

Forever home



LANG RESIDENCE

This bold, modernist structure of glass, wood and stone is the home of Connie and Michael Lang.

BY MARTY FUGATE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG WILSON

Inevitability and surprise. They're two rare qualities in a house, and rarer still when combined. A waterfront residence in a pleasant Osprey community has both. This bold, modernist structure of glass, wood and stone stands out from the crowd. It seems to grow from the land itself with logic and organic grace.

Connie and Michael Lang are the homeowners.

Both are retired from high-powered executive careers with Paul Mitchell Ohio, Inc. They'd been visiting Sarasota for years and became seasonal residents in 2007. They bought their first house in the Southbay neighborhood in 2011.

"It wasn't our forever home," Connie says. "We always knew the house was only temporary. Moving on was always the plan. When a waterfront lot came up, we instantly grabbed it."

The new site was a three-minute drive from the Langs' previous residence — a gorgeous slice

of land along the Intercoastal Waterway. The existing residence was undistinguished. But the property boasted a killer view of deep blue waters and the green silhouette of Casey Key.

The land was theirs now. All it needed was a new house.

"That next step took a big leap of faith," says Connie. "We were newbies. We'd remodeled extensively, but never built a house before."

After demolishing the original structure, the couple studied the site, and came up with a

wish list. At the recommendation of interior designer Kurt Lucas, they put their list in the hands of Randall "Randy" Sample, a Sarasota-based architect. Sample promised to honor their goals — and follow the principles of Frank Lloyd Wright's organic architecture. The Langs knew he was the right man for the job.

"Randy wanted to bring the outside in, use all natural materials, and follow the lay of the land," says Mike. "We really saw eye to eye."

During his initial research, the architect drew inspiration from the work of E. Fay Jones, Wright's most successful protégé. "Jones' work attracted me because of its lighter touch and

simpler construction," Sample says. "I adapted this line of thought to our region through the use of airy, bright space and local construction methods and materials."

Connie and Mike loved the architect's creative direction and encouraged him to keep going. Their small list of dreams became a long list of decisions. Choices unfolded over numerous creative conferences, revisions, refinements and false starts. This wasn't a rush job. The Langs wanted to get it right. Drawing up the plans took nearly a year. It only seemed like forever.

At last, Sample put the final design in the couple's hands. It was beautiful — and every-

thing they'd asked for. Their response?

Let's do it.

For their builder, the Langs chose Ryan Perrone, the young president and co-founder of Nautilus Homes. "He's one of the region's best," says Connie. "Where other builders want to cut corners, Ryan just wants to do it right. He's a tough cookie with uncompromising standards."

The site had a natural slope, rising up from the water. Following Sample's intent, Perrone never flattened the lot. Instead, he carefully draped the house on the land's existing contour.

After several months of work, Perrone had completed the main structural elements. But the



Exteriors of the waterfront Osprey home as seen from two different perspectives. The home, designed by Randy Sample, followed the design principles of Frank Lloyd Wright.





Motorized roll-up screens open to reveal views of the swimming pool and Intercoastal Waterway.

house was still just a shell. For the finishing touches, the Langs selected Walter Jennings as the interior architect.

For Jennings, organic architecture is a family affair. His late father was Maurice Jennings, the longtime architectural partner of E. Fay Jones — the same architect who had inspired Randy Sample. His father's high-profile residences included the stunning house that got the Hollywood treatment in "Gone Girl". Walter Jennings proudly followed in his father's architectural footsteps.

"We flew Mr. Jennings down from his practice in Fayetteville, Ark.," remembers Connie. "We were under roof by the time he walked in. Walter looked around. He didn't say, 'What colors do you want?' He said, 'Here's the way we're going to do it.' And we said, 'OK.'"

Jennings designed the house's permanent interior elements — primarily cabinets, doors and lighting fixtures. He drew on his own network of artisans and the talents of Elite Woodwork to turn his designs into reality.

For the kitchen, Jennings created a hub plan. He put sink, range and other working areas at the perimeter, facing windows to the north and west. Connie, the designated chef, gets a view of the water whether she's standing at the range or sink. (This also applies to Mike, the designated sous chef.) A central island of cherry wood and open shelves offered additional work and storage space. More shelves of the same warm wood descend from the ceiling — open with no backing.



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The elongated master bath features marble counter tops and floors of smooth coral stone, a unifying element throughout every room.

Jennings' illuminating lighting design includes the dining room's stunning, wood chandelier — the work of a painstaking Arkansas-based artisan. The wooden piece is made up of nested rectangles, stacked inside each other like an upside-down ziggurat. A geometrical contrast to the free-form dining table below.

These inspired details catch your eye. Others are hidden — like the structural supports inside the apparently seamless railings of the central stairway. Or the non-standard 12-inch by 3-inch cherry wood stair steps. It looks like typical stair tread. But the pieces are solid, not hollow. You feel the difference every time you use the stairs.

Jennings' contributions work seamlessly with Sample's materials vocabulary: dark cherry wood elements, bare white walls and columns of light, stacked stone. Floors of smooth coral stone flow through every room, and also create a sense of unity. Open railings on generous balconies face the water — and remind you of what's important. Wherever you look, beauty draws your eye up and out.

All the details work together here. Everything serves the whole. So, who gets credit for what cool idea? Sometimes, it's hard to say. "This was really a collaborative effort," says Perrone. "We bounced ideas off each other and came up with solutions on the spot."

After 14 months of heavy lifting, the house became a reality. On Christmas Day of 2015, the couple moved in — a drive of only three blocks. As moves go, it wasn't a long haul. But it made a world of difference.

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"This was our forever home," Connie says. "Our leap of faith paid off."
"We're not going anywhere," Mike says, smiling. "There's a lot to love here."

What's to love? First, all the feasts for the eye. This house is just plain cool to look at. Glass, wood and stone create a beautiful study in contrasts. Sample's cathedral-like design creates a variety of ceiling heights. And the view outside is equally cool.

The windows open up to picture postcard vistas. Clever high-tech touches help with the big reveal. Accordion-fold glass doors seem to disappear at the living room balcony. Motorized roll-up screens actually vanish. A push of a button reveals the gorgeous paradise of the natural world.

Ample balconies and terraces invite you to experience that paradise up-close. The lawn is a manicured green carpet; the plantings range from the ornamental (Buddha bamboo and Confederate jasmine) to the edible (lychee, avocado and mango, along with assorted citrus trees). A dock stretches out into the bay, ringed with a profusion of mangroves. It's all so beautiful.

Appearances aside, the house works. In the truest sense, form follows function here. Each room flows gracefully into the next, creating the perfect space for parties and gatherings. Intimate corners invite quiet time — like Mike's informal music nook, with its neat array of shining guitars.

The color scheme is a study in earth tones. The furniture is handcrafted, honest and old-school. Like the classic Roche Bobois leather folding chair by one terrace. Or the high-backed chairs created by Amish craftsmen surrounding the free-form dining room table — the work of a Sarasota furniture artist. You can easily envision breaking bread here — and talking long into the night.

A stunning wood chandelier, made of nested rectangles, is a beautiful contrast to the dining table below.



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The couple's collection of haunting paintings by Cherokee artist Donald Vann fills your eye with images of quiet endurance. The art feels right in this earthy, unpretentious home.

Something about this place just says relax.

Don't just look at the art. Really see it.

Don't breeze through the house.

Sit down. Take your time. Drink it in.

Mike points out that this calming, meditative feeling is no accident.

"You're supposed to feel that way," he says. "The amazingly talented people we worked with sweated every last, little detail to make sure you do."

"We really wound up with a dream team," agrees Connie. "Randy has an earthbound integrity in the Frank Lloyd Wright tradition. Ryan never settles for anything less than perfection. He's only 30 years old, but you'd think he'd been building houses for several lifetimes. Walter follows in his father's footsteps — and I think E. Fay Jones and Maurice Jennings are smiling in heaven."

Architect: Randall P. Sample
(941) 362-0414

Builder: Ryan Perrone
Nautilus Homes
(941) 366-3650
nautilus-homes.com

Interior Architect:
Walter Jennings
Maurice Jennings Architect
(479) 443-4742
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