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A CLIFF-HANGER OF A REMODEL GETS A HAPPY ENDING: AN OPEN-PLAN, BAY-FOCUSED HOME.

BY MARTIN HOLDEN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID DUNCAN LIVINGSTON

WATER WORLD



ABOVE: Nellie and Zarko Draganic, with son Sam, outside their new Belvedere home. In the great room (LEFT), architect Dan Phipps's patinated steel fireplace catches the afternoon sun. Furniture is from Holly Hunt (chair and table), Nancy Corzine (chaise), and Donghia (sofa). The alabaster light fixture is from J.H. Lighting.



LEFT: The limestone-tiled master bath overlooks Belvedere Cove. **CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT:** Decorator Eugenia Jesberg designed the walnut dining table; the kitchen is separated from the dining area by a concrete counter and bar. Outdoor furniture on the back deck is by Henry Hall Designs. The architect's update recasts the spirit of old Belvedere in crisp modern lines.



"ESPRESSO?" IT'S AN OFFER NO VISITOR TO ZARKO AND NELLIE

Draganic's Belvedere home would think of refusing. The viscous, potent potion is lifeblood to Zarko, a tousled tech entrepreneur and sailor—not necessarily in that order—and Nellie, marketing director at *San Francisco* magazine. That's why they have three espresso machines distributed through their house. (Normally we don't feature our own residences, but when we saw this one, and heard of the other publications eager to cover it, we had to jump.)

A bachelor in the early days of the Internet boom, Zarko already had places in Palo Alto and San Francisco when he found a near-vertical property on Corinthian Island back in 1998. The best thing going for the shaky home was its breathtaking view, across Belvedere Cove to the main island with San Francisco's skyline on the left and Mount Tam on the right. The aggressive, down-to-the-studs remodel was originally intended to be a weekend getaway, a port in a storm—then he fell in love. Some men might have retreated to the suburbs, but not Zarko. He made his weekend pad into a family home.

Naturally, architect Dan Phipps took his cues from the maritime setting. "Everything is oriented toward the bay," he explains. The patio outside Zarko's office is no larger than a walk-in closet, but the waterfront deck is the size of a baseball diamond, big enough for son Sam to kick a soccer ball. It's where the Draganics keep their eclectic watercraft collection, including small Laser sailboats, his-and-hers sculls, and



A spiral staircase crafted by San Jose Stair Company connects the decks of this maritime masterpiece.

HOME → a Protector powerboat that cuts commute time to the city down to eight minutes. Their Melges 24 sailboat, the *Cavallino*, is usually moored across the cove at the San Francisco Yacht Club.

The house itself is crafted of red cedar, which is weathering to a fog-colored gray. From the water, its facade resembles the superstructure of a ship, its semicircular deck the bridge where a captain might gaze out to sea. Though Phipps's work is modern in spirit, it blends in well

Phipps's work is modern in spirit, but it blends in well with the grand homes and clapboard boathouses nearby.

with both the grand old homes and clapboard boathouses nearby. "We were trying to fit the house into the context of the neighborhood," he notes.

A waterfront theme is also pursued inside. The floors and stairways are built of coffee-brown iroko, also called African teak, a wood favored by boatbuilders for its durability and resistance to salt air. In fact, some of the wood used in the Draganics' house came from another techie's ambitious boatbuilding project, abandoned when the market swung south. The layout of the house, its four fairly narrow floors connected by spiraling stairs, has a compactness that is distinctly boatlike—except for the soaring ceilings. The third-floor great room, for example, combines a galley-influenced kitchen, the dining area, and the family's main living

area. A home theater is concealed by a sliding panel of steel, red-stained like the rusted hull of a ship. On the bottom floor is the "sailors' zone," in Nellie's words—a rum-pus room bedecked with nautical gear, a bar, and, of course, its own espresso machine.

With all that swaggering sailor's energy in the place, the couple brought in a designer who could balance it with a feminine touch. They enlisted a trusted collaborator in Mill Valley designer Eugenia Jesberg, a friend of Nellie's whose husband sails with Zarko, early in the process. To ensure that the finished interior would really sing, Jesberg took over some of the details originally in the charge of Phipps's office, like the concrete counters in the kitchen and dining areas. She also insisted on adding pendant-shaped alabaster lamps to help define the three spaces of the great room. "I wanted to soften Dan's architecture a little," she says. An antique Iranian carpet and comfortable furniture with classical lines (some designed by Jesberg herself) work well toward this end.

Zarko's expert manipulation of the knobs and levers of his favorite countertop espresso machine begs the question: Why doesn't this modern home have one of those fancy new built-ins? Turns out they're not quite good enough—yet. "When I'm having a party, I can make a hundred espressos an hour on this machine," he says, patting it tenderly. You have to admire a man who really knows what he likes. ●

Resources

Dan Phipps Architects, 1031 Post St., S.F., (415) 776-1606.

E.J. Interior Design, 198 E. Blithedale Ave., Mill Valley, (415) 383-8333.

San Jose Stair Co., 3070 Osgood Ct., Fremont, (510) 656-7700.

Stroub Construction, 300 Main St., Sausalito, (415) 331-0621.

FURNITURE

Donghia, 101 Henry Adams St., Ste. 144, S.F., (415) 861-7717.

Henry Hall Designs, 297 Kansas St., Ste. B, S.F., (800) 767-7738.

J.H. Lighting, 101 Henry Adams St., Ste. 344, S.F., (415) 431-8154.

Kneedler-Fauchere (for Holly Hunt table and chair), 101 Henry Adams St., Ste. 170, S.F., (415) 861-1011.

Sloan Miyasato (for Nancy Corzine chaise), 2 Henry Adams St., S.F., (415) 431-1465.