

GENTRY

PENINSULA

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SPRING FLING

THE SEASON'S BEST SWIMWEAR

TROPICAL ZEN

INSIDE A LOS ALTOS HILLS ESTATE

WYN WACHHORST'S

AN AMERICAN EPIC

GORDON MOORE AND
THE BAIRCHILD LEGACY

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Former Olympic athletes Ann and Gary Sheerer have created their own little piece of paradise in the heart of Los Altos Hills.

Tropical Zen

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Ann and Gary Sheerer lead an exuberant life, one that's abounding in vitality and extreme joy. It's no surprise that their home evokes the same effervescent spirit that radiates from these two former Olympians.

Ann served as the home's visionary, taking on the landscape and interior design with her trademark gusto. She spent a year designing the property on paper, researching and incorporating ideas from the couple's favorite architecture found in such exotic locales as Hawaii, Costa Rica, Bali, and Japan. Ann even took inspiration from the Big Island's Kona Village Resort, a cherished destination of the couple. In fact, she first visited Kona Village in 1970 as a swimsuit model for *Sports Illustrated*. To execute Ann's vision, the Sheerers enlisted the expertise of Los Gatos-based architect Louis Leu. His mandate was to create a home where adults, kids, and dogs could comfortably co-exist. "I think the chemistry was very good between us from the beginning," recalls Leu. "The Sheerers had strong ideas and the visions we shared were not that different, so it made for easy execution."

The resulting home is a mini Pacific Rim-inspired resort unto itself, complete with water features that are integrated into the home's grand entrance and expansive back patio. To achieve a seamless indoor/outdoor feel, Leu had five sets of retractable lift side doors installed, some of which slide back into pockets in the wall and others that open up at 90 and 135 degree corners. "The corner-less openings are more dramatic and unexpected," notes Leu. The overall effect is incredibly dramatic—framing the exotic mix of plants, hardscape, and a spectacular pool.

Indeed, being surrounded by water was imperative for the Sheerers. To enter their unique home one must cross a bridge over a long pebble-lined koi pond. "The koi pond is accessible from the inside of the home by way of sliding doors on either side of the entry," notes Leu. "The bridge is covered by a roof supported by columns made from the trunks of palm trees." The Sheerers reinforced their island Zen theme with large gongs, hand-carved Indonesian artifacts, and tropical plants on the entry porch.

Both Sheerers are former Olympians in water polo and diving, and they are still involved in water sports today. The backyard features a 75-foot lap pool, a typical length for competition swimming, and they use it for training and exercise. The adjoining spa waters cascade gently into the pool. A decorative Japanese-style bridge adds a whimsical touch.

Ann designed the home's interiors with the help of her daughter-in-law, Joy Sheerer. The idea was to create a minimalist feel that would not compete with the indoor/outdoor flow. People are constantly coming and going, many from all over the world, so one large great room works perfectly for this couple's on-going entertaining. Furnishings were chosen to be family-friendly where one can comfortably plop down and put feet up. Dogs are always welcome to reside in, too.



PHOTO: JAMES WILSON/STY

THIS SPACE: Owners Ann and Gary Sheerer adorned the front porch with a large gong, hand-carved Indonesian artifacts, and tropical plants.

CEILING: One great room works for the Sheerers, who are constantly entertaining family and friends, many of whom travel in from all over the world. Slate floors and comfortable furnishings make this space both kid- and dog-friendly. The slate tiles extend out to the back patio for a seamless indoor/outdoor feel.





Their entire lives have been about water, so it was important that the Sheerer's home be surrounded by water, even though it is landlocked. In the back, a 75-foot lap pool is used by these former Olympians for both training and entertaining. The entire rear opens up to the backyard with retractable doors. The Japanese-style bridge connects the patio to the rest of the backyard.



above: The master bedroom features a three-sided fireplace, which separates the sitting and sleeping areas. Retractable doors open to the spa on the back patio. Recessed ceilings with grass cloth and Palisade-style fans highlight each space. Salvador Dalí lithographs are displayed as a collection above the sofa.

right: Homeowner Ann Sheerer has accessorized the home with furniture and art from South East Asia.

An exotic feel throughout is achieved by the use of different textures and woods, including the aforementioned palm columns, light bamboo cabinets, dark bamboo, cork and slate floors, cambara wood beams, cedar ceilings, alder and mahogany doors, and vertical grain fir windows. The subtle use of stone pebble on the cabinetry and stair risers supports the feeling of nature and water. Most of the

artifacts come from Arteak in Santa Cruz. "I dream up ideas for the kinds of things I'd like to see in my home," says Ann, "and I can usually find them at Arteak." The owner, Scott Burns, travels to Indonesia and Bali to source unique wood sculptures and art. Her favorites are masks that make you smile. "I have a mask in our bathroom with a crooked, distorted kind of look. When I wake up, see it, and then look at myself in the mirror, I think, 'Wow! I don't look too bad.' Homes should be filled with art that has a sense of humor. We shouldn't take ourselves too seriously."

For the landscape, Ann implemented lots of tropical grasses and plants, along with various bamboos. Her landscape philosophy: "If everything dies, it still has to look great." Her plan for this home was for the plantings to evolve from a peaceful Japanese Zen-like garden into a lush Tazman jungle experience with zip lines, a 50-foot waterfall, climbing ropes for kids (of all ages), and room for dogs to freely explore. From the mind of Ann Sheerer and the talent of architect Louise Leu comes a sublime and unforgettable island experience. ■

