

AMELIA ISLAND HOME & DESIGN

WINTER 2008

Island Living from the Inside Out

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on Amelia

*kitchen trends
new homes guide*

AMELIA ISLAND HOME & DESIGN WINTER 2008



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welcome

RECENTLY, AFTER PHOTOGRAPHING A GORGEOUS RENOVATED HOME in the historic downtown, we decided that perhaps one day, when the kids were grown (and the clutter and chaos had, God willing, subsided), such a wonderfully serene historic home might be our dream home. Although we are definitely not collectors of antiques these days, we have always loved old things and places, and the way they evoke the mystery of long-past associations.

With our interest in history, we never expected to fall in love with a quintessentially modern house made of concrete and glass. We have to admit that we were a bit surprised by our reaction to the home featured on our cover this issue. The interior of Francis and Diane Lott's amazing beachfront home is just as comfortable and inviting as its exterior is impressive. The modern design effectively invites nature indoors. Having visited the home at several different times of day, we witnessed how the light reflecting from the beach infuses, yet does not overpower, the open spaces, often creating dramatically different settings as the sun shifts and exposes the architecture, layout, and décor in new ways. The home challenged our views and opened us up to the many possibilities of modern architecture.

In Tom and Sally Henderson's marshfront home, our second featured home this issue, natural and architectural elements also mingle in a profound and unique way. Here, the sounds and the motion of water are present both indoors and out, recalling Frank Lloyd Wright's masterpiece, Fallingwater. Yet the Asian influence seen throughout the home adds another dimension to the home's beauty, recalling a Zen retreat. It is a singularly beautiful home that moved us with its sense of serenity and natural beauty.

Besides the passion they share for their homes, both couples also share a spirit of generosity toward the community, and they have certainly been generous in opening up their homes to our magazine and readership. Many thanks to both families. We hope you enjoy these beautiful homes as much as we did.

Phil Kelly *Deana Basile Kelly*

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Editors/Publishers

Philip Kelly
Deana Basile Kelly

Sales Representatives

Clayton "Ed" Swartwood
Mark O'Day

Art Director

Tom Barrett

Editorial Assistant

Theresa Duncan

Editorial Contributors

Jan Davis
Nan Kavanaugh
Teresa Sopp

Contributing Photographers

David Burghardt
William Raser
Lynne Taylor

Sweetpea Media, Inc.

910 South 8th Street
Suite 100
Fernandina Beach, FL 32034
904-277-8012
Fax 904-277-8076

editor@ameliaislandhomeanddesign.com
www.ameliaislandhomeanddesign.com

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a lofty idea

Francis and Diane Lott build a magnificent
modern beachfront home called Sealoft

By Theresa Sopp

Photos by David Burghardt, Island Photography

OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS, passersby on South Fletcher Avenue have been treated to the block-by-block building of a dramatic new modern house called Sealoft. Francis Lott, a Georgia Tech-trained architect by education, but a real estate developer by trade, wanted to build a dramatic modern home that would make a significant contribution to the Amelia Island landscape. Francis and his wife, Diane, already owned an ocean-front lot with breathtaking views and they set their sights on building a house that would be just as breathtaking, one that would allow for maximum ocean visibility. They enlisted one of the country's premier contemporary architects to execute it.

William Morgan, an internationally recognized, Jacksonville-based architect, had never designed a residence on Amelia Island before. "I chose William Morgan after reviewing the work of a dozen architects in Florida and the

Florida AIA Awards book," says Francis. "I had admired Mr. Morgan's work for many years, and, when we were finally ready to build, I considered him to be the most significant modernist, residential architect in Florida."

At nearly six thousand square feet, Sealoft is constructed of steel beams and reinforced concrete slabs and fluted concrete block, with massive sheets of glass and a standing-seam aluminum roof. When it was discovered that the concrete block manufacturer had lost the block molds and could no longer produce the special fluted concrete blocks that were integral to the design of the house, builder Russell Tomasini of Fernandina Beach tracked down identical molds in Anchorage, Alaska, and had them shipped to the plant in Florida for manufacturing. Francis states, "Russell is the best construction person I have ever been associated with. He bought into the design and

Left: The spectacular, light-filled open living and dining spaces are constantly changing to reflect the light patterns of the seasons and time of day.

details immediately and executed the work flawlessly. We have become great friends in the process.”

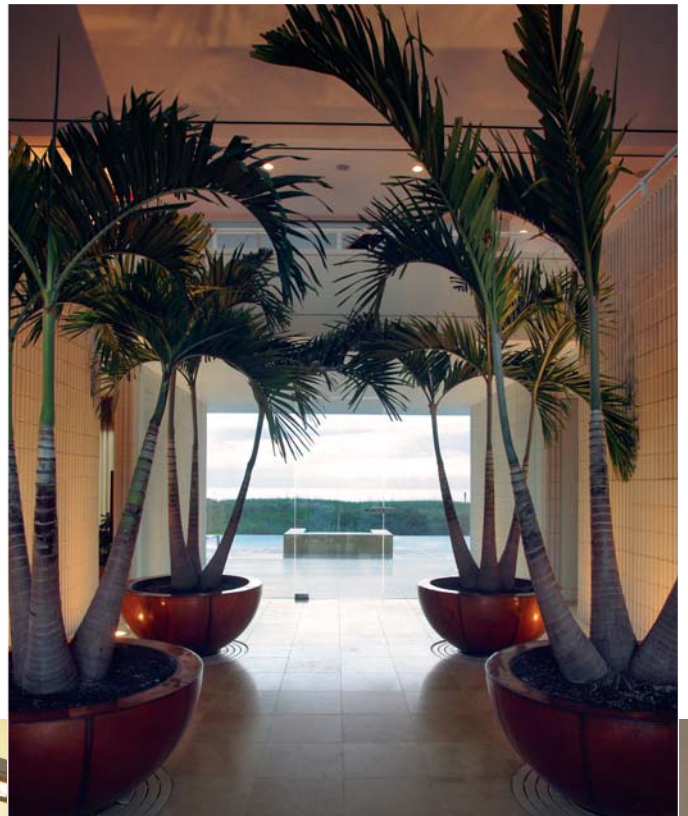
Once Francis and Diane selected the architect and presented him their requirements, the design process was wrapped up in only six months. The modern architecture, with the strength of the concrete allowing for large expanses of glass across the long, rectilinear home, was the perfect way to achieve the maximum ocean visibility that the Lotts desired. Curious islanders observed the meticulous construction of the house over the following two-and-a-half years.

And it was well worth the wait. Guests enter Sealoft through a wall of stacked glass panels into the two-story, palm-tree studded atrium. Because the front wall is all glass, there was no logical place for a doorbell. Instead, a sensor captures the foot traffic coming up the walk and activates the chime. Diane laughingly says she has startled curious folks who wander up to press their noses against the glass, not realizing they’ve already rung the bell!

A trip up the staircase to the second story always elicits a gasp from first-timers. The living room, media room, dining room, and kitchen surround the open atrium. The entire space is a glass-enclosed area that seems to float above the ocean, which is visible from any single point of each of these rooms. Some twenty-four feet up, the ceiling soars as if weightless. Lightwells at each end of the living area and a narrow skylight along the ridge of the roof fill the space with

Below: The palm-tree studded atrium, visible from the street, often attracts onlookers..

Bottom: The dining room furniture and carpet was designed by Jacksonville interior designer Rebecca Davisson to complement the painting by Neptune Beach artist Larry Jon Davis.





The upstairs guest bedroom is reached through a hallway designed to display the Lotts' glass art collection.



Top: A retractable curtain darkens the media room for daytime viewing; the television screen and projector lower from the ceiling. Above: Designed for total beach access, Sealoft's pool and patio area offer a fabulous place to relax. At a recent family wedding, underlit Lucite panels over the pool created a dance floor.

natural light. At night, a state-of-the-art lighting system gives the architectural lines a luminescent sculptural glow and casts frond-shaped shadows onto the ceiling from the palms below.

Francis and Diane love to entertain family and often host out-of-town friends for weekend get-togethers. The pool, barbecue area, and beach walk-over are designed with guests in mind: there's plenty of room for swimming, sunbathing, and sand-castle building.

The kitchen—Diane's favorite room—has lots of glass wall space, but very little room for wall cabinets. Instead, beautiful cherry-front drawers provide kitchen storage, and a large walk-in pantry is just around the corner. The kitchen is divided from the dining room by a counter with the gas range. The range hood is topped with shelves to show off the Lotts' extensive glass art collection.

Francis and Diane had a small collection of glass in their home in Georgia, also a contemporary design, but they realized that the display niches and the abundant light in Sealoft would create the perfect backdrop for an even more extensive collection of fine glass. The colorful pieces with rounded and fluid lines provide a counterpoint to the rectilinear architectural style and add bright splashes of color to the simplicity of the design.

The Lotts and their extended family and friends are highly pleased with their Amelia Island getaway. Francis says, "We



Top: A large outdoor kitchen with a gas grill is recessed below eye level so as to not interrupt the vista from the glass house. "I wanted total ocean expanse as the view," says Francis. Above: One of five bathrooms in Sealoft, the upstairs bath reflects the ocean with its seafoam green color scheme.





wanted a home that would be soaring, dramatic, and filled with light, something that would have a significant architectural impact on the island. Trained as an architect and working as a developer, I could have designed the house myself, but I wanted more than I could deliver, given my limited experience. The result is a sensational house, far better than anything we ever dreamed possible.”

Friend and fellow architect Bob Broward, also of Jacksonville, calls the design “perhaps the best design Morgan has ever done, in terms of arrangement, plan, the view from both sides, the way it’s adapted to the site and to the family’s lifestyle. It’s just so well done and beautiful.”

The Lotts have indeed made a significant impact on South Fletcher Avenue with a signature home that islanders will be enjoying for years to come.



Top: Just across the atrium from the dining room, the formal living room centers around a gas fireplace; replicas of Louis Sullivan carved panels over the mantel are gifts from architect William Morgan.

Above: Shoji screens separate serene, zen-like master bedroom which is divided from the master bath retreat.