

# OPPOSITES ATTRACT

*Two stunning vacation homes—one East, one West—offer striking contrasts in architecture and materials, yet share a common bond of meticulous craftsmanship*

**T**he definition of a “vacation” house in today’s upscale market has changed. With more spacious floor plans, open layouts, gourmet kitchens and varied outdoor spaces, the custom vacation retreat has become a home away from home—a place for living, not just a weekend or seasonal getaway. This trend is handsomely evident in the two houses featured in this issue. The first, constructed by Bruce Olson, lies nestled at the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains ringing Northern California’s Lake Tahoe. Just steps from the Lake’s edge, the 5,300-sq. ft. house (below) synthesizes the best of Craftsman and Scandinavian styles, with native wood and rustic stone as its primary materials.



The other, on Long Island’s Eastern Shore, is a dramatic contemporary, a composition in concrete, glass and steel that unites flowing interior spaces with exterior surroundings of sky, sand and the waters of the Atlantic. Built by Telemark Construction, under the supervision of *Custom Builder* advisory board members Frank and Roy Dalene, and designed by New York architect Rafael Viñoly, the 17,000-sq. ft. home features a largely open plan stretched out over a series of levels in a gallery-like setting.

Individually, these projects are a study in contrasts; together, they represent some of the finest craftsmanship in the custom residential field.



BY CHRISTINA NELSON



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## ‘Rigorous Simplicity’

*Challenged with creating a sculptural wonder of glass and concrete and steel, these Long Island builders mastered the improbable*

**T**he Dalene family has been building throughout eastern Long Island for over 40 years, first under the leadership of Norwegian-born Hugo Dalene, more recently under the direction of sons Frank, age 42, and Roy, 39. Their firm, Telemark Construction, located in Bridgehampton, New York, has its roots in strong family ties and a dedication to preserving the quality and standards of Scandinavian craftsmanship. The brothers learned early on that there was only one way to build: the right way. That commitment to excellence has served Telemark well, for its fine reputation has attracted clients from all over the world and given the company a multi-million dollar share of the high-end vacation market. The firm currently employs 15 in-house tradesmen, relying on a select group of subcontractors to handle such tasks as concrete work and rough framing.

In the Hamptons, where much of Telemark’s business is centered, traditional architecture and attitudes prevail. So when the Dalenes started construction on this substantial

concrete-and-glass structure, its presence raised more than a few eyebrows and stirred up a good deal of controversy in this older established neighborhood. “The truth is that in this area it’s not unusual to have a unique style or design that doesn’t conform to what people envision as a ‘traditional’ home,” says Frank Dalene, who serves as the company’s general business manager. “In the strictest sense of the word, a traditional building in this region should probably be a teepee.” Neighbors’ attempts to halt the project were squelched, thanks in part to the client’s quick action and considerable experience in real estate and construction matters—although a series of lawsuits and counter-suits erupted that took months to resolve.

The client, a widow in her 60s who owns an even larger primary residence in Connecticut, was as steadfast in her vision for this weekend retreat as she was in dealing with others’ attempts to foil it. She hired architect Rafael Viñoly, who practices in Tokyo and Buenos Aires as well as New York, because she was drawn to the

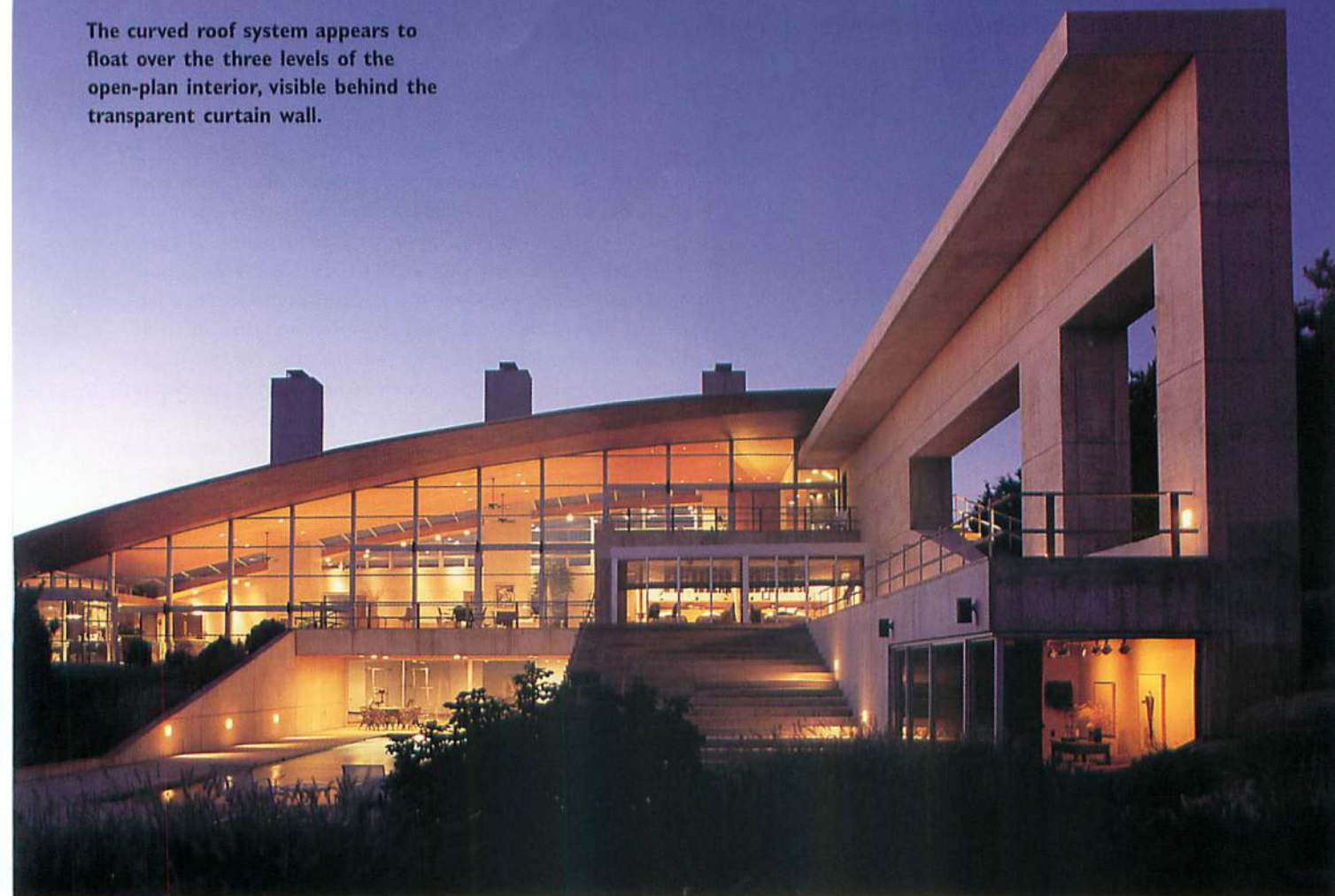
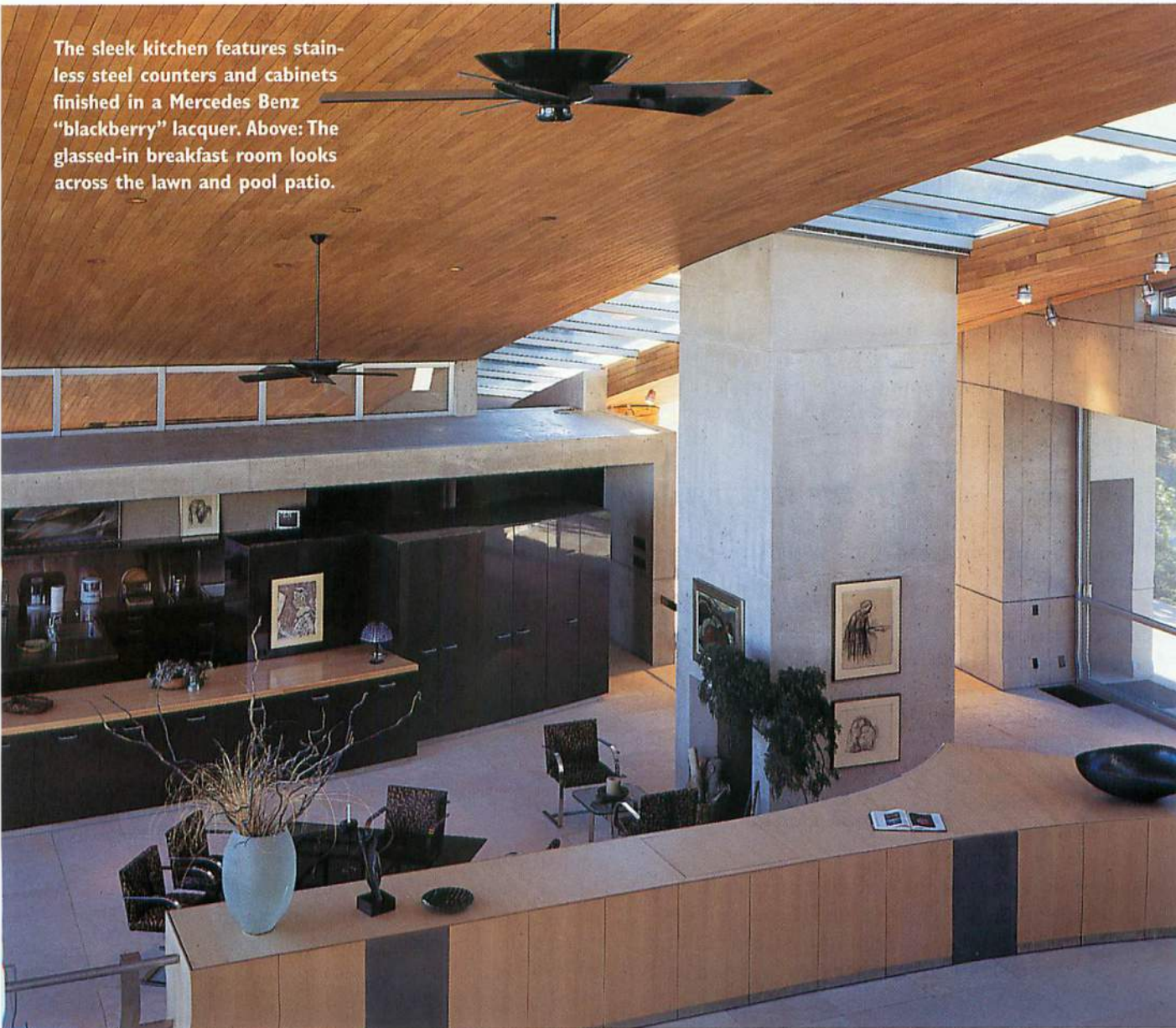


includes maid's quarters, two guest suites, and a large gym that opens onto the pool terrace and features a stationary "Swimex" indoor pool.

The basement level houses a huge mechanical plant that Roy Dalene describes as "spotless and organized like a steamship's room." Among its occupants are four wet-base boilers, part of a computer-controlled hydronic system that provides domestic hot water and fuels the radiant heat, and water-source heat pumps used for air conditioning. The mechanical room also holds all components for the home entertainment, security, and lighting systems; pool equipment; the 800-amp electrical service panels; and a generator system for back-up power.

Frank Dalene acknowledges that the first impression on seeing the house and experiencing its grand interior space is often one of speechless wonder. "But as you take in its complexity and meticulous detailing," he adds, "it's a house that definitely grows on you." ■

The sleek kitchen features stainless steel counters and cabinets finished in a Mercedes Benz "blackberry" lacquer. Above: The glassed-in breakfast room looks across the lawn and pool patio.



The curved roof system appears to float over the three levels of the open-plan interior, visible behind the transparent curtain wall.

ture on every contract. No decision was ever based on price alone—cost was a factor but not an issue. What she sought was quality, honesty, and integrity."

Indeed, the owner selected the Dalenes over their competitors because, she says, she was "confident they could build a home of Tiffany quality and craftsmanship."

**CLIENT'S COUNSEL**

Because the client's main residence is only a three-hour drive from the Hamptons, she attended weekly job-site meetings on a regular basis. Interior designer Gary Gutterman acted as her representative during absences, working closely with the Dalenes and serving as a kind of liaison with the architect. Roy Dalene remembers a debate between architect and

*"In the strictest sense, a traditional building in this region should be a teepee"*

—Frank Dalene

owner over the concrete color: Viñoly wanted to retain its natural gray; she insisted on a warmer shade that echoed the color of the beach sand." We made 20 to 30 mini-batches of concrete, pouring them into small forms, trying to get the color just right," the builder recalls. "She was very pleased with the results."

Color was also an issue when it came to selecting the teakwood for ceilings and roof overhangs. Their client specified a Burmese variety for its "coffee" shade, a request that took some detective work since Burma was no longer exporting rain forest teakwood and the project required some 100,000 linear feet. Fortunately, the Dalenes found a New Jersey supplier that imports teak cut from logs reclaimed from Burma's river bottoms. Although the owner likens her vacation home to a "three-bedroom summer cottage," the expansive multilevel plan

**BUILDER:**

Telemark Construction  
Frank and Roy Dalene  
Bridgehampton, NY

**ARCHITECTURE:**

Rafael Viñoly, FAIA  
Rafael Viñoly Architects  
New York, NY

**LANDSCAPE:**

Robert J. Venuti  
Bridgehampton, NY

structural originality of his buildings. To fit the footprint to the site and meet the pre-existing conditions for zoning and setbacks, Viñoly created a design he describes as "rigorous yet simple—an L-shape wall defining the view with a roof floating over it." Behind

*"The whole building is about space. The entire house was built on paper first"*

—Roy Dalene

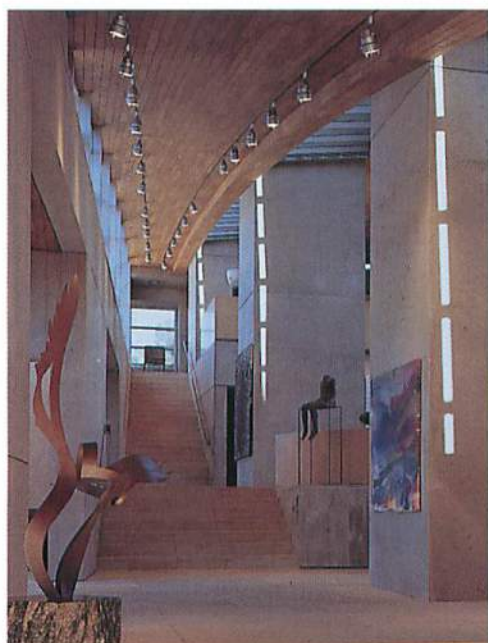
Roy Dalene, who handled the project on a day-to-day basis. A structural engineer as well as a contractor, he was intrigued by its complex geometry, interesting angles, and construction challenges. "The entire house was built on paper first," he remarks. "Every trade submitted detailed shop drawings, which had to be discussed and approved by the architect before any work commenced. The project required a tremendous degree of coordination among the architect, subcontractors, engineers, general contractor, and owner." Roy Dalene's own engineering experience proved helpful as well. One of the most useful tools for everyone involved was the architect's model of the house, a 5-ft. by 3-1/2-ft. structure built exactly to scale. "A large model gives a truer sense of the completed building and can be invaluable in translating drawings into reality," explains Viñoly. In fact, the architect finds the model concept so valuable as a presentation aid, and design and construction tool, that he employs a 12-person model shop in his New York headquarters.

#### MASSIVE ENGINEERING

Although the house edges the beachfront, the site's stable soil permitted a conventional foundation to be poured, says Roy Dalene, "yet the footings were certainly atypical, requiring 300 yards of concrete. One footing

the curtain wall stretching across the beachfront facade—"essentially a large piece of glass integrated with the vista," he says—lie three continuous spaces that follow the roof as it ascends from the more public areas to the private realm.

"The whole building is about space," says



Stairs ascend from public to private areas and columns provide gallery space for artwork lit by a customized Lutron system.

alone measured 20 ft. wide by 160 ft. long to support the weight of the building." He estimates that the house consumed 2,500 cubic yards of concrete and 150 tons of steel rebar.

The curved roof system was particularly tricky to engineer and build. Three chimneys act as the main supports for the roof along one side; a series of steel columns hidden in the glass curtain wall support the opposite side. At the top of the curve, the roof cantilevers 18 ft. beyond the curtain wall, then gradually narrows to 10 ft. as it sweeps towards the ground. Beneath its lead-coated copper exterior, glulams of varying sizes were employed to give the roof its basic shape, then pared down to create the smooth curves that characterize the design.

One of the engineers consulted wouldn't guarantee the roof's structural integrity in the event of a severe windstorm, but, says Roy Dalene, "We were confident it would work. We looked closely at the weight of the roof, and determined it was heavy enough to withstand virtually any uplift load."

From an interior vantage point, the roof and curtain wall make a dramatic impression and underscore the grand scale of the spaces. Except where punctuated by the massive chimneys, the teak-finished ceiling is surrounded by glass. Aluminum gridwork housing individual glass panes adds a sculptural element to the three-story curtain wall and integrates smoothly with the cube-form breakfast bay and a series of sliding doors leading to the outdoors. An abundance of natural light from the south, sand-colored concrete walls, Arizona flagstone flooring, pearwood cabinetry, and a highly-customized Lutron lighting system bring warmth to the huge living and dining areas—and serve as a backdrop for the owner's collection of original artwork, sculpture, and furnishings. Radiant heating throughout the stone flooring adds further to the physical comfort, and makes the house a pleasant retreat even in overcast, wintery weather.

"In design and materials, our client was clear on what she did and did not want," recalls Frank Dalene. He describes her as a highly private person, yet totally unpretentious, who wished her home to be both a sanctuary and a kind of functional sculpture. "She was very involved from the start, personally interviewing the subs and putting her signa-



Within the first level's soaring spaces, a grouping of designer furnishings creates an intimate conversation area. Opposite: The cantilevered roof, finished in Burmese teak, narrows from 18 to 10 ft. as it sweeps towards the ground.