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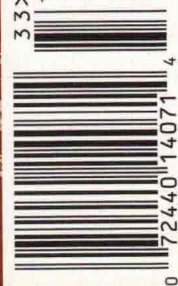
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ready to relax

What started as a vacation home became a full-time residence stacked high with built-in beauty for long-term living.

by Sharon L. Novotne

THROUGH SEVEN HOMES, BOB AND COLLEEN GOSSETT lived with the inevitable trade-offs. They loved the spacious feel of one home's two-story foyer and another's big kitchen, indoor-outdoor connection, and detailed moldings. But no home was perfect.

"With every house you purchase, you give up something," Colleen says. "You love it, but you always wish it were slightly different. When we decided to build, we just got carried away. We said, 'Let's build the house we've always wanted.'"

And they did, in a place that holds a special spot in their hearts—the New Hampshire coast near where Colleen grew up. For years, family ties tugged the Gossetts back for summer and holiday

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► **A POINT OF DISTINCTION INSIDE AND OUT**, the round window makes Colleen and Bob Gossett's home a showstopper from the beach and feeds light into the top two levels.

SUBTLE CURVES break up the home's long horizontal lines along the back deck and the side of the house where the staircases curve to follow the wall.







visits to their favorite beach, where properties usually are snapped up before they're listed. Finally, the couple beat the competition to a 50x100-foot surfside lot tucked behind protected dunes.

When it came to designing their 4,132-square-foot, three-story beach retreat, the couple recalled favorite features of homes past. "We're the entertainers in the family, and we're kitchen people," Colleen says. "We knew from experience that no matter how many people you have, no matter how nice the family room or dining room, people come to the kitchen."

Their wish list, plus their collection of magazine and newspaper clippings, landed on the desk of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, architect John Merkle. "When a client comes to you with lots of clippings and things, they're thinkers," he says. "It's not that

they want what they're showing you literally. It's usually the emotion it evokes, or the feeling it creates. It pushes a button in them. Colleen and Bob are warm,



emotional people and very detail-oriented."

Literally combining ideas from the couple's previous homes would have resulted in a hodgepodge, he says. But by discovering why certain features appealed to them and fit their lifestyle, he helped bring their vision to life. "It was like going to school," Colleen recalls. "John made us do our homework and forced us into looking at things. Without John and his ability to fine-tune and create an artful way of presenting our ideas, we never could have put it together."

in detail

location:	New Hampshire
square feet:	4,132
bedrooms:	4
bathrooms:	5
footprint:	34'x60'
est. cost:	\$192/sq. ft.
building time:	12 months



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▲ **STRATEGICALLY PLACED BUILT-INS** add personality and practicality. Just off the living room, this hutch-style, built-in bar is packed with entertaining amenities, such as a dishwasher, refrigerator, icemaker, sink with disposal, and liquor storage behind countertop doors.

◀◀ **GLOWING LIKE THE SUN**, the round window lights the living room and brings out the golden sheen of the antique-pine floors. The white beaded-board ceiling bounces light throughout the interior.

◀ **GREEN TILES WITH A CELTIC KNOT** accenting the living room fireplace were a sentimental choice for Colleen Casey Gossett, who wanted to honor her Irish parents and her heritage. Bookcases beside the fireplace push the windows high on the wall for privacy.





For example, the high-volume foyer Bob liked in a previous home translated into the vaulted ceiling in their new living room. The gracefully curved stairway is as beautiful as the one they left behind in Seattle and makes the welcoming statement Colleen wanted.

A main-level living/dining area was perfect for their entertaining style because it opens the all-important kitchen to living spaces, and wraparound windows offer a lighthouse-like view.

The couple has always appreciated the efficiency of built-ins, which help maximize small spaces and add to the “living on a yacht” feeling in their new home. Columns, moldings, furniture-like trims on the built-ins, and coffered ceilings in the kitchen and dining area are the kind of architectural details the couple loved in their other homes.

“I wanted an old-fashioned beach house that didn’t look too beachy,” Colleen says. “I really wanted it to be as beautiful with no furniture in it as it is with furniture—lots of moldings, lots of wood, lots of windows, lots of different angles because basically, our lot is small and narrow. It’s really like a shoebox.”

Because the Gossetts learned they couldn’t shoo guests out of kitchens past, family cook and wine collector Bob wanted the kitchen’s table-size island for food prep and casual dining. It’s 11 feet long, 2 feet 8 inches wide, 40 inches tall, and can seat 10. For the granite-top island’s base, Merkle copied the columns and brackets from the pergola on the home’s streetside exterior.

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◀ **COORDINATED BUILT-INS** include this dining room sideboard. The center section has drawers for table pads and linens behind bifold doors. The dining table works with the kitchen’s “table” island to seat up to 24 diners.

SURFACES AND FABRICS FIT LIFE AT THE BEACH. The pine floors are already distressed, so sandy feet aren’t a worry, and fabrics are durable. “Everything in the house you can sit on with a wet bathing suit and it won’t be ruined,” Colleen says. “We like to have people feel comfortable in our home. It cost a little bit more to get the look and the durability, but it’s worth it.”





“The whole house was designed around the huge island,” says Bob, who enjoys chatting with family and friends as he cooks. “People can sit at it, lean against it, and put stuff on it.” The grand-scale island is “the fireplace of the kitchen,” Merkle says. “It’s the focal point.”

By clustering appliances—including the range beneath a pot-filler faucet, dual ovens, and refrigerated drawers—at one corner of the kitchen, Bob has every convenience at hand. “Bob’s a wonderful cook, and I’m his sous-chef,” Colleen says. “It was important that we not only had a table to seat a lot of

people, but that people could maneuver around the entire kitchen without being in Bob’s way.”

Another past home—Bob’s grandmother’s place in Brooklyn—inspired the kitchen’s glass-front cabinetry, subway-tile backsplash, and box-lock hardware and shell design pulls. “Bob wanted that feeling of what probably would have been the 1920s, so we worked with the cabinetry, hardware, and surfaces,” says interior designer Michael Cebula, who joined the design team in the planning stages and shopped for ideas at the Boston Design Center with Colleen and Bob. “They came armed with a lot of pictures and ideas of things they liked from their past houses and past experiences. They have a very relaxed, comfortable style, and they were great decision makers,” he says.



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▲ **COOKING NECESSITIES GROUPED WITHIN THE ROOMY KITCHEN**, including a pot-filler faucet at the range, refrigerator drawers, and a warming oven, give Bob a compact, efficient work space that’s close to his guests seated at the island.

◀◀ **PROVIDING A SUBTLE TRANSITION** from the dining room to the kitchen, this cupboard makes a charming focal point and repeats the furniture-look details of built-ins in the living/dining area.

◀ **OPPOSITE FROM BOB’S COOKING CORE**, the microwave oven slips into a slot in the cabinetry to create a secondary workstation. Cabinet doors have vintage-style box locks and echo the home’s divided-light windows.



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▲ **KEEPING THIS GUEST ROOM TIDY** is easy because built-ins have tambour doors that roll up to reveal the television and counter space for toiletries.

► **SURROUNDED BY SUN**, Colleen and Bob scratched plans for a deck off the upper-level master suite, opting instead for a flat-roofed dormer with a wrap of windows.

▼ **SYMMETRICAL COLUMNS AND A PERGOLA** in front make the cedar-shingled home look formal from the street, but bowed windows hint at the architectural playfulness inside.

THE EXTERIOR IS A LOW-MAINTENANCE MIX of cedar shingles, stone, and copper roofing.

IT'S ENERGY-EFFICIENT. For thermal and sound insulation, the roof has 8–10 inches of foam with an R-value of 7 per inch.

THE HOME HAS ITS OWN GENERATOR, metal storm shutters hidden in soffits on the ocean-side exterior, and some steel framing to weather hurricane-force winds. “It’s a fort,” Bob says. “It’s a comfort to know that—primarily in the winter when you get those heavy, heavy storms—we’re all set and protected.”



Getting Cebula on board early in the process was important to Colleen. “We wanted to make sure that we were building it together, and that things like the couches and the dining room table were going to fit in the space,” she says.

Merkle’s challenge was to make the home feel spacious despite a 28-foot height limit and 20-foot front and rear setbacks on the long, narrow lot. The mansard roof offered a way to get three floors of living space under the height limit and still achieve a vast, open feeling. “The house could have been a little bit larger, but in Bob’s words, he didn’t want it to look like a meat loaf from the outside,” Merkle says. “That stuck with me.”

The couple has two grown daughters, Erin and Kelley, and lots of friends who come for visits, so four bedrooms were a must. “I told John if we’re going to make anything smaller, let’s start with the bedrooms,” Colleen says. The home’s lower level, with walk-out access to the beach, has two queen-size, Murphy-style beds that provide sleeping space for guests. The lower level, which can be shut off



from the rest of the house, has a full bath, refrigerator, and television, so friends and family can use the space even when the couple isn't home.

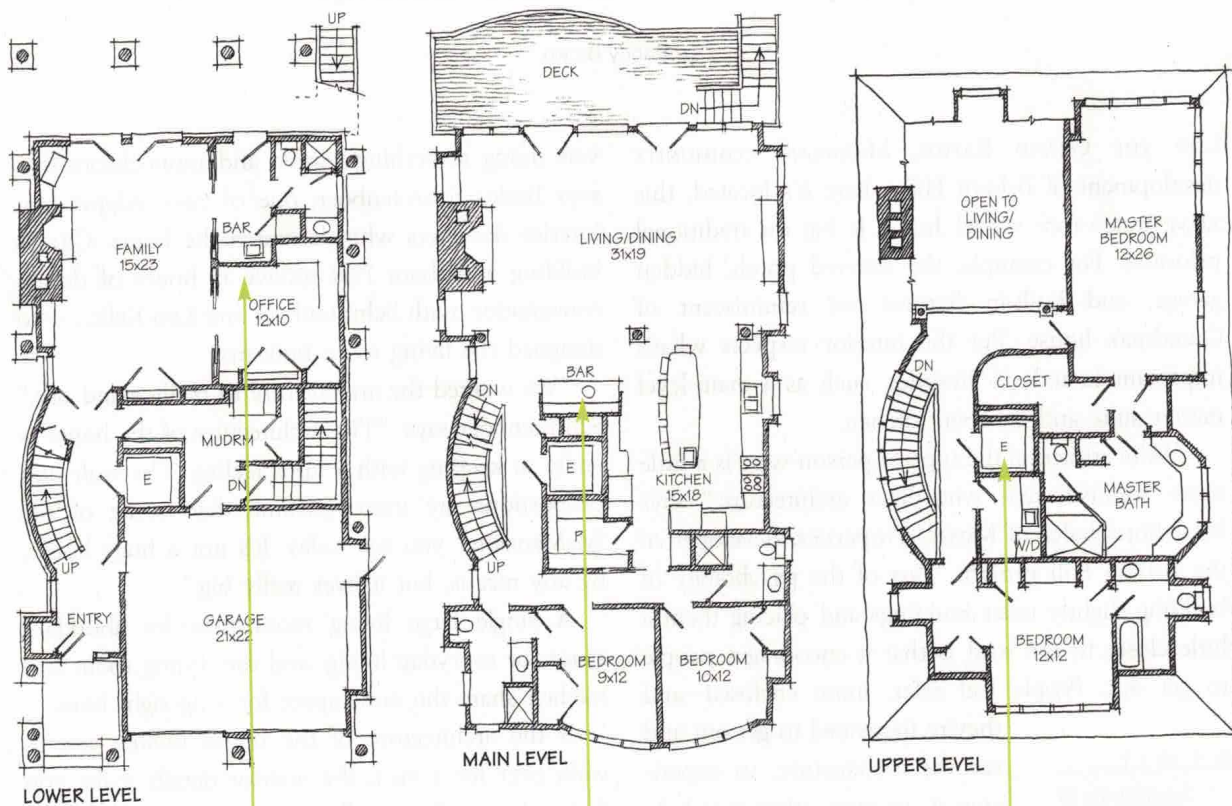
Merkle gets several calls a month from people inquiring about the Gossetts' new home and one of its eye-catching features—the porthole window that almost didn't make it into the plan. For a while, the couple considered a feature like the dormer in the master suite, but Merkle convinced them that the round window would work architecturally from the

outside and inside where it catches light and offers views from the upper-level balcony.

"It's almost like you're looking out of a telescope," Colleen says. "As many times in the day as I go by that window, it changes because of the color of the water, the color of the sky, what boats are out on the water. John said once that it's like looking at a different piece of artwork everyday." **HPI**

Buying information, page 112

photographer: JAMES SALOMON • illustrator: CARSON ODE • architect: JOHN MERKLE, TMS ARCHITECTS • builder: GLENN FARRELL, YFI CUSTOM HOMES, INC. interior designer: MICHAEL CEBULA, CEBULA DESIGN, INC. • landscape architect: FRANK TODD, FRANK TODD & ASSOCIATES • field editor: SUSAN SALOMON



"SMART ROOMS" GIVE BOB THE OPTION of working from his home office now, something he may do more often in semiretirement. "There is voice and data cable for computers and phones and audio pulled into each room," Bob explains.

OPTING FOR BUILT-INS INSTEAD OF FURNITURE PIECES makes the home easy to keep clean and tidy. For long-term storage, drawers are cedar-lined and closets have cedar shelves.

AN ELEVATOR MAKES CLIMBING STAIRS OPTIONAL. "If we're building for the future, there's going to be a need for it," Colleen says. "It has come in handy because we've had people who had to use it." Architect John Merkle said similar elevators cost about \$18,000.