



best
little
house

LIGHT & BALANCE

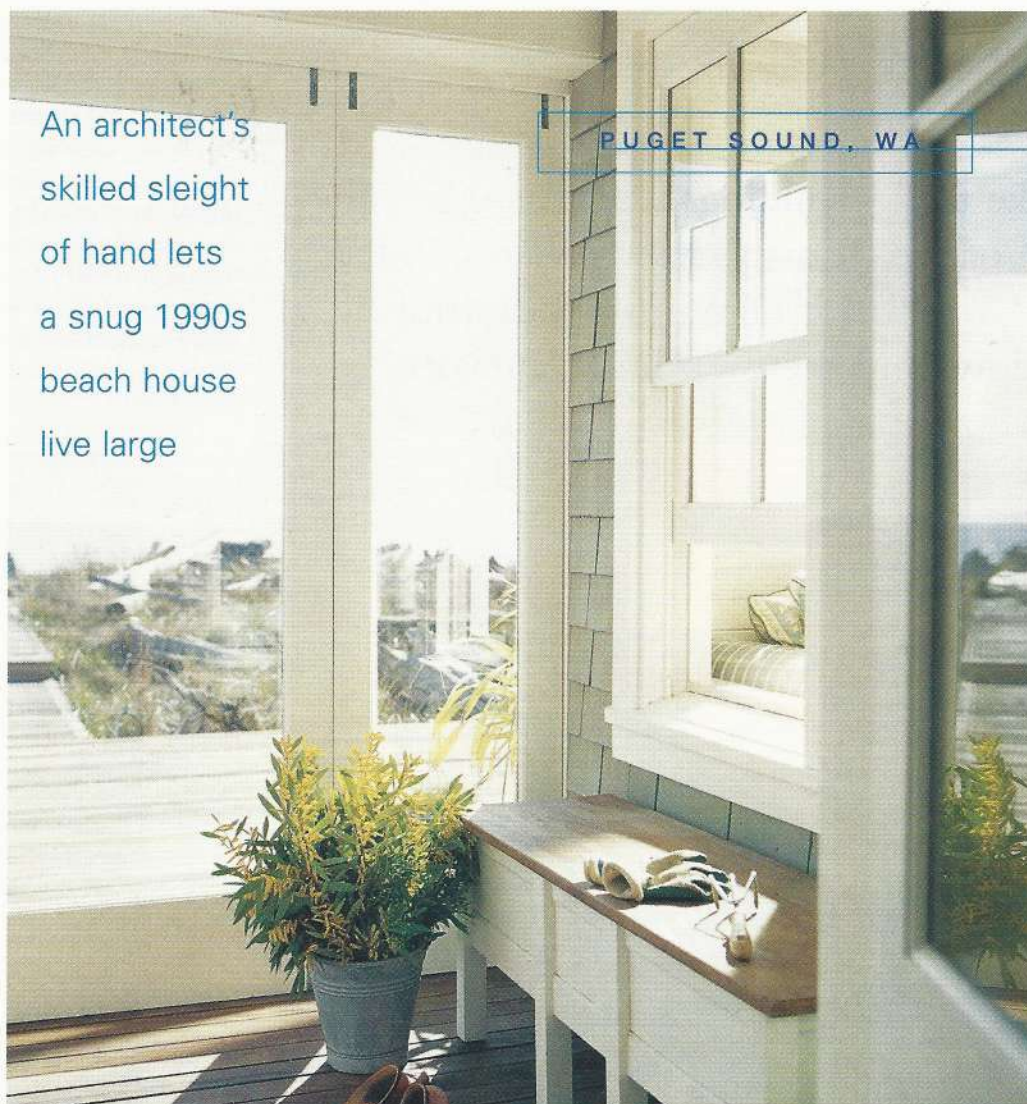
PRODUCED BY LINDA WHITMARSH STYLED BY LINDA HUMPHREY
PHOTOGRAPHED BY LAURIE BLACK WRITTEN BY SAXON HENRY

The living room sofas are covered with durable fabric to withstand beach-related wear and tear.

Opposite top A porch off the kitchen has a built-in bench; the seat flips open to store toys and sandy beach shoes. **Opposite bottom** Light wells in the roof on each side of the windowed gable bring in diffused sunlight.

An architect's
skilled sleight
of hand lets
a snug 1990s
beach house
live large

PUGET SOUND, WA




wish I could take credit for the vision and execution, but I can't," says the homeowner of this open, light-filled Shingle style getaway. "What we can take credit for is being smart enough to jump on something very special immediately. I don't know if I could have designed the house *this* perfectly. Everything in it is of unbelievable quality."

So when this family bought the beach house from the original owner, they embraced the structure's thoughtful, well-executed design whole, changing only some of the furnishings to suit their own relaxed and easy lifestyle.

Located on a pretty island that runs parallel to Washington's Puget Sound





"I like to do buildings where you feel the trace of a craftsman's hands," the architect says. "You feel it here in the beautiful windows and the fireplace stonework"

Antique-style bin pulls on the kitchen cabinetry echo the sheen of the stainless steel countertops.

Opposite top Barstools in the kitchen do double duty as guest seating during social gatherings and as casual seating when guests are long gone.

Opposite bottom Across from the kitchen counter, a roomy window seat with large built-in drawers lines the alcove formed by a square bay window.

coast, this extraordinarily welcoming, efficient residence is grounded in natural light, symmetry, and quality craftsmanship—a triumvirate of principles that underpinned the early-1990s design of its creator, noted Seattle architect Thomas L. Bosworth.

“A house should be more than a storage container; it should have character and warmth,” he says. “Using natural light is very important. I don’t mean more light, I mean higher quality natural light.” Light infuses the home through two banks of light wells, a wall of windows facing a picturesque bay, and a window-filled gable that juts through the roof above the great room. The gable “gave us some nice vertical space,” explains Bosworth. “We were able to add height above the rooms—I think we achieved almost 10 feet in ceiling height.”

Bosworth credits the 16th-century Italian architect Andrea Palladio for inspiring his fascination with vertical distance in an interior space. “I like to have tall spaces in my buildings, because you feel better if you’re in a tall space, particularly if you’re in a small footprint,” he remarks. The footprint of this 2,200-square-foot home and the exterior height were limited by building restrictions. “Those buildings are perched like birds on the edge of the beach,” he explains. “We had a maximum exterior height of 17 feet, and houses were on each side cheek-by-jowl. So we needed to maintain privacy while drawing in more sunlight.”

The solution: For both sides of the house, Bosworth settled on 18- to 24-inch-deep square bay windows, which allow extra light to spill in through long, narrow side windows, while minimizing views into and out of the house on the compact site. Some of the bays are fitted with window seats and drawers—among the many low-maintenance built-ins in the house.

On the minimalist street side,



1. Rather than merely increasing the amount of light in the home, the vertical light wells, which punctuate the length of two parallel halls, bring in soft, high-quality natural light.
2. The home’s windows were all custom designed and custom built. “I have one of the best window makers in the world,” says the architect. “You can actually feel the quality in a building when things are beautifully crafted.”
3. The open floor plan of the main rooms brings a feeling of freshness to the interior, especially when open windows and doors catch the breezes that waft in from the water. “This house is very light, very airy, and it feels good to be in it,” remarks the wife.





Site it right: “This house feels like it was designed for this [compact] site,” says the wife. “It just fits here so naturally”

Bosworth designed a private courtyard on either side of a garage that fits flush with the facade of the house. A shingled wall protects the yard from the wind that often billows in from

the bay, and a secure, gated entry locks when the garage door closes. The garage was a challenge to work into the design thanks to site restrictions. “I gave the garage a low ceiling, sank it a few feet below street level, and tucked it into the middle of the street side of the building,” says Bosworth. “Then I designed a [child’s] bunk room [with five bunks] that sits under the gable on top of the garage.”

The stairwell to this room rises behind the living room’s fireplace wall. High above either side of the limestone Rumford fireplace, sloping stairwell walls create angular openings that link the stairwell and the vertical space above the living room.




Left In the combined living room–dining room, the gable boosts vertical space—an important comfort factor for a smaller home. **Bottom** The open design of the first floor easily accommodates large parties so that guests can relax and soak up gorgeous views of the Pacific Ocean. See *Resource Guide* for details.

While these cutouts add architectural interest, they’re also cozy triangles where kids can curl up and spy on grownups. “When we bought the house, our son was nine,” says the wife. “He used to crawl up in that space and sit and look down. Now that he’s a teenager, he and his friends stick their heads out to see what’s going on with the adults!”

During the summer months, when there is plenty of time for such reconnaissance, the erstwhile main room becomes the perfect evening gathering place for all sorts of visiting friends and family. “Once you come through the main hallway, it’s one large, luminous great room that opens to the beach,” remarks the wife. “We do a lot of informal entertaining here—cocktails on the beach, dinner at the house.” Cooking in the well-appointed kitchen is a breeze, and with good reason—the first homeowner was a chef. “Even though the kitchen’s not huge,” explains the wife, “it’s very efficient, with its stainless steel countertops and wonderful professional Thermador stove.”

The wife took her cue for interior colors from the seaside environment outside the home. “I wanted to bring the outdoors in,” she remarks. “The colors are all ocean and beach: yellows, sea greens, and blues.”

Relaxation, ease, and durability were paramount in the interior design. The homeowner says that now “it’s the kind of place where good friends will be here for about 15 minutes and say, ‘I think I’m going to go take a nap in here. Is that okay?’” 



1. The deck, which faces the water, includes open areas and two semi-enclosed porches that are protected from the wind. **2. The double sink**, custom crafted to sit flush with the stainless steel countertop, creates a seamless surface with no crevices that trap food particles. **3. A walkway** to the beach makes quick work of tending to the crab pot. **4. The garage** was built with a low ceiling and tucked into the middle of the home's street side in order to satisfy building restrictions. The garage door is timed to open with a gated entry. **5. Rather than installing a basic tub** and shower in the guest bathroom, a claw-footed tub with a shower converter perches in front of the window. **6. The unwall first floor** opens directly to views of sky and sea. Guests can walk unhindered from the living area, with two new full-size sofas, into the dining and kitchen areas.

