

A SPIRITED SOLUTION

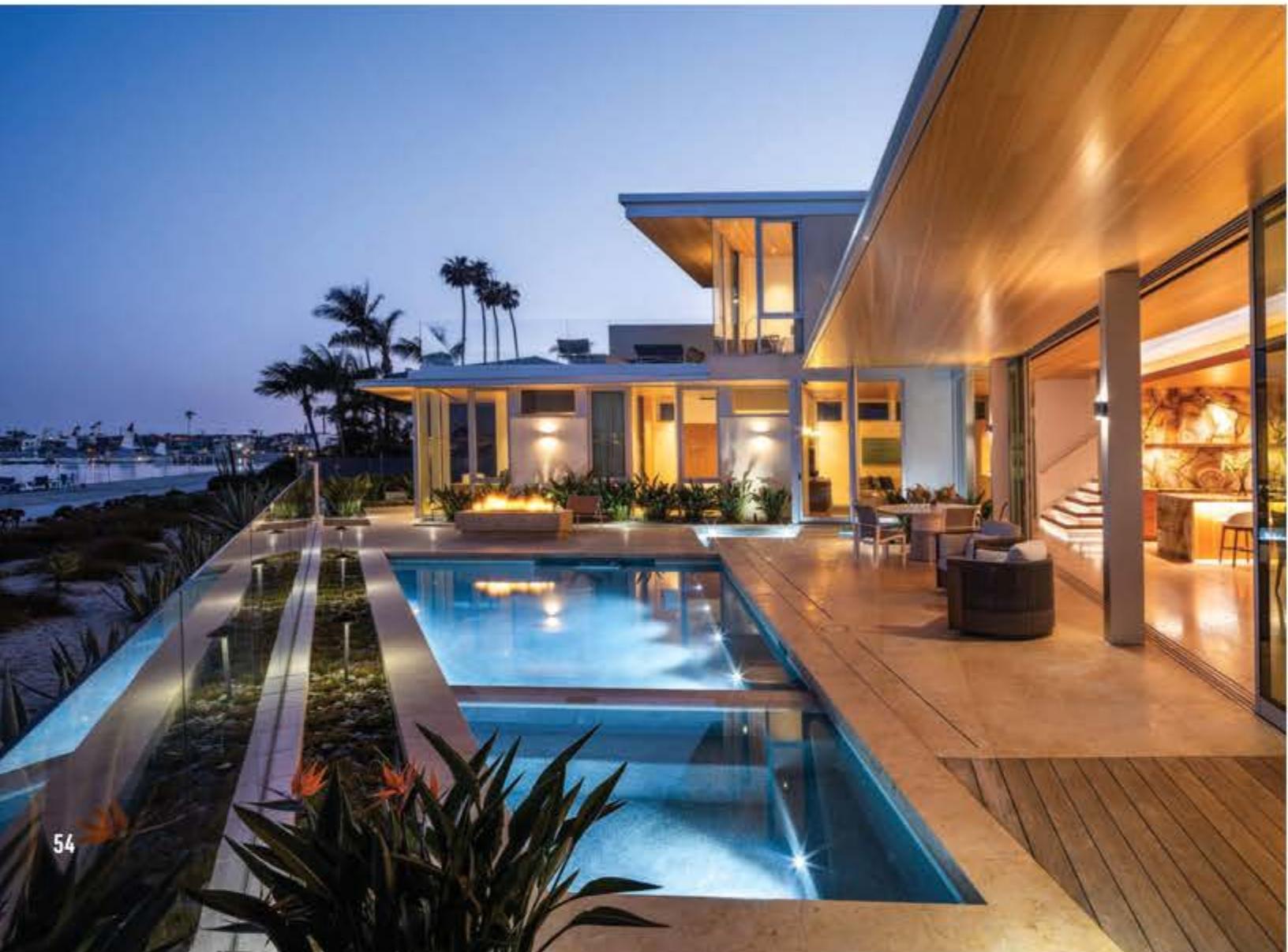
Developer Chris Loughridge built his new house on a small lot. It takes advantage of its site by opening up to boardwalk and beach.

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HOW GIN & TONIC HELPED SHAPE DISCUSSIONS
FOR A NEW HOME ON MISSION BAY IN SAN DIEGO.

BY J. MICHAEL WELTON / PHOTOGRAPHS BY MANOLO LANGIS



ture, the Gin & Tonic may have saved "more Englishmen's lives and minds than all the doctors in the Empire," as Winston Churchill once said.

But more recently, it played a key role in negotiating a San Diego property for real estate developer Chris Loughridge.

Despite its zesty bite,

Its tonic may taste bitter, but that's from the quinine contained in the 18th-century, antimalarial cocktail. And with a simple twist of lemon or lime, the G & T packs a double whammy: Its tangy dose of Vitamin C staves off scurvy too.

A few years back, though, when Loughridge was working on that 21st-century real estate deal in San Diego, the G & T had been elevated well beyond the realm of medicine.



Above: Architect Taal Safdie created places where people can hang out and enjoy themselves on the water. Below: The house faces left with a large overhang hovering inside and out.

It had made its great leap onto the social stage.

Once it was established as an effective tool in British medical kits, it debuted as a star on the highball circuit. It made its way west to the U.S. in the 20th century—and still holds its own as the go-to drink for warmer months. When seersuckers and summer shoes splash coast to coast across the nation after Memorial Day, the ubiquitous G & T fizzes from Maine to Miami.

No surprise, then, that when Loughridge began courting the owner of a pie-shaped piece of property facing unobstructed, 180-degree views of San Diego's Mission Bay, the drink was part of their ritual.

Loughridge was already living in a condo three blocks away from the site he thought the best in the area, with twice as much waterfront—and vistas—as its neighbors. So he'd written a letter to the owner of the property, then stopped by to meet, talk, and develop a friendship. "She had me over for G & Ts," he says. "We talked a great deal, and she kept my letter."

Eventually the property became available, and Loughridge jumped on it. "He's enthusiastic and has a lot of energy," says San Diego-based Taal Safdie, founding partner in Safdie Rabines Architects. "He embraces life—he's in his late fifties or early sixties."

An existing house in less-than-desirable condition had to come down to meet Loughridge's vision for a new home that would accommodate his family—including his partner, her son, and his two daughters.

But taking total advantage of the site was a major priority too. "It truly opens up to the boardwalk and the beach," Safdie says of the design she developed with her husband and partner Ricardo Rabines. "Some people would have wanted it to be more private, but he wanted people to walk by, see him and talk to him—he knows a lot of people in the neighborhood."

He got to know his architects well, too.

Trained at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Architecture, Rabines and Safdie met there, then worked in New York at Kohn Pedersen Fox and Pei Cobb Freed & Partners. When Penn's chairman asked them to open an architecture school at UC San Diego, the couple jumped at the chance. Alas, the school closed in the early 1990s, but the architects stayed on.

The Loughridge project was smaller than their usual fare, but the client was on board with Rabines and Safdie. "I just liked them a



Top: Outside finish material is Turkish limestone. Center: Cabinets and ceilings are Western hemlock. Here: The architects called for a significant amount of steel and glass.





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great deal as I got to know their work," the client says. "They usually do much bigger projects, but they liked this site very much."

Their assignment was to maximize the home's views from each of its four bedrooms and an office—but to make people feel comfortable and relaxed the moment they walked in. "I wanted people to enjoy looking at it—and being in it," he says.

The architects and client worked with construction project manager Matthew Cole from the San Diego office of Hill Construction to achieve that effect. The home is California contemporary in style, with indoor/outdoor





living spaces, big and open rooms—plus plenty of natural finishes, a beachy color palette, and vertical grains in Turkish limestone.

"One thing we really liked was that Chris liked taking the slabs and using them as works of art in the kitchen and office," Cole says. "They give pops of color and visual interest in the more intricate details."

At ground level, each room opens to a patio through floor-to-ceiling glass doors. Top-floor bedrooms with panoramic views further blur lines between interior space and the im-

mediately adjacent boardwalk. "It brings the outside in, while providing a visual connection to the community," Rabines says.

That's a sensitive reflection of Loughridge's outgoing personality, one the former owner didn't miss when the two began discussing her property's eventual sale.

When the time arrived, she told her broker to approach Loughridge first.

"She actually left a bottle of gin and tonic for the closing," he says.

And the rest is history. *



This page: Upstairs are four bedrooms.

Next page: The architects chose natural finishes and a beachy color palette. The master bathroom is Blue Roma limestone. Stone countertops in every room are of different natural stone.