



endless summer

The Andersen family slowed down and enjoyed the ride in creating their Old Greenwich family home.

by ANN KAISER photographs AMY VISCHIO



Ask any real estate agent what the single most important aspect of a listing is, and you know what they'll tell you: Location, location, location. One look at this property in Old Greenwich, and it's obvious that the homeowners, Marc and Marilyn Andersen, have the same idea.

With Tod's Point in the distance, and a steady stream of water activities in the foreground, this waterfront property has a view that any

agent would call "priceless."

"Every morning I wake up and I see people rowing outside on the water, and I see the fishermen on the sailboats," says Marilyn. "It's beautiful."

The Andersens bought the land in 2008, after a three-year search for the right property. At the time, a "well-loved" circa-1940s cape sat on the plot, but the Andersens had something else in mind. They de-



"She's got a great sense of humor," says Havilande of her client. Cheeky pieces like the "Cold Beer, Beautiful Girls" poster in the foyer are perfect for the beachy, casual vibe the Andersens wanted in their home.

cided to start from the ground up and build a family home that both embraced the waterfront location and meshed their unique styles.

"They said, 'We want to feel like we're on vacation every day,'" says interior designer Havilande Whitcomb, who helped take Marilyn's "happy California" style and Marc's "vintage Danish" roots, and make one beachy, vacation-like space for the couple and their three young children.

Although she's a little more tailored and modern, and he's a little more rustic and handcrafted, they both agreed on how they wanted their home to feel: cool, casual, and family-oriented.

"We toured a lot of homes, and at the end of the day the places we always wanted to drop our bags were in the pool houses," says Marilyn. "We wanted a house that felt like a family home, something that we felt was stripped of all formality." That preference for casual, colorful living comes through in the place they created for themselves—it's got the fresh air, clean lines, and open feel of a pool house, but it's expanded and equipped for everyday living.

The wide-open kitchen/dining/living room at the rear of the house is where the family spends much of their time, and draws the eye—and, oftentimes, the rest of the body—into it. From the front door, visitors can see right into this space and out to the water, a layout that encourages friends to stop in and say hello—and they do. The extra-

large room has the kitchen at one end and living space at the other, and a dining table floating in the middle—the place where birthday cakes are cut, Thanksgiving dinner is served, and every major family meal is eaten.

Offering a near-panoramic water view, the back wall is lined with doors that can be folded onto themselves to form a sixteen-foot-wide opening. A large screen rolls down to let the breeze in but keep bugs out. "We live that way, with the windows wide open, from April to October," says Marilyn. "The house feels like we're living on a giant porch." This is casual living at its absolute best.

In the furnishings and décor, "I tried to channel a little bit of the California girl in me," says Marilyn. Though she's been on the East Coast for two decades, including seven years in Greenwich, "I think that you never quite leave where you grew up, mentally...and for me that's LA," she says. That she gravitates towards classic LA artists is evident in pieces like the "Wonderful" surfboard by Peter Tunney on the second floor landing. Her sense of humor comes out in the playful posters sprinkled throughout the house (i.e. a "Cold Beer, Beautiful Girls" poster hanging in the foyer, a framed piece dictating that the viewer "Musn't Grumble" in the kitchen). The couple have also started collecting Danish furniture in a nod to Marc's background—in fact,

Architecture and interior design both have starring roles in this home, and both Goodwin and Whitcomb really got the couple's vision. "All I knew was how I wanted the house to make us feel, and they did it," says Marilyn.

"We live...with the **WINDOWS WIDE OPEN**, from April to October. The house feels like we're living on a **GIANT PORCH**."

—MARILYN ANDERSEN





An expansive, thoughtfully designed space features distinct zones for cooking, dining, and lounging that each serve their own function and yet still look stylish as a whole.





At one end of the multi-purpose room along the back of the house, a custom hood fits right in with the La Cornue range. At the other end, a comfortable seating area and fireplace are cool in the summer and cozy in the winter.





The signal light on the living space bookshelf is a nautical nod. The fireplace stone was originally installed in the Brooklyn Botanical Garden.



Goodwin went a little more refined in the bar area and butler's pantry, using ash wood in the cabinetry and wraparound millwork. The barstools are Robert Stilin, and the cart is from Get Back, Inc. This room also includes a pool table, making it the perfect play space for grownups.

almost every room has a significant vintage chair in it. The clean lines of the furniture, patinated metals, and graphic patterns are a happy marriage of both aesthetics.

To furnish the spaces, the team shopped everywhere from Wyeth to Brimfield to 1st dibs, with a real collector's mentality. "One of the things that Havilande was particularly great at while we were doing this project was encouraging us not to buy pieces that were meant for the house, but to buy pieces that we loved," says Marilyn—a bit of advice the homeowners would especially appreciate when it came time to move.

"We're really happy in the end—all of those things are in my Sherpa's bag for the rest of my life," laughs Marilyn, who will take every single

piece with her to her family's new house just across the water. "They added a lot of their personality," says Havilande, who also embraced a subtle nautical theme throughout the waterfront property—signal lights on a bookshelf, the aforementioned surfboard.

The kitchen, too, has seafaring style, though more in the planning than anything else. "It was like a boat—we thought out every inch," says Havilande. The refined La Cornue range and hood balance the more rustic reclaimed-hemlock beams and floorboards used throughout the home.

"It was really important for us to feel that things were touched by hand," says Marilyn. The couple loves the history of the beams, and the sense of artistry the hand-troweled walls brought to the home. The



A nubby white Mama Bear chair in the sunny TV room is one of many iconic designs in the house. "We went hunting for those," says Havilande. A custom sectional from Dune picks up the blue of the water outside.



The oversized office allows Marilyn to work while the kids play nearby. A Moroccan-style rug, walnut desk from Cliff Young, and sofa from Bright (covered in Paul Smith for Maharan fabric) look right at home together. below: A cut-out for firewood also helps to break up the mass of stone used in the fireplace.



The second-floor landing was intended to be a second play area for the Andersen children. The Peter Tunney "Wonderful" surfboard is a nod to Marilyn's Los Angeles roots.





The sculptural tub in the master bath is from Urban Archaeology. opposite: A mix of warm gray Azul Batiege stone and hemlock beams gives the space visual interest without going overboard—or distracting from the view.

hearth in the main room was created from stone that was formerly installed in the Brooklyn Botanical Garden.

Of course, there's another side to the waterfront location coin, and that is FEMA regulations—but architect Mark Goodwin of Beinfield Architecture addressed these without losing any points for beauty. The first floor needed to be elevated nine feet off the ground, which led Goodwin to build up rather than out, with a compact footprint and a symmetrical design. "We worked hard to make the house feel like it was anchored in the ground, even though there's tons of space for water to wash in and out," says Goodwin. Breakaway panels on the garage are designed to tear away from the home in a severe flood, and the elevated first-floor porch has steps down to the backyard, picnic

tables, and beach.

Little did they know how quickly the design would be tested: When Hurricane Irene barreled down on the home only a week after move-in, "No one knew what would happen," says Havilande, "but Hobbs built the house like a fortress. Everyone held their breath—and it did exactly what it was supposed to do." Water washed in and back out, and the house was undamaged.

But as parents of young children can attest, a hurricane is one thing—having three children under the age of ten is another. This home was built to withstand both forces of nature. The three young Andersens have the run of the place, which was a huge factor in the design—above all, their parents wanted a true family home, where the



"They said, 'We want to feel like we're **ON VACATION** every day.'"

—HAVILANDE WHITCOMB







A graphic blue-and-white striped rug by Madeline Weinrib keeps things shipshape in the master bedroom. On the wall behind the bed, Goodwin used new ash wood to contrast with the more rustic hemlock on the ceiling. A classic Cherner chair completes the bedroom's dressing table area.

kids could touch the furniture and feel welcome in every room. “The kids are every part of the house, and it’s by design,” says Marilyn. “I really don’t mind the chaos when their friends are over and they’re all running around. I know it’s fleeting.” Her oversized office on the main floor was created with them in mind. She can work while they play nearby. “Family was definitely a part of the way the rooms were conceived,” says Goodwin.

On the second-floor landing, he created another play space where the kids can hang out. It also allows their parents to hear what they’re up to, even if Mom and Dad are cooking dinner in the kitchen.

Upstairs also holds the bedrooms, including the master suite, stacked over the back multi-purpose room. With a view like this one, you can’t blame the Andersens for bringing the wall-to-wall window idea upstairs to their bedroom too.

In the master bath, a sculptural cast-iron tub from Urban Archaeology is a beautiful piece from which the owners can enjoy the water view—though the view of tub isn’t too shabby either. Havilande used warm gray Azul Bateige stone as a matte backdrop to the glistening, sculptural piece.

The creation of this home was definitely a collaboration between designer, architect, and homeowner, and in this case, it’s especially rewarding that they enjoyed the process as much as the finished product, since they’ll be moving on to do it all again soon. “A lot of care was put into this design, and we had a lot of fun looking for the things that made it special,” says Havilande.

“They got to know us and what makes us tick, how our family works, and they captured it,” says Marilyn. Though the move will be bittersweet, the chance to decorate a new house is not. This family knows that the most important location is the one where they can all be together. And they’re going there with all their favorite things in tow. **ah**

RESOURCES:

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Hobbs, Incorporated, New Canaan, 203-966-0726, hobbsinc.com