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Just looking at the house from the street you would never know there is a “hidden room” above the garage. You wouldn’t even know it once you were inside the 10,000-square-foot oceanfront residence unless you happened to take the elevator from the ground level to the second floor and saw four buttons instead of the expected three. Then you would begin to realize there’s more to this house than meets the naked eye, including 800 photovoltaic solar panels integrated with the concrete roof.

But there’s more about that in the telling of a larger story that began with an invitation and led to the building of a multigenerational family retreat.

“I have a very close friend who lives here and he was the one who introduced us to Seagrove East,” says the owner, whose primary residence is in Winter Park. “My family thought it was a friendly homelike environment and would be a terrific place for us to have a second home. The location on what is a relatively private beach couldn’t be better. We’ll

One of the owner’s requests was that all of the plantings look established, giving the impression that the oceanfront home had been there for years. He also wanted to make sure that the 800 solar panels on the roof were not seen from the street. Mission accomplished.







In the kitchen an oversize gas cooktop, double sinks and double ovens get plenty of use when it comes to preparing meals for a large gathering. The double islands maximize family participation and provide for additional dining options as well.

walk the beach for an hour or so and maybe run into two people and a dog.”

With his family as smitten with the South Beach community as he is, he got in touch with longtime friend and former colleague Bill Schabot, co-owner of Vero Beach-based Seaside Construction. It was Schabot’s task to assemble a team of professionals who could best respond to

the owner’s requests.

“Everyone did a great job,” the builder says, referring to architects Larry Brown and Rob Atkins, and Susan Schuyler Smith of Spectrum Interior Design. “I knew Larry from having done business with him for the past 20 years and together we interviewed a number of interior designers. Susan’s name kept coming up as being the very best and she

is. Susan’s the one who brought Rob to the table – he has that attention to understated detail that’s just terrific. It was a collaborative effort all the way around with no egos involved – everyone was always looking for the best answers.” There were a lot that needed to be found.

First and foremost the owner wanted to know if it was feasible to build a 10,000-square-foot house that



The two-level grandchildren's "Ship's Loft" was designed by architect Rob Atkins. With shiplap siding on the walls and ceiling, portholes on the doors and other nautical accents it's no wonder that "wannabe pirates" can't wait to bunk here.

would be entirely dependent on solar power. The answer was yes, thanks to Brown who located a solar panel system at the Eagle Roofing showroom in Orlando. As Schabot explains, "It was unique because it integrated into the Eagle Roofing concrete roof tile system. Unlike most photovoltaic solar panels these were not to be installed on a rack, but instead installed flat on the roof so it didn't have the ugly look of a rack-mounted system; the average eye would never know the house was solar-powered. We explored the cost and return on investment and approached the

clients, making them aware of what Larry had discovered.

"They were very excited as they were truly focused on building the greenest house possible," Schabot adds. "They wanted to eliminate any possible impact that the esthetics of the home would have on the neighborhood by having the solar panels visible in any way from the street.

"When I talk to people who are interested in using solar power one of the first questions I ask is, is this your last house or is it a five- or six-year house because it's expensive and the payback usually takes about seven

years. The client, who was very cost-conscious, said this is it – this house is for my children, my grandchildren. It's going to stay in the family."

The family is a growing one, at present ranging in age from 10 days to 92 years and it's not unusual to have all 30 of them gathered under one roof at the same time. How the team responded to their diverse needs is where Practical meets Fun.

"It was all about our being in tune with the various elements of the family and what they would enjoy and what they would use," says Brown. "We kept asking ourselves, who is it





we're designing the house for? How are they going to use it? Every space is used by different ages for different activities."

Case in point: even though Atkins designed "The Ship's Loft" for the grandchildren, an adventurous grown up or two have been known to sneak inside what is often called "The Pirate's Ship" and imagine what it would be like to set sail for Treasure Island. All wood siding, arched ceiling beams and trim give the feeling of being on a ship. Add working portholes on the doors, a ship's ladder-like stairway to the loft above and you can almost feel the waves rolling beneath your feet.

"We had so much fun with that room," says Atkins, who also added an element of surprise to guest bedroom number six. The smallest and only one without an ocean view, it could have been the last place anyone would choose to stay. Instead, what is referred to as "Grandma's Attic" quickly became one of the most sought after.

"The room needed a feature, something to make it fun," Atkins explains. "There was plenty of height so we designed a ceiling that recalled old hand-framed roofs as seen from the attic, the kind you might have stayed in when you were a kid visiting your grandparents. The gables were framed down and wood trim and details were added. There's also a Jacuzzi in the bathroom. Family members have been known to fight over who was going to stay in there."

It's no wonder. Smith, who

Designed for maximum family enjoyment, the living room features three different areas where everyone from toddlers to seniors gather to share meals and conversation, relax, read or simply savor the ocean view. The raised ceiling features box beams and smaller cross members that visually unify the three areas. Spectrum Interior Design further unified the spaces by selecting custom furnishings and easy-care natural fabrics.



The library/office, which is part of the soundproofed master suite, was designed as a quiet haven. With concealed workspaces in the cabinetry on either side of the two-person desk housing computers, printers and personal files, everything is within easy reach.

collaborated on many of the architectural elements, designed custom furnishings, floor coverings and window treatments throughout that enhance their surroundings and prove practical as well, given the amount of activity in the house at any given time.

Smith admits it wasn't always easy, especially when it came to the main living area. "The biggest challenge was fitting in areas for so many people without it looking like a cafeteria and without having a large dining room. Once we established that the dining table actually became the divider between two seating areas,

both with fireplaces, the whole plan took shape."

Another item on the client's request list was that the house be eco-friendly and able to weather the severest of storms. Again, the team researched and responded. "We used the healthiest products available, such as green construction materials, Mythic paint, Quietrock Soundproof mold resistant drywall, the highest efficiency HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) plus the highest R value insulation throughout to lower energy consumption and the carbon footprint," says Schabot, adding, "and the house

is built way above code. Together, the impact resistant windows and automated electric shutters can withstand up to 170 mile-per-hour winds."

The clients, who had purchased another house in Seagrove where they frequently stayed during the 2½ years it took to design and build their oceanfront home, were readily available to the team and observe the progress being made.

The original 4,000-square-foot house was demolished and the new one, which totals 10,000 square feet, was constructed on the same exact footprint. How was that possible?



In the master bedroom it's all about the view. During construction the owner was used to seeing a wide-open space with an uninterrupted view of the ocean. When it came time to install the original window, which had panes, he insisted they be taken out. Even though he tried to talk the owner out of it, Schabot ended up getting the largest and highest hurricane-rated sheet of glass available. "It was very expensive and so heavy it had to be put in place with a crane," he says. "But when I look back it was the perfect decision. It's phenomenal and meant so much to him."

"By adding a second floor and cantilevering the east side of the home out eight feet past the lower floor to create a pocket-porch between the second-floor master bedroom and guest bedroom and including a second-floor game room over the garage," Schabot explains.

"Actually, the house is two-and-a-half stories because of the 'hidden room,' which is where all of the security equipment, inverters for the solar system, elevator equipment, water heating and conditioning systems, the wine cellar condenser, central vacuum, home automation equipment and phone system are housed.

It even has its own AC, which makes it the ultimate safe room. Because the house was thought of as a second home we needed to make sure it was self-monitoring – the owner could run it with his iPhone," says Schabot who along with architect Larry Brown worked out the details.

"Bill is one of those guys who looks far ahead. He's the one who said there's so much space above the three-car garage that maybe we could create another room," says Brown, giving credit where credit is due. "Basically it's a commercial structure that behaves like a house. One of our main concerns was to

make sure it was a long-lasting one."

Having been involved in the design and construction of numerous large commercial and residential projects over several decades, Schabot has found that mechanical space areas are almost always limited in size and tend to get squeezed into small spaces which takes away from the livable space.

"As we advanced the design of this home and began to explore areas where it would be possible to install the mechanical and electronic equipment we kept finding that we would need to make rooms smaller or eliminate one or two of



The second-floor sitting room off the master bedroom and adjacent to two guest bedrooms and the second-floor family room offers a quiet respite as well as morning sunrises and afternoon sunsets. Custom furnishings selected by Spectrum create a cozy setting perfect for curling up with a good book.

them. Finally, I came up with the idea to make the garage ceiling eight feet high and use the space between the garage and the game room above for the 1,200-square-foot ‘hidden room.’”

An additional challenge presented itself when it came time to design the pool and patio area in what is a relatively tight space. “We were limited to the set-back of the dune line,” says Brown. “There are certain rules you have to follow and we wanted to protect the natural beauty that was already there. We just worked

and worked, using some mechanical things to create more space to everyone’s advantage.” Again, eco-friendly design comes into play. Rainwater is collected in an underground storage tank and used to re-fill water lost in the swimming pool due to evaporation.

“Even though there wasn’t a large outside area for the many family members to use I think what we ended up with is really pretty cool,” says Smith. “The chaise longues actually sit in the pool and there’s a fire pit that’s surrounded by numerous chairs. You don’t get the feeling of being crowded and the view is wonderful.”

The view, which initially attracted the owner, was made even grander after the dune area was re-nourished with additional sand and sea grapes and sea oats enhancing its natural beauty and adding extra protection against storm surge.

When asked what he likes best about the house the owner admits it’s hard to choose just one thing. “I enjoy everything about it,” he says, then after some thought adds, “Maybe our master bedroom where it’s quiet and the view we have with the open window. There was another window planned for there and I took the dividers out so the view is unobstructed.



Even though the area planned for the pool and patio was narrow, the design team made use of every inch of space to allow for the utmost gathering opportunities. Chaise longues sit in the shallow end of the pool and on deck, while upholstered chairs form a circle around the fire pit. The owner re-nourished the dune area with additional sand, sea grapes and oats, enhancing the natural beauty and providing protection against storm surge.

Bill was a little suspect when I told him what I wanted him to do.”

Schabot had every reason to be concerned. “During most of the construction the large space where the window was going to be installed was wide open and the client became used to seeing the full view of the ocean. When it came time to install the window we were going to use he didn’t like it because it didn’t give

him that full view. So we got the largest and highest hurricane-rated sheet of glass you can have made. It was so heavy we had to set it in place with a crane. I tried to talk him out of that window because it was expensive but when I look back it was the perfect decision. It’s phenomenal and meant so much to him.”

In fact, their beachside retreat means a great deal to everyone in the

family, no matter their age. Whether an infant or nonagenarian the house was planned with their needs in mind and for their enjoyment. “For me what was most exciting was seeing how happy they all were when they saw everything completed,” says Schabot. “Every time the owner is here and I ask how’s the house doing, he always says what’s not to love. And he means it.” ❁

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MAGAZINE

Seaside Construction Personally Thanks You

for allowing us the privilege of introducing ourselves and our business to you.

We were honored to be featured in Vero Beach Magazine and have one of our custom homes grace its cover. Seaside builds high quality, recognition worthy projects throughout Central Florida, earning the respect of the building community and homeowners alike. Seaside wants to work with you on your next addition, remodel, new home or commercial project. Our reputation is providing only the highest level of craftsmanship on every construction project.

As an award winning General Contractor, we have the ability to complete your project, no matter the size or budget, with the same superior quality and customer satisfaction that our clients have come to expect from us. With experience in residential and commercial, large and small projects, we are able to provide our clients with options and direction that are unique and practical while still realizing your dream concept. If you are considering a builder for your upcoming project, please consider Seaside Construction and let us show you commitment, quality and care from start to finish.



I hope you have enjoyed the photographs and article regarding Seaside Construction and look forward to personally speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Bill Schabot

Bill Schabot
Vice President / Principal, Seaside Construction
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