



Sweet
DIGS



MODERN FAMILY: A CONTEMPORARY HOME BUILT FOR MULTIPLE GENERATIONS

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What does a former entertainment publicist do after wrapping up a career built on rubbing elbows with the likes of Bob Dylan and Michael Jackson? She goes to the beach, of course. Linda and Kevin Rosen of Manhattan Beach spent three years searching for the perfect lot to build a home for themselves and their three teenagers. Foregoing today's nomadic lifestyle trends, the Rosens wanted a house that their children could come back to as adults.

"We built the house so that we could have elderly relatives visit, and at the same time be comfortable when we become elderly," Linda Rosen said. She raved about the elevator that connects all four stories of their contemporary Sand Section walk-street home. "We have 49 steps from bottom to top, and I can climb them now, but I don't know what that will be like when I'm 85."

Characterized by sleek angular exteriors and an open floor plan, the home, designed by Jonathan Starr of Starr Design Group in Hermosa Beach, features eclectic touches that counterbalance the modern with the traditional. "We

gave the roof a modern twist by making it asymmetrical," noted Starr. He tilted the angle of the roof to accommodate large, fourth-floor picture windows that open onto a generous ocean view. "[The angle] expands toward the beach and the sun and all the great things you want to look at."

Rosen credits contractor Alan Lieberman of Red River Contracting in Manhattan Beach for coming up with an idea to keep the beach views crystal-clear. "The windows have little valves that turn on automatically to rinse off the sand and grit," Rosen said. "This morning there was dew all over the windows and sand blowing around, so I just turned on the valves. It's brilliant." In addition to the window sprayers, automatic shades open and close on a timer to protect the interior wood surfaces and furnishings.

On the fourth floor where the kitchen, views and upper balcony are, the Rosens cook, entertain or simply unwind. Thanks to the abundance of windows, the space is well-lit and gives off a warm, inviting energy, a feeling



that is lacking in many contemporary-style homes. Crowned by visible mahogany beams, the modern appeal of the front living space is offset by an exposed stone wall. Rosen had seen a similar concept in a home decor magazine and knew instantly that it would work in her home. The stone, imported from Israel, is similar to Jerusalem limestone. "It's a juxtaposition between the really old and a little bit of contemporary," Rosen said.

The contrast between the old and the new lives on in the furniture. Dark mahogany chairs are adorned with nautical-style upholstery and decorative pillows, echoing the casual elegance of a contemporary beach resort. A 200-year-old rustic worker's bench from a French farm adds an anachronistic flair and is a nod to the family's former residence, a Mediterranean-style custom home in Manhattan Beach's Hill Section.

Rosen jokes that she sold the entire contents of the Mediterranean home on Craigslist. However she is quick to point out that certain pieces, such as a 300-year-old grandfather clock that once kept time in a French farmhouse, "are part of our family. We bought it 15 years ago, but it will remain with us." The ornate, stately clock rests near a decidedly modern powder room whose centerpiece is a backlit agate sink in amber tones. The golden hues complement a floating, latticed mahogany ceiling that adds

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dimension and visual interest to the space.

Heirlooms and delicate, polished stone aside, the home is built for durability. Limestone floors can withstand anything from parties with upwards of 50 guests, to a group of teens filming a dance sequence for a recent school project. "In the summer, I'll have 30 kids run up the stairs, head into the kitchen and empty my refrigerator, then run back down," Rosen shared. "We really built the house for the kids. There's an outdoor shower, and a separate bike storage room adjacent to the garage. In the old house, they used to run their bikes between our cars and scratch them. Now, I don't have to worry."

Starr wholeheartedly supports his clients' vision. "This is a house for kids and a house for a family. It's not supposed to be a statement; it's supposed to be a place to live, a place where you can put your feet on the couch." Starr described the process involved in building a home where the focus is livability.

"Things happen during construction," he stated. "When you design a house, you think you might be able to see the ocean, but you really won't know until you're out there building it. We realized during construction that if we raised the breakfast nook about eight inches, you could see the view."

Rosen adds that the inspiration for the breakfast nook and kitchen color scheme came from a



prominently displayed photograph she and her husband purchased in Las Vegas. The image, a 3-foot tall vertical rectangular shot of a small fishing boat floating atop a turquoise sea, set the tone for aqua-striped upholstery in the nook, and emerald-green accents from natural plant arrangements.

With an eye toward sustainability, the Rosens chose high-efficiency lighting in the kitchen, and a circulating hot water pump system that runs only during peak times, such as in the mornings for showers and at night when the kitchen sink is being used heavily. In addition, each room is outfitted with a European-style heating and air conditioning unit that operates for one-third the cost of a traditional thermostat system, according to Rosen. “We were thinking ahead to when the kids leave. We could just heat the living room and our bedroom, which would be more energy-efficient.”

Each of the home’s five bedrooms has an ensuite or adjacent bathroom, a feature that Rosen decided on not only to accommodate her children’s needs, but once again looking ahead. “When the kids come back with families of their own, it’s just so much easier if everyone has their own bathroom. I also made sure that each bedroom could fit a queen-sized bed versus a twin, so two adults could sleep comfortably.”

Comfort is king in the family’s casual living space on the second floor. A soaring interior wall of exposed Jerusalem limestone—dramatically uplit at night—is visible directly ahead as one descends a flight of floating steps. From the family room, the floating staircase is visible through a mahogany open-slat wall, a feature that allows natural light to filter down from the home’s upper floors. A set of floor-to-ceiling bifold doors opens onto a spacious outdoor living room in the home’s front yard, adjacent to the walk street. In the summer months, the doors can be left open to capture ocean breezes.

The basement level, which Rosen jokingly refers to as the dungeon, is anything but. Not only is it well-lit, but there is no trace of mustiness or humidity, an issue that plagues many beach cities homes with lower levels built into the ground. The Rosens consulted with experts in waterproofing and air conditioning. As a result, a special air conditioning and heating system comprising a network of underground pipes connects to a vent in each basement-level closet, allowing for abundant air circulation.

Built primarily for storage, the basement level gets plenty of use, thanks to the kids’ gaming room, a guest bedroom and a climate-controlled wine cellar with old-world flourishes. Nestled between wine racks, a counter made from a slab of Jerusalem stone with a rough-hewn edge adds a rustic flavor while providing a practical spot to pour and taste wines. An onyx backsplash offers a modern contrast to the traditional styling of the wine room.

In the front yard succulent garden, which received a seal from the Manhattan Beach Botanical Garden for meeting water efficiency requirements, Rosen reminisced about her early career in entertainment publicity. Although she once traveled the world in rock-star style, there’s no place she’d rather be than home at this stage in her life. “I love sitting on my balcony and watching the dolphins. Today they were playing with the surfers, and it made me think how lucky I am to live here with my family.”