



Inquirer

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Craig LaBan gives Georges Perrier three bells

Karen Heller on how to win your Oscar pool

Having fun by fooling Mother Nature

SPECIAL ISSUE

Home & Design

Homes away from home

Stories by Judy West
Photography by Catherine Tighe

STORY BY JUDY WEST
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CATHERINE TIGHE



Vast banks of windows open up the views of bay and marina.

THE SKY BEYOND

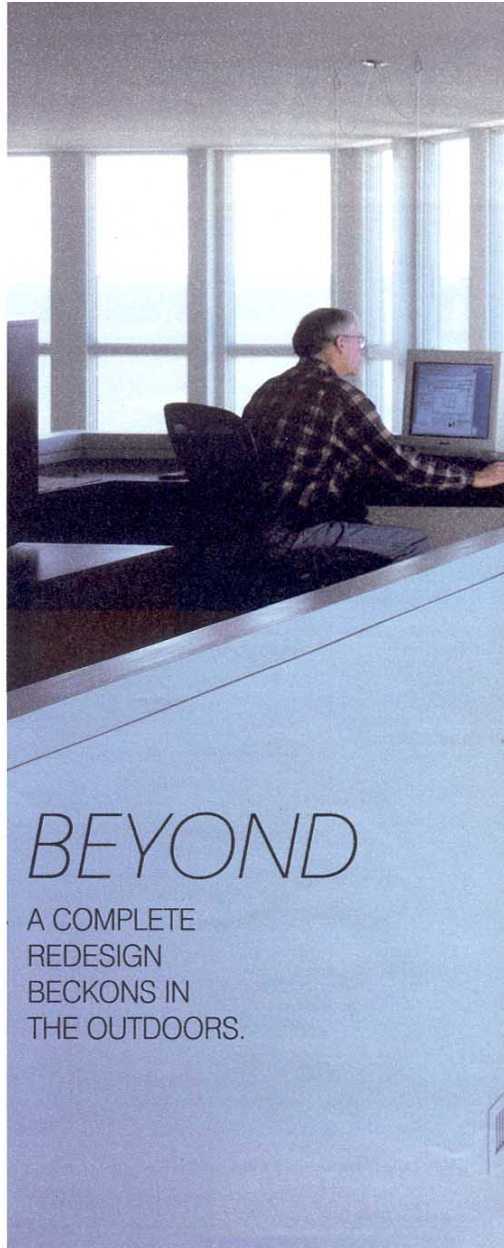
It is a cold February morning on Long Beach Island, N.J. The air is raw and the mercury refuses to rise past freezing. A brisk wind scuds across the bay, whipping the waves into frothy crests, knocking seagulls off course.

It's the kind of weather Ann Martin loves.

"On days like this we go out and sit in the hot tub on the deck," she says. "We don't turn on the jets. We just sit there with our heads barely above the water and watch the birds."

Coming to the beach in the winter is a relatively new habit for Ann and her

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A COMPLETE
REDESIGN
BECKONS IN
THE OUTDOORS.



Bob Martin's home office on the mezzanine offers a panorama of the bay.

THE LOCATION WAS PERFECT, BUT THE HOUSE WAS CRAMPED.
 "WE THOUGHT MAYBE WE COULD DO A LITTLE RENOVATION."



From the open-plan kitchen, Bob and Ann Martin can watch seabirds diving for fish.

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husband, Bob, though L.B.I. has for years been a regular summer spot for the Summit, N.J., couple.

"About five years ago, we were renting a house across the bay," recalls Bob. "I was on a windsurfer and I went past this point and there was a 'for sale' sign." Bob turned his windsurfer around posthaste and hurried back to share his discovery with his wife.

They bought the house, and with it an enviable lot, nestled in a marina, with expansive views across the bay. Barnegat Light is nearby, and the island is so narrow at this northerly point that from the upper floors of the house there's a clear view of the dunes and ocean.

Although the location was perfect, the house, built in the '70s, had only one good room; the rest was dark and cramped. The couple called in local architect Michael Ryan, whose work they had seen featured in the *New York Times*. "We thought maybe we could do a little renovation," Bob said.

That "little renovation" ended up being a total knockdown. "We started with the redesign of the living space and our bedroom and we just got unbelievably excited with what we saw Mike doing. Then we thought, 'What the heck?'"

The couple's mandate to Ryan was clear. "We wanted separate living spaces for us, for our kids, and for our guests," says Bob. "We wanted a good work environment, and we wanted to bring the outdoors in. The previous house had one room with a great view, but the rest was closed in."

Ryan's design makes the most of the house's bayside location. With sweeping banks of floor-to-ceiling windows taking the place of walls in the living area and a first-floor bedroom that offers views of the marina, the 3,600-square-foot structure beckons the outdoors in. A screened-in porch on one side of the dining area is perfectly positioned to capture the best view of winter sunsets. From the open-plan kitchen, Ann and Bob can look out across the honed black granite countertops to the bay beyond.

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Judy West writes the magazine's Home & Design column.
 Catherine Tighe photographs the magazine's Home & Design column.



The Antonio Citterio sofa is positioned to enjoy sunsets over the bay.



The spiral staircase leading to the offices and the floating window seat add to the weightless feel of the house.

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White walls, pale olive ceilings and dark mahogany furniture give the house a harmonious, unified look. Which isn't surprising, since Ryan designed most of the furniture himself. The platform beds that seem to hover above the floor are his work, as are the mahogany dressers and bedside tables, suspended on the wall for a less bulky feel.

On a trip to Bali, Ryan and his wife, Rande Spelkoman (who works as an interior designer for the firm and tracked down much of the furniture in the house), found the perfect brown-and-black-checked bedspread for the Martins' bed.

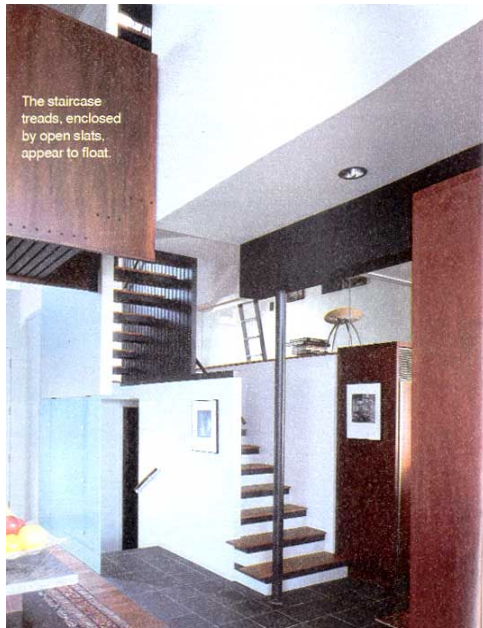
"Michael has this stunning ability to do both the grand design and the tiniest details," Bob says.

Another detail of which he is particularly fond is the slightly-higher-than-usual hood over the kitchen range. That's so the lanky homeowner doesn't hit his head when he's cooking.

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Architect Michael Ryan suspended the rich brown mahogany furnishings for a less bulky look.

The extra space behind the stairs became a library.



The staircase treads, enclosed by open slats, appear to float.

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Ann and Bob, who both work for Lucent Technologies, use technology to their own advantage, telecommuting as much as they can. "We'll come down on Thursday night and work from here on Friday and maybe Monday," Ann says. The views from their adjoining mezzanine offices are spectacular. Bob gets the bay view, Ann the marina. Neither is complaining.

If they get restless at their desks, a high-speed wireless Internet connection lets them take their laptops outside and sit by the pool. "While you're waiting for the computer to boot up, instead of getting annoyed you just look at the seagulls."

With five bedrooms, the house can easily absorb the seasonal influx of visitors, including the couple's two grown daughters. "We wanted separate living spaces so when people are here, we can escape, and they can escape, too," Bob explains. One guest room is configured as a self-sufficient suite, with its own connecting office and bathroom.

This sleek, modern house, with its free-flowing spaces and spare furniture, is a far cry from the couple's primary residence in Summit. "That's a traditional Dick-and-Jane house, with the dining room to the right and the living room to the left," Bob says.

Does their new place make them discontented with the old? "Well, the Summit house goes on the market on Wednesday. Does that answer your question?" Ann says with a huge smile. "Once you've lived here, you always want to be here. And that's what we're planning to do." ●

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