ridge, covering about 60 square in all, with a crew of six to eight talented carpenters. Would any of us care to do it again? Well, I think this was my last roof, and one to remember.

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Photos: Dave Holbrook