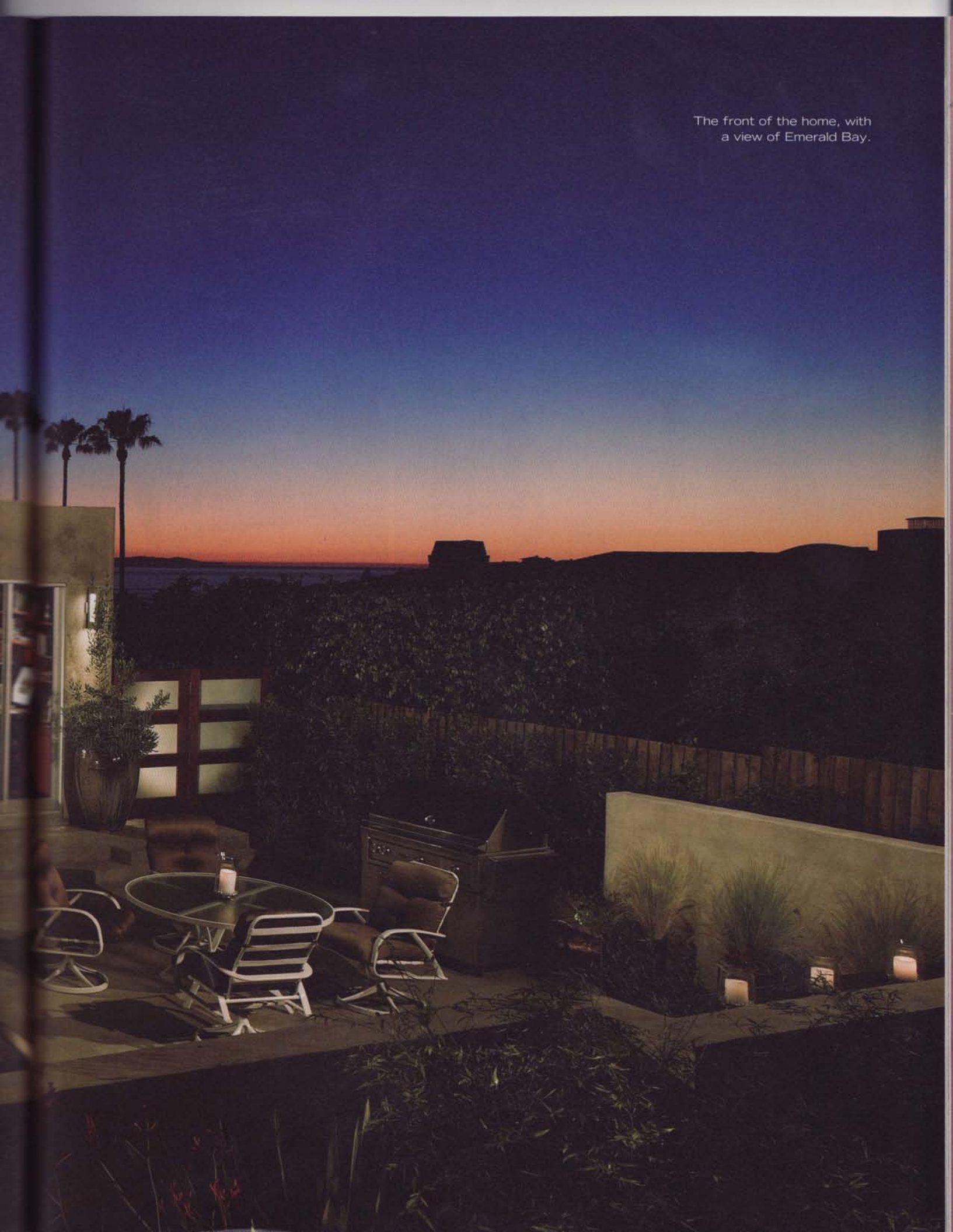


MODERN GETS A SOFT TOUCH

LAGUNA BEACH HOUSE PLAN BECOMES A COMFORTABLE COMPROMISE
BY COURTNEY CAMPBELL • PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILL HARE



The front of the home, with
a view of Emerald Bay.





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Until he decided to tear down his 1,500-foot bungalow three years ago to build a modern house, a North Laguna Beach bachelor hardly knew his neighbors of 10 years. The decision certainly “fostered interaction” on this quiet, traditional street, he recalls. The neighbors, afraid of losing their much-coveted views of Emerald Bay, resisted the encroachment of a modern home.

The original plan was to remodel, but as his vision grew during discussions with architects, the project’s scope expanded. “I wanted a contemporary house with sleek lines, cable lighting, and open space for entertaining,” he says.

He commissioned longtime friend Al Oligino of Oligino Construction Services of Laguna Beach to be his builder, and for the design selected Laguna Beach-based Michael Blakemore Architects Inc., which specializes in high-end, modern residential

projects. Blakemore’s philosophy, stated on the company’s Web site, is to adapt “to the stylistic desire of our clients,” a philosophy he put into practice on this project.

The owner first asked for classic, modern lines. Then he married a woman with two teenagers, and decided to incorporate his bride’s preferences, which leaned more toward what she calls “Tuscany meets contemporary.” Blakemore responded by softening the concrete and stainless-steel exterior with a mahogany and laminate garage door, and adding mahogany gates at the property’s polar ends.

Openness is a central feature of the home, although its well-proportioned, modern exterior only hints at what’s inside. From a sleek, opaque front door, visitors step into a main, open-plan room that integrates space for living and dining, as well as the kitchen, media room, and office. The dining area leads to a large terrace with a captivating view of the bay.



ABOVE: Hand-blown Italian light fixtures in the daughter’s bedroom.

LEFT: “Organza” sheer embossed crystal chandelier reflects light over the dining table.

The rear terrace as seen from the front entrance to the home.



The terrace railing mimics
the stair railing inside the home.





ABOVE: The opaque tile trim adds dimension to the backsplash.

RIGHT: The owner's dog, Bella, peeks over the staircase railing.



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The office is just a step away from the living room and also doubles as a guest room. It features a crescent-shaped, built-in desk designed by Dora Brigham Interiors of Costa Mesa, and overlooks a patio, landscaped by Elizabeth Leland of Dana Point, with a cascading double-sided waterfall and a gas-fired fireplace, which together add a dramatic touch to the architecture.

The home's Spanish porcelain-tile floors, which look like rusted steel, change, chameleon-like, with the moving sun and play against the warmth of the kitchen's Brazilian cherry wood flooring. The kitchen, which includes a massive Dacor dishwasher, reflects the owner's passion for cooking and entertaining.

Light filters through the laminated skylight and stairwell that lead to the second floor. In the daughter's bedroom, futuristic, hand-blown Italian light fixtures hang from the corners, while the son's room looks out onto a courtyard that features a round, freestanding fire pit. This is where the teenagers gather

with friends when not in the cozy downstairs family room.

A smoothly curved stucco wall, which displays the homeowner's art collection, leads to the spacious master suite. A fireplace warms the room, and the 13-foot glass walls of its sitting area let in the sun, moon, and stars. The spa bathroom, fitted with Carrara marble, includes a Kohler infinity tub. Double-glass basins are set atop a raised-glass countertop and cherry cabinet, a design the owners admired during their travels to Italy.

From design to completion, construction of the 3,400-square-foot house, delayed at times by rain and a wedding, took three years. With good teamwork all around, the newlyweds survived the ordeal, and, in the process, created a comfortable and well-designed modern home. OC

—Courtney Campbell is an *Orange Coast* contributing writer specializing in home design.