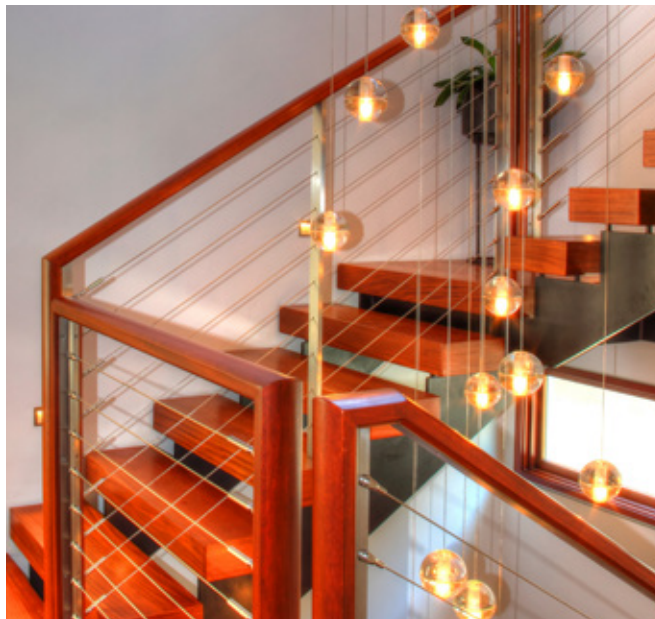


SWEET DIGS

Sweet DIGS





NOT YOUR MOTHER'S MODERN:

"Smart" home keeps three generations wired

BY PAMELA CORANTE-HANSEN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL JONASON

From her perch on the balcony above a quiet walk street in Manhattan Beach, Ruthann Jagd can sip her morning coffee, check the latest news on her iPad, and catch a glimpse of the strapping young surfers who head down to the beach to catch some waves. She can also check her iPhone to make sure her 26-year-old granddaughter remembered to close the garage door.

At 81, Ruthann shares a tekkie's dream of a beach-modern house with daughter Kim and granddaughter Nikki. And on a reporter's recent visit shortly after the three women moved into their new home, it's Ruthann who seems to have the best handle on the house's smart system.

"I knew I wanted the technology before I built the house," says Kim, a former UCLA women's volleyball assistant coach. "But I wanted to be sure it was something my mother would be able to handle."

Kim also wanted a home with two master bedrooms, since Ruthann, a widow, was living with her. The pair searched all over the beach cities but couldn't find a house that met their specifications, so they decided to have one built.

"Their proposal was unique," says Jon Starr of Starr Design Group in Hermosa Beach, who designed the three-level, 3900-square-foot house. "Typically I'm working with a family or someone who's single, so I'm designing a house with one master bedroom and a couple of kids' rooms. In this case, it was a mother and daughter who each wanted a master suite. In a way, it was like having two different clients, each with their own personalities and needs."

Starr designed Ruthann's room with a larger master bath so that she would have room to maneuver. And since stairs are difficult for her, the home was designed with an elevator that Ruthann uses to get from floor to floor.

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“Mom’s biggest fear is falling,” says Kim. “So as part of the smart lighting system, a path of lights along the floor illuminates the way from the elevator to her bedroom if she’s up late watching TV when it’s dark in the house.” Just about everything from lights to television sets to window shades can be operated from an iPad or iPhone, from another room, or even another city.

“My sister lives in Colorado,” Kim explains, “and while I’m there, I can use my iPhone to check the video cameras at my house and make sure everything is okay.” Kim describes how a smart system setting on her iPhone will let her know if the garage door is open. With just a tap on the iPhone, she can close the garage door, whether she’s down the street, at her Indian Wells home, or visiting friends and relatives out of state.

Smart home technology has been around for at least 10 years, according to Kirk Attoian, CEO of Interior Technologies in El Segundo, the company contracted by Kim to design and install the smart system in her home. “Back then, people wanted speakers in their backyard and wiring for surround-sound,” Attoian says. “Today, if someone builds a new house, they want to be able to get on their iPad and turn the music on or off in different rooms. I would say about 80 percent of our clients want that now.”

Since the Jagd women are avid sports fans, Kim says that having TV sets in all rooms was a priority. In her master suite, a plasma screen is flush against a wall, but from her bed she can use an iTouch remote to move the screen away from the wall and pivot it toward her bed.

Although the home is tricked out with technology, Starr used natural materials to reflect the home’s seaside surroundings. Teak and limestone flooring and mahogany ceilings and walls add warmth and texture to the modern design. Tile work throughout the house in aqua and sand hues complements ocean views. And shellstone walls run from the outside of the house to the foyer and all the way into Kim’s master suite, elegantly blurring the lines between indoor and outdoor spaces.

On the ground floor of the house, which is on the same level as the walk street leading to the beach, oversized pocket doors slide out of view to seamlessly connect an outdoor terrace with the indoor multi-purpose room, a space that Kim refers to as “the twenty-something room,” where her daughter Nikki can entertain her friends. In this room, poured concrete floors with bits of blue and green glass pick up the deep turquoise blue of the sectional couch while providing a contrast

for bright orange end tables, a design palette developed by interior designer and Palos Verdes native Michael Moloney of “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition” fame.

While Ruthann relies on the elevator to move from one floor to the other, the rest of the household uses a soaring, angular staircase that wraps around a 12-foot-long lighting fixture with 36 bulbs. Floating steps add a sense of openness and allow sunlight to filter through.

Although they have lived in their home barely two weeks at press time, the women are partial to the home’s third floor, where a great room runs the length of the house and boasts plenty of floor-to-ceiling glass walls to take in a spectacular ocean view. “Mom wanted a great room,” Kim notes, “and on a long, skinny lot, you almost have to have one to bring in the natural light and take advantage of the view.”

Starr explains that the concept for the house was “an exposed skeleton, almost like a Tinker Toy fit. On the top floor, you can see the ribs of the structure.” For Starr, this openness turned out to be the most challenging aspect of designing the home. “I design homes based on what the client wants their house to be, not on a certain look. For Kim, she wanted to maximize the view, the sunlight and a feeling of openness. This is what drove the choice of glass, tall volumes and an unobstructed view.”

Kim’s love of indoor-outdoor living is best exemplified by the covered lanai, which is equipped for year-round use. Complete with a fireplace, hot tub, grill, outdoor living room and the ubiquitous plasma screen TV, the space is protected from wind and sun by automated shades. Sensors on the shades can detect strong winds and trigger the smart system to roll them up.

Because the lanai provides a comfortable and spacious outdoor living area at the back of the house, the indoor living room at the front of the house was pushed as far forward as possible to take in unobstructed ocean and beach views. A modest balcony runs along the side and front of the home, allowing enough space to step out and enjoy the salt air.

Two bars, a spacious formal dining room, a minimalist kitchen and a jewel-box of a powder room—inspired by Ruthann and designed by Moloney around an heirloom Erté mirror—create an ideal space for entertaining. In a refreshingly casual tone, Kim mentions that during her recent Colorado trip, her daughter had 60 friends over for a beach volleyball party. The idea alone would send most parents over the edge. But for a mom who can keep an eye on the house from far away, what’s the worry?

