

THE MAGAZINE of *SPLENDID HOMES and GARDENS* • JULY/AUGUST 2015

# DESIGN

NEW ENGLAND

## DREAM GETAWAYS

Summer houses along the New England coast





# the house of sea and sky

A SHELTERED PATIO with an outdoor kitchen offers stunning views of Cape Cod Bay. A mechanized screen can be lowered to keep insects out. Seating is upholstered in Perennials outdoor textiles.



# A FAMILY OF EIGHT REALIZES ITS DREAM OF A MODERN AND COZY RETREAT ON OUTER CAPE COD

WRITTEN BY MEAGHAN O'NEILL  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY DURSTON SAYLOR







**Down a shady gravel lane,** past the weathered gray-shingled houses and scruffy landscape that define Outer Cape Cod, sits an architectural surprise: a house finished in a golden-ruddy cedar, perched on a slice of land between the road and a bluff that drops a dramatic 130 feet to the beach below. As a visitor approaches the house, the arresting views of Cape Cod Bay aren't yet visible — but they are palpable.



**A SLAB OF LIVE-EDGE BLACK** walnut became a 14-foot custom dining table (THIS PAGE, TOP), designed by Ray Forehand of interior design firm Forehand + Lake. The lighting fixtures, also custom-designed by the interiors team, are made from hammered steel and mica. The kitchen cabinets are Tabu ash. Decks (RIGHT) provide views of the sea and landscapes.





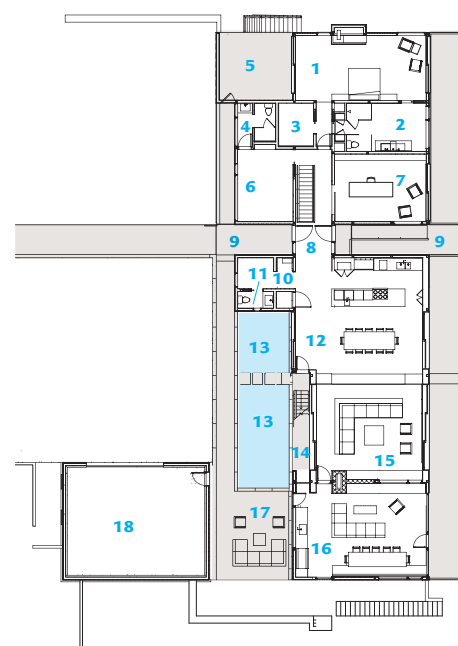


**IN THE OPEN-PLAN living area,** Forehand + Lake specified limestone for the floors and fireplace surround. The fireplace is made from Cor-Ten weathering steel, which was left outside to oxidize for four months.

This welcome is no accident. The site and its subsequent effect were carefully considered and rendered by architect Jill Neubauer, whose logic appealed to homeowners Terilyn and Todd Esse. The couple had rented vacation houses in Wellfleet, Massachusetts, for several years before building this house in Truro, one town to the north, closer to the tip of Cape Cod. That experience made the Esses well prepared programmatically as to what they wanted in a summer home — kids' rooms downstairs, limited television, social space for entertaining up to 20 guests. Design-wise, though, they were open to ideas.

For Todd, who works in energy trading and investments, building a contemporary home was a longtime dream. However, Terilyn, who now stays home with the children, three boys and three girls ages 8 to 21, was concerned that a Modern dwelling would be too cold for their active blended family. But Neubauer, founder of Jill Neubauer Architects of Falmouth, Massachusetts, says, "I knew what I wanted to do right away. And my initial





#### MAIN FLOOR

- |                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 1 MASTER BEDROOM | 10 MUDROOM         |
| 2 MASTER BATH    | 11 POWDER ROOM     |
| 3 CLOSET         | 12 KITCHEN         |
| 4 BATH           | 13 REFLECTING POOL |
| 5 OUTDOOR BATH   | 14 EXTERIOR STAIR  |
| 6 DEN            | 15 LIVING ROOM     |
| 7 OFFICE         | 16 SCREENED PORCH  |
| 8 ENTRY          | 17 TERRACE         |
| 9 WALKWAY        | 18 GARAGE          |

BUILDER **Cape Associates**

horizontal sketches are pretty much exactly what's built."

Despite her worries about the limits of contemporary interiors (a trip to California helped persuade her otherwise), Terilyn knew she wanted something unlike their traditional Fairfield, Connecticut, residence. "Part of the beauty of having a summer home is that it feels like a destination and a departure," she says. "I wanted it to feel like we were in a very different space than [our main] home."

Neubauer's plan comes into focus at the driveway. "There's a beautiful abstract line that welcomes you," she says, explaining it is designed to mimic the shoreline. "This is the language of the entire project: horizontal, quiet, abstract." An ipe walkway leads to the front door and a terrace, where honed granite steppingstones lead across a wading pool.

Inside, the axes of the 6,800-square-foot house are immediately apparent, with long sightlines to each side and views in every direction that lead to sea and sky. Above, a grid-ded skylight connects the outdoor canopies that tie together the wings of the house.

The main floor features an open-plan kitchen and dining and living areas. The space

**AT THE ENTRY, honed granite steppingstones lead across a wading pool to a custom staircase designed by Forehand. The steps lead up to the spacious roof deck with views of Provincetown.**





**THE GIRLS' BUNK ROOM** (ABOVE) is fun for kids, but sophisticated enough for adults. It features built-in beds of walnut and a garage-style overhead door that can open for open-air sleeping. Two screens that rise from the floor and lower from the ceiling add protection. The exterior of the house (LEFT) is clad in cedar finished with Penofil oil, which gives it a warm glow.





**SWEEPING VIEWS** OF the ocean are on display from one of two master bathrooms (ABOVE). The master suite (FACING PAGE) has a serene palette, but a painting by local artist Anne Packard supplies a pop of color. Homeowner Todd Esse, an art aficionado, chose a Massimo Vitali photograph for his office (LEFT); a painting by Chuck Close hangs in the stairwell beyond.





extends outside to a deck and screened patio through multiple lift-and-roll doors — monster sliding contraptions that when raised open the inside to the outdoors, but when closed let light in but keep weather out. From here, a sculptural outdoor staircase leads to a 680-square-foot roof deck with glass railings and stunning views to Provincetown and Cape Cod Bay.

To create the warm interiors important to Terilyn, designers Ray Forehand and Christina Lake of Forehand + Lake of Fairfield, Connecticut, used a quietly rich palette and textures in faux-suede textiles, chenille pillows, ash-paneled walls, and limestone floors and fireplace surrounds. They added contrasts by using weathered-steel panels left outside to oxidize for four months until they reached the perfect patina to build the fireplaces. “We didn’t want to make it ultra-Modern,” says Lake. “The goal was to make it neutral but comfortable, and to bring the natural flavor of the surroundings into the house.”

The main floor transitions through an office and small den into

the master suite, where two en suite bathrooms battle for the title of more luxurious. The first faces the ocean through floor-to-ceiling windows; the second is built entirely outdoors, replete with a generous soaking tub.

The house lot slopes steeply, and the back of the lower level is built into the landscape. Beachside, the property meets the bluff across the 50 feet of land protected by a conservation easement. The views from this level — which includes a guest suite, a second living area, two bunk rooms that accommodate 14, a wine cellar, and utility space — are green and woodsy. To complement them, Forehand and Lake specified a slightly different palette in the kids’ rooms — walnut for the bunks and built-in cabinetry and green and blue accent textiles. Here, again, doors roll up and screens come down, opening both bunk spaces to the outdoors.

The house meets US Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design specifications. It has a geothermal





heating and cooling system as well as state-of-the-art Duratherm windows and doors, and all materials are free of formaldehyde and have low or no volatile organic chemicals.

The overall effect is that of a classic New England cabin with the cozy feeling of a house that's been loved for generations but has the functional layout a contemporary family wants. "The design has a rigor to it that Modern houses need," says Neubauer. "But even with a Modern house, it's important to have warmth and scale."

"The whole house wowed me the first time we walked in," says Terilyn. "I cried! It was our dream come true."

-----  
FOR MORE  
DETAILS,  
SEE  
RESOURCES

"I cried too," says Lake. "It was very touching. You never know exactly how a project is going to turn out, but when it exceeds your expectations, it's so much fun." ■

**AN IPE AND granite walkway with steps leads to the front entrance of the low-slung house. Architect Jill Neubauer's horizontal design takes its cues from the long stretch of seashore beyond.**





#### DESIGN DECISION *Landscape for Tranquillity*

Relating the Esses' residence to the shoreline beyond a steep bluff was a challenge. With permission from the Conservation Commission in Truro, Massachusetts, landscape architects at Stephen Stimson Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, designed a staircase using helical "corkscrew" posts. The structure is anchored in a way that minimizes impact to the dunes, while a landing halfway down provides respite for tired legs.

Elsewhere, only minimal changes were allowed to the site's grading, so subtle transitions were employed. The lawn is in line with the boardwalk, for example, and the water feature with the entry. "When you have just a few human steps between different levels," says landscape architect Annie Gilson,

project manager and lead designer, "it provides a sense of openness and brings a sense of calm." Gilson, who has since opened her own firm, A. Gilson Landscapes in Boston, addressed runoff concerns by using permeable surfaces and a dry well, while the wading pool uses recycled water. Native vegetation including blueberry, sweet fern, and ilex was used throughout, and a small lawn — a rarity on the Outer Cape due to extreme wind and salt conditions — was planted using perennial rye and fine fescue.

Brought on at the beginning of the project, Gilson worked with the architect and interiors team from the start. "That kind of collaboration early on," she says, "creates harmonious transitions from inside and out."