



## Redefining Coastal Living

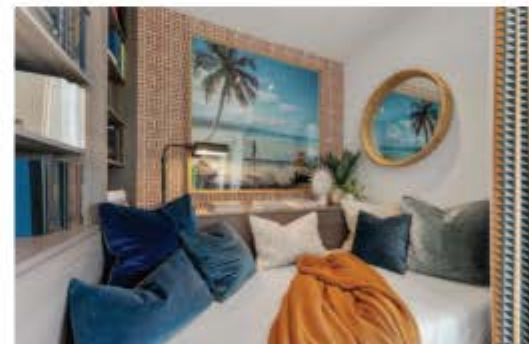
*Interior Judy Betlyon had a vision for a house that would redefine coastal living and architect Rose Randa from AS+P worked with her to make this house in Avalon, New Jersey a reality*

Prior to 2021 residents of Avalon, New Jersey's Avalon Avenue deckhouse on 32nd Street near the lifeguard station as 'the house on the corner.' Everyone in town knew the house. It was blue, built in the late '60s. It had a few decks with several exposures and had seemingly been there forever. So, when Interior Designer Judy Betlyon (Social House Design) and her family bought the property and leveled it, she says there were likely many opinions.

But Judy had a vision. A vision for a home that redefined

coastal living. A home that would take advantage of vistas and angles and ease of living. In 2021, her family got it. And they spent the better part of two years working with their architect, builder and contractors to create a dramatic post and beam house—a house that stands out on the block and perhaps the town itself.

According to Judy, who, along with her family had lived in California, deckhouses took on a different persona there. They were light, bright and casual. They were designed to not only maximize beach and ocean views, but incorporate





native landscaping, both exposing the home to the elements and letting the elements inside—all with absolutely no barriers. It's as if it is an integral part of the beach itself. So many shore houses have a similar look. "I think there was a period of time when there wasn't much attention paid to architecture. I wanted to see and do something different," she says.

"People who come to Avalon can bring traditional home structures to the shore. It's almost as if they don't want to interact with the outside of the house." It may have been standard issue for many older homes, but this house is part of the neighborhood. Judy describes it as interacting and engaging both interior and exterior—having great sight lines, while being 'pulled back from the ocean. And she claims things, they are changing, with creative architectural design beginning its rise in the area.

The photography speaks for itself.

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The use of glass, wood, clean lines is a testament to the integration of natural elements with the surroundings. While the lot is only 60 X 110, a lot of home is packed within. At 4,361 square feet, Judy paints an image of three floors, each with magnificent views on all levels. The third level was pushed to the rear of the house, allowing a second-floor cathedral ceiling.

According to Rose Randa, Sr. Associate for the architectural firm, Asher

Slaunwhite & Partners (AS+P), "The house is simple in form, so the quality of details become important to the design. Everything was carefully considered and crafted. A home meant to be there for generations."

In many ways, the initial consultation went well according to plan. Rose, who Judy describes as a great listener, sat down with Judy to hear what she was looking for. As with many who are building, a variety of ideas were pulled from magazines, photos of other homes, perhaps even online. Rose says, "To define the project concepts, the team pulled from their years of collective design experience and studied mid-century structures as well." It all comes together in a sort of vision or mood board—giving the architect a solid idea of what is really in their client's dreams. "There was one exception. Judy is an interior designer. One with roots planted in a Delaware River town (Titusville, N.J.), with her

influence reaching throughout the Great Philadelphia Area, including Bucks, over through Princeton, down to South Jersey—all the way to the shore. She's worked on other projects there, including previous guts and flips for others and herself. She's experienced. And it's why Rose says it was easy to work with Judy because of her vast knowledge. And why Judy says working with Rose on prior projects made it natural for her to be the lead on this one.

Judy knew this was the place for her. After receiving the tip to look at the original home, she entered the house, looked around, brought a ladder up to the second floor and stood on it. It gave her a good feeling for what a view could be. "Heights are different now," she adds. "I saw the potential." If you're a shore-goer, you have gradually seen the change. Small cottages once meant for sleeping, eating and changing have given way to more modern, multi-level structures meant for gathering and entertaining. And this one, right now, is one-of-a-kind—at least in Avalon.

AS+P describes the property as a fresh approach to the deck house. The 'Guard House', as it's become known for its location near the lifeguard station "employs steel structures that allow for expansive glass and sliding wall systems. The interior is full of light, clean, with cantilevers that the firm says, "weaves together the threads of modernism and historicism that inspired this unique design." Colorful Henrybuilt custom cabinetry with wooden accents brightens an otherwise neutral palette. Judy says the style was influenced by the well-known modernist architect, Joseph Eichler. He built homes during the Mid-Century, thus making his mark with unique angled lines, sloping roofs, interior exposed beams. Predominantly built in California, many of the thousands were single floor. And his style is said to have been influenced by another great architectural name—Frank Lloyd Wright. Judy also



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notes similar tones in Australian architecture.

One of Judy's favorite features is the floating staircase, which leads up to the main living spaces. Four bedrooms in all, the primary suite is accessed through a private set of stairs, while the other three guest bedrooms are on the first floor. The lines are clean and simple. It's open and airy, providing Judy and her family with the exact integration they desired. Every aspect of the home, from the exterior and interior design through the landscaping and hardscaping were carefully thought out, wanting to use as many native plants as possible. "Our landscape architect was from Bucks, Nectars Landscape. "We incorporated native species from the dune area. So, it looks like a straight line from dunes to

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home. We didn't want a manicured look, using as many shells as possible for mulch. Once the plants got established, they took hold, not requiring much maintenance, nor water," says Judy.

Both Rose and Judy agree that the house was built with sustainability in mind. Custom airfoil louvers provide relief from the sun's strong rays, and the first level's concrete floor all work together to keep the home cool in summer and warm in the winter. Natural materials including wood and large windows work in symmetry, and it all makes for one cool home that is pretty much everything Judy and her family could have conceived.

"This home encourages more outdoor living. That's why I'm there," Judy

says. "We're there as a family to use the whole property and we went into the project with that in mind. There are no dead spaces. And getting into the outdoors is encouraged." She imagined lazy reading days on big porch swings, sitting on steps and edges of the porch interacting with neighbors. She's got it.

Hardly a newbie to the shore, Judy, a Bucks County native, not only spent many a day down in Ocean City. But upon moving back east from California, settled there with her husband and three boys for a number of years. "It was a lovely experience. Ocean City is a great place for kids. And a lot of memories were made there." She joked that she'd never leave Ocean City. "Why would I leave? It's a great town." But a house in Avalon came calling, and Judy answered

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it. While it's no longer the blue deck-house, she sees her home as a new and improved one, making the house on the corner once again a location known for its location, proximity to the lifeguard station and a most unique design.

Judy Betlyon is owner of Social House Design, which she says is based out of her home (and car) on the NJ side of the river (www.socialhousedesign.com). AS+P is located in Jenkintown, with projects throughout the Greater Philadelphia Area, including down the shore, www.asparchitects.com. ♦

Chrysa Smith is a contributor to the magazine, with a keen interest in all things home.

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