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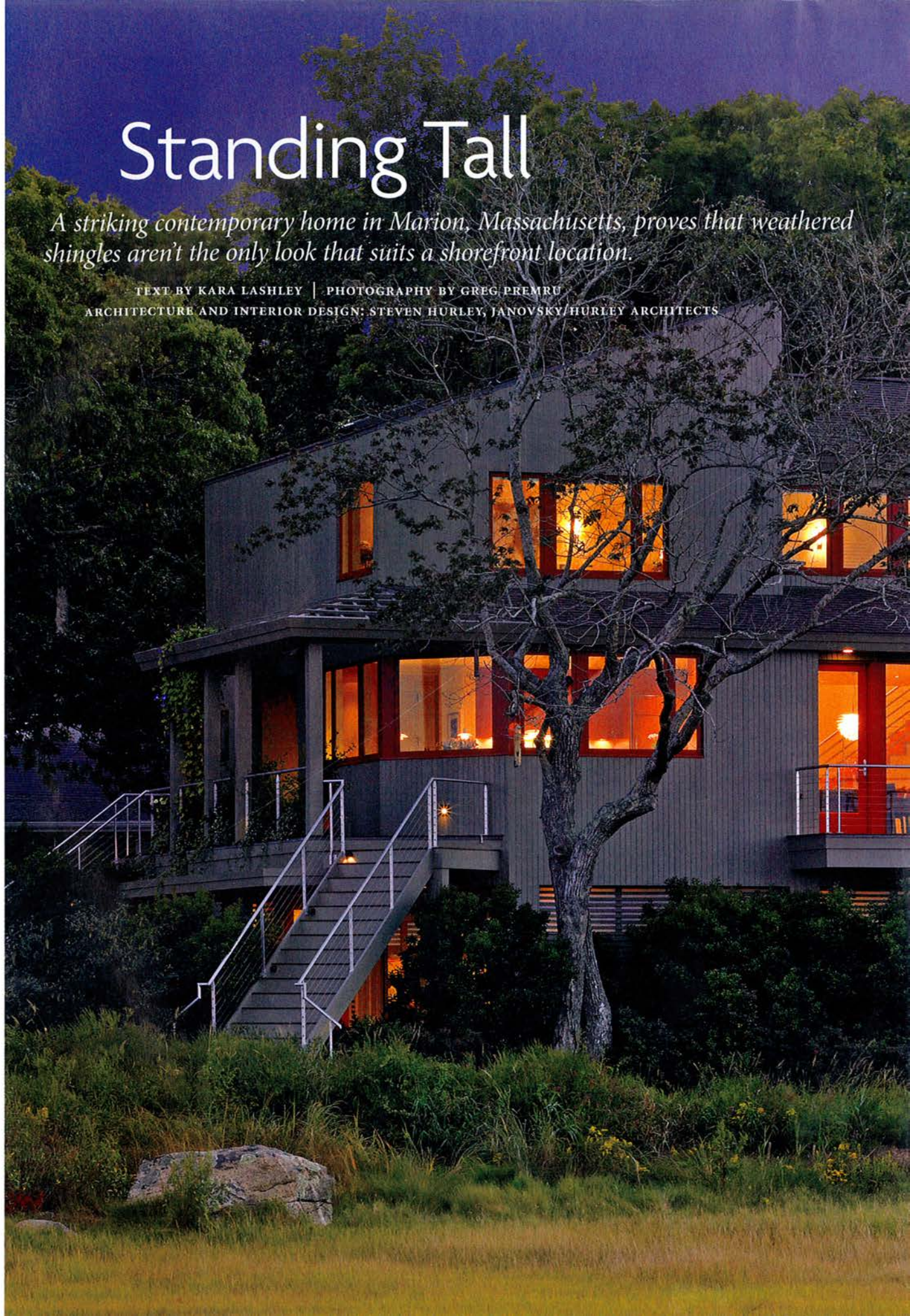
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# Standing Tall

*A striking contemporary home in Marion, Massachusetts, proves that weathered shingles aren't the only look that suits a shorefront location.*

TEXT BY KARA LASHLEY | PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG PREMRO  
ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN: STEVEN HURLEY, JANOVSKY/HURLEY ARCHITECTS







Elevated above the marsh by *pilotis*, more in the water than on it, the house pays homage to its environs with outdoor spaces on three levels.





**P**erched on stilts eighteen feet above the marshy shore, Steven and Sue Hurley's home in Marion, Massachusetts, turns its face toward the water, taking in the whole of Sippican Harbor. In this quiet neighborhood of weathered Capes and traditional cottages, it is known as "The Architect's House."

True, its clean lines and glassy surfaces reflect Steven's affinity for contemporary design and hint at the work of his firm, which specializes in research laboratories. Yet, for Steven, the house was not simply an architectural experiment. It was, as he puts it, "a labor of love," its striking form designed to absorb the site's lavish harbor view.

After all, it was the view that drew the Hurleys to the property in 1999, when only a fisherman's cottage stood on the lot. Though the cottage was humble—just twenty-five feet square—it was, Steven says, "a sweetheart of a deal" and made a convenient base for the couple's weekend sailing excursions. Steven began to envision the new home he would build there one day, when he and Sue were ready to retire.

Soon, however, new regulations came into effect that outlawed building on the site, in a flood velocity zone. The Hurleys had a choice: start construction under their current building permit—ten years ahead of plan—or retire later to the tiny, spartan cottage.

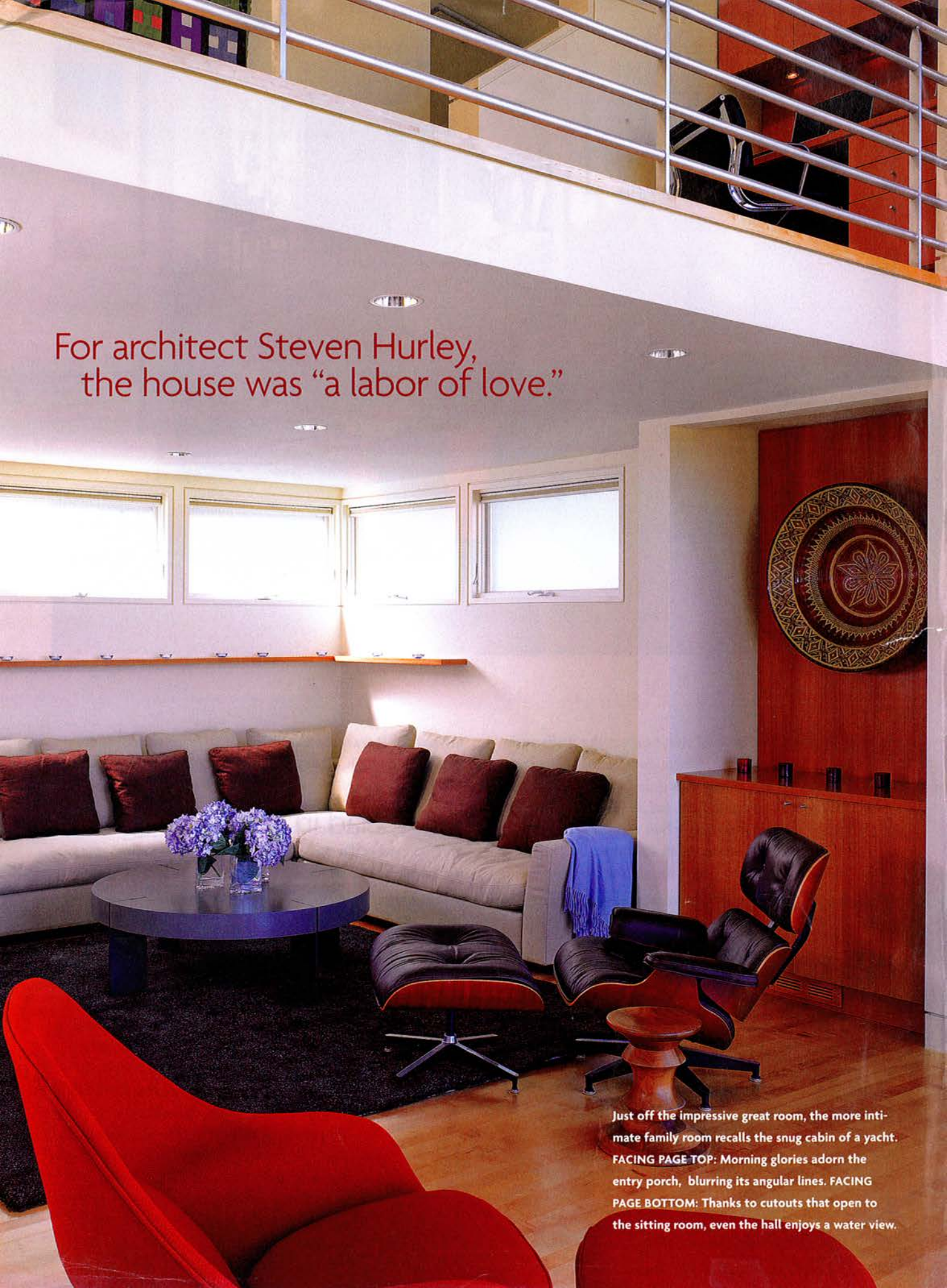
Perhaps only an architect, and an impassioned one at that, would have taken on the challenges the site presented, not to mention the less-than-opportune timing. All three of the couple's children were in college, and Sue had recently returned to school. Their primary residence in Lexington, Massachusetts, still needed some work.

"We didn't have a lot of money," Steven says, "but we had a big vision."

Acting as his own contractor, Steven recruited carpenters and craftsmen who had worked on projects for his Wellesley-based firm, Janovsky/Hurley Architects, to give form to his vision. For two years, he spent his weekends at the site, meticulously overseeing every detail of the 3,200-square-foot house, from the bookmatched millwork to







For architect Steven Hurley,  
the house was “a labor of love.”

Just off the impressive great room, the more intimate family room recalls the snug cabin of a yacht. FACING PAGE TOP: Morning glories adorn the entry porch, blurring its angular lines. FACING PAGE BOTTOM: Thanks to cutouts that open to the sitting room, even the hall enjoys a water view.





the half-inch plaster “reveal” that borders the walls and slinks up the stairs. “You’re by yourself, sleeping on concrete, and you think, ‘What am I doing?’” he recalls.

Sue, now a nurse practitioner, helped keep the project on an even keel. For instance, when truckloads of cedar siding needed to be stained on all four sides, she invited family and friends to the house for an old-fashioned paint-

ing party. “It was like a quilting party, with paint,” she says with a laugh, remembering the drying racks that covered the property. “It was definitely a collective effort.”

## Now, clad in a tight skin of

gray-stained cedar and screened by a windswept maple, the house seems as native to this shore as its shingled

neighbors. “If you do it right,” Steven says, “the house is subordinate to the landscape.”

But how do you make a contemporary house on stilts not *look* like a contemporary house on stilts? The concrete columns—or *pilotis*—that elevate the home above the danger of flood waters are wrapped in siding to soften their appearance. Thoughtfully placed plantings of northern barberry and native grasses visually anchor the house to the shore, toning down the scale.

The shady space created by the *pilotis*—“The Cool Room,” as the Hurleys call it—opens onto the marsh, welcoming boaters back inside after a day on the water. With a bluestone floor, his-and-hers showers and







Punctuated with shots of vibrant color, the sophisticated sitting room and dining area (facing page) are a modernist's delight. FACING PAGE BOTTOM: A 425-foot boardwalk reaches out into the harbor.





iconic Jamaica stools lined up at a stainless steel bar, the outdoor room is compact yet well-equipped—“like the cabin of a boat,” Steven explains.

## Inside, too, everything is ship-

shape. Taking what he calls “an architectural approach to interiors,” Steven insisted on using the same finishes throughout the house. Creamy white walls, floors of quartersawn maple, amber-toned Linga cabinetry and sleek Louis Poulsen lighting enhance the seamless look of the

open-plan living space.

The kitchen flows into dining and sitting areas, and then to the double-height great room with its soaring chimney breast. A series of eight-foot-square windows invites the view inside, flooding the rooms with eastern light. “We frosted all the windows on the sides and back of the house,” Steven says, “so we don’t have any visual leaks. You’re always reminded that all you can see is the water.”

The furnishings, mostly classic modern pieces from Montage in Boston, complement both the view and the couple’s worldly artwork.


In the sitting room, an oil from Czechoslovakia makes a bold statement over a white B&B Italia sofa. A bright red Saarinen Womb chair accompanies a grand piano in the airy great room. Steps away, the earthy tones of a massive Spanish bowl echo the browns of the Eames lounge chair and stools in a casual seating area. Plush area rugs seem to soak up their grays and blues from the harbor.

Clean-lined yet comfortable, the interior marries the couple’s surprisingly different tastes. “He’s always leaned toward contemporary and I’ve leaned toward traditional,”



At the cozy kitchen banquette, “a lot of daydreaming goes on,” Sue Hurley admits. ABOVE: Whether by sailboat or skiff, the Hurleys cruise the harbor every day throughout the summer. FACING PAGE: Steven received the grand piano in the great room as payment for his first architectural commission.





Massive windows invite the view  
inside, flooding the rooms with  
eastern light.





says Sue. Now, she says, “He’s comfortable with a few more pieces, and I’m comfortable with a few less.”

The balance they’ve struck is especially evident in the kitchen, where sleek granite and stainless steel offset a cozy banquette, an ideal nook for watching the sunrise.

**Recalling the deck railings out-**side, an anodized aluminum stairway leads upstairs to three harbor-facing bedrooms off a bright hall, which the

Hurleys use as a gallery for their art collection. Of course, “the view is a painting in itself,” Sue says. “Even on a stormy day, when the sky is gray and the sea is wild, it’s beautiful.”

The most stunning vista of all unfolds up one more flight of stairs, on a roof deck of Brazilian ipe outfitted with a sunshade that nods to the passing sailboats. Classic Richard Schultz lounge chairs offer berths for savoring a cocktail as the boats glide in and out of Marion’s busy harbor.


“I think this is everyone’s dream, to find an incredible piece of land with an incredible view,” Steven says. Though the Hurleys’ new home frames the harbor in ways their former cottage never could, the pure pleasure of inhabiting this place at the water’s edge hasn’t changed. “Whoever built that cottage,” Steven says, “had the same feeling that I have today.” **NEH**

**RESOURCES** For more information about this home see page 237.

To see more of this home tune in to NECN’s *New England Dream House* on Sunday, July 27, at 10 a.m. when host Beth Shelburne and Kyle Hoepner, editor-in-chief of *New England Home*, will take viewers on a tour. The show will also air July 27 at 7 p.m. and at 3:30 p.m. on July 28 and 31 and August 5, 8 and 13. You can also see the show online on [www.nedreamhouse.com](http://www.nedreamhouse.com) starting July 27.







From the entry porch, a graceful aluminum railing beckons guests down to the water. **FACING PAGE TOP:** Steven Hurley likens the roof deck's breathtaking view to "being on top of a Ferris wheel." **FACING PAGE BOTTOM:** From almost every room in the house, the harbor is present.