

Built to last

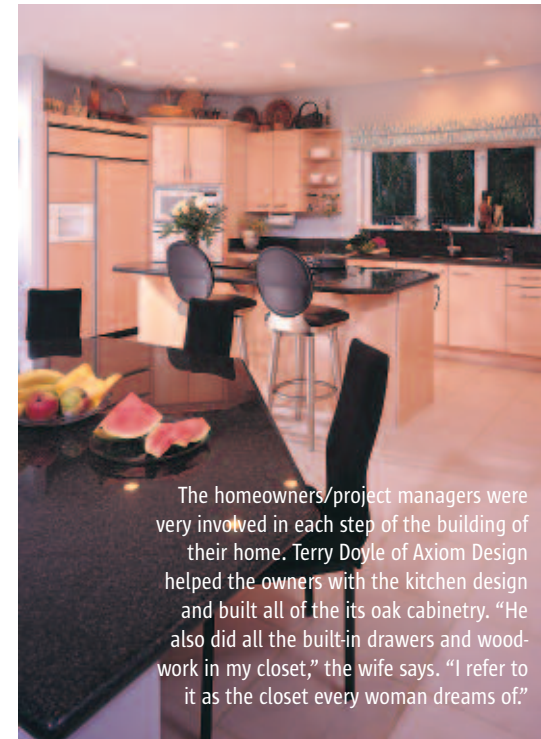
A trashed, vacant Kailua lot is granted a high-end home and legal beach access.

STORY BY AIMEE HARRIS
PHOTOS BY MACARIO
BUILDER: 3BUILDERS, INC.

As homeowner and project manager, this Kailua resident had a lot of heart, money and time invested in her new house. It all paid off when she witnessed the front glass doors being installed. “I was standing in the living room when the sun hit those double doors for the first time. It brought tears to my eyes,” she says. “It still does, because rainbows were cast all over the room. It was so beautiful. It was like living in the middle of a piece of art.”

The homeowners are long-time windward residents, living between the Windward Passage and Kailua since 1963. “We discovered that we like living near the ocean, but don’t like living right on the water,” the wife explains. “You would think that beachfront living is peaceful and calm, but it’s not at all. Waves would sometimes hit the windows when it’s the least bit windy. It was just so disruptive.”

In one of the owners’ former windward homes, they were very exposed to the wind. “In four years living there we bought all-new major appliances and replaced our ocean-facing sliding doors twice, because they kept rusting out,” she says.



The homeowners/project managers were very involved in each step of the building of their home. Terry Doyle of Axiom Design helped the owners with the kitchen design and built all of the oak cabinetry. “He also did all the built-in drawers and woodwork in my closet,” the wife says. “I refer to it as the closet every woman dreams of.”

When the couple decided to build a new house on an open lot off of Kailua Bay, they knew two things: they wanted to build with quality, weatherproof materials and hire a contractor who would work with them as homeowner/project managers. Choosing 3builders, Inc. as their contractor was an easy decision. The man of the house, who works with contractors as part of his job, was already acquainted with the president of 3builders, Inc., Nick Denzer.

Working mostly by word-of-mouth, 3builders, Inc. has been hired to do five different jobs on the same block as this house. Denzer smiles, “We’re accepted here. Everyone is used to us, and they all know the crew of guys by name.”

Denzer came from the Neighbor Islands, where his first homes were pole houses, which are built with old timber in a post-and-beam style.

“For eight years my crew and I bounced around the Neighbor Islands. We’d get a place to live, move the crew and then fly our tools over,” Denzer says. “We’d do a job and

hang around until we landed another house—sometimes on another island.” Denzer laughs. “We thought it was cool, but it was actually expensive.”

Then, in 1993, Denzer paired his contractor’s license with an Oahu-based developer. In 1998, he branched out with two other builders to establish 3builders, Inc.

The company works on custom, commercial and residential jobs. “Though lately, there have also been a lot of beachfront remodels and new construction,” Denzer notes. “We pride ourselves in not priding ourselves on anything specific ... we can pretty much build anything.”

This was good news for these owners, as all they had to start with was an overgrown, 10,200-square-foot vacant lot enclosed with an eight-foot fence.

For generations, the Castle family owned this lot, along with three others, as a buffer between the family and the public. The wife says, “People had been trespassing over this lot for years, as a path to go to the beach. The lot was full of broken fence planks and beer bottles.” Younger generations of the Castle family traded in the privacy the land provided for its monetary value. Suddenly, the four formerly private beach lots were on the market.

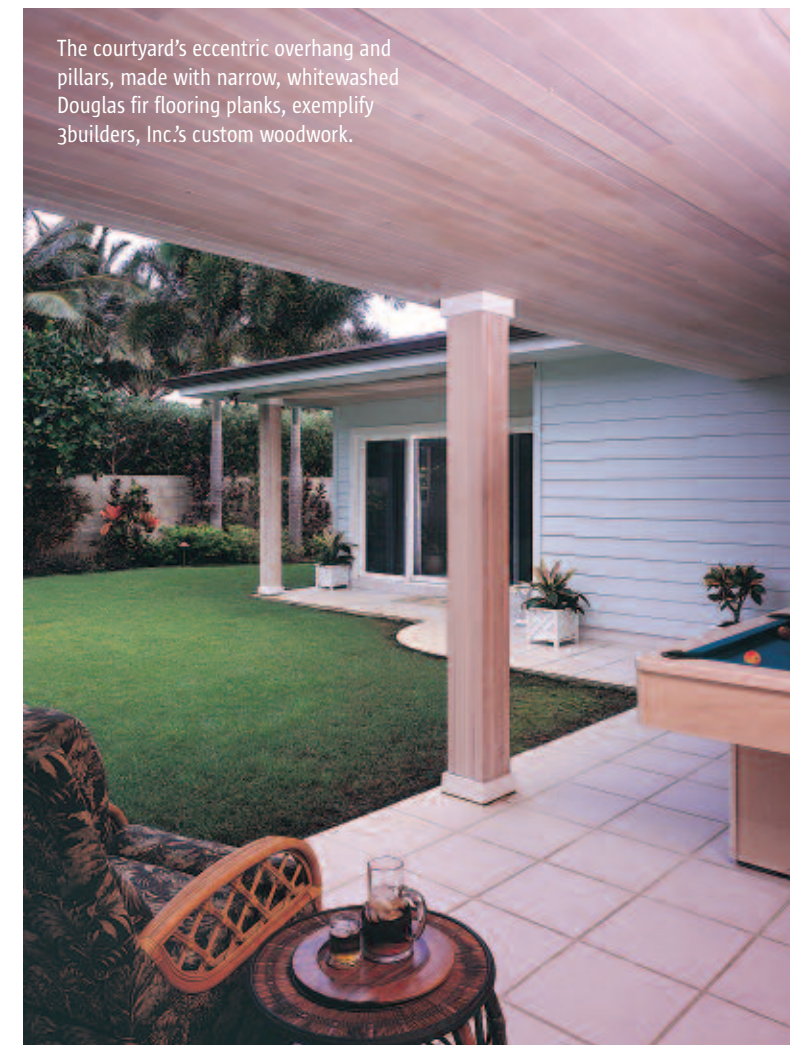
“We were very blessed,” she says. “We think we got one of the best lots, because of its privacy.”

By the time they broke ground in the summer of 1999, the couple had a clear design concept. The owners wrote down everything they really wanted in a house. “We designed what we considered to be the perfect home,” the wife says.

The home’s u-shape provides two separate wings, adjoined in the center by the great room. “It has a hotel-style design,” Denzer says, “where you can park the car in the front and enter the public wing of the house, which starts off with a laundry room and pantry, and leads to the kitchen and continues back toward a powder room and guestroom, with a bathroom. The other more private wing holds a study and master bedroom, with bath. That entire side of the house is the owners’ refuge.”

Given that the great room is in the center of the u-shape, you can enter the heart of the house through the front, double glass doors, or through the backyard’s courtyard doors. “When they entertain guests or have parties, everything flows very nicely,” Denzer says.

The owners say that this house is a collection of all the design elements they liked from their prior homes, plus some new



The courtyard’s eccentric overhang and pillars, made with narrow, whitewashed Douglas fir flooring planks, exemplify 3builders, Inc.’s custom woodwork.

On the vacant 10,200 square-foot lot (see before shot, above), 3builders, Inc., built this contemporary, streamline house, with about 3,800 square feet of living space. Note the covered passageway from the garage to the public wing of the u-shaped house.

ideas. “We knew we wanted a great room with a high [14-foot] ceiling. The architects discouraged us from this big, open space. They warned us that the room would echo,” the wife says. “They wanted to put in some elaborate things to dampen the sound and busy it up. We took the red pen and said, *No, no, no.*”

“Also, everyone kept telling me that I shouldn’t install carpet, living so close to the ocean. I asked interior designer Wayne Parker to do a walk-through with me and give us some advice. I didn’t take it. We just prefer carpet. We like the cushiness.” It turns out the room’s plush carpet and the soft, fabric furniture soften most of the sound.

For the exterior, it was agreed that, due to the nearby bay, the home should be built with high-quality, weather-resistant materials.

From the inside out, this house is about prevention, protection and materials specially chosen for beachfront living. “Building materials have improved so much since the first time we built a home 20 years ago,” the owner says.

All of the window seals throughout the house are made with Corian, an acrylic-based, solid-surfacing material that is non-porous, seamless and durable. Denzer says,

“If you take a look, all the seals are still in perfect condition, even five years later. Corian is a lot better than wood or composite material for this application.”

The entire house is stocked with long-



The large, rounded Coastal Windows and the action of the V-shaped, Douglas fir planks add drama to an already grand front entryway.

lasting, vinyl Coastal Windows. All of Coastal’s windows and hardware are designed specifically to take on Hawaii’s heat and damaging sun. Each window is made to catch all of the great trade wind breezes, but

also resist corrosion.

According to Denzer, the house’s cementitious, or fiber-cement, siding is the perfect material for weather-beaten homes. It offers a natural wood texture without all the

upkeep. The siding is a combination of cement, ground sand, cellulose fiber and sometimes clay. Mixed with water and cured in an autoclave, these ingredients yield siding that will not rot, burn or serve as lunch for termites. Long life (up to 50 years), design versatility and easy installation have made fiber-cement sid-

ing a popular, low-cost choice. Denzer notices, “The siding hasn’t flinched at the weather one bit.”

“The gutters from Gutter King [in Waimanalo] are ideal for here, too,” Denzer says. “They are copper, seamless. So, when you look at this courtyard space, it’s really protected from the weather.”

Both the front grand entrance and the back courtyard share a peculiar roofing style. Both overhangs are installed with narrow, whitewashed Douglas fir planks. It’s flooring turned upside down and used as a ceiling. The wife says, “One of the builders of 3builders, Inc. was a real artist with wood, so we gave him tremendous freedom with the design as we went along.”

The whitewashed wood gives the otherwise contemporary house a beachy, casual feel. “The fir is actually a little more sensitive to weather than the other materials, but it’s holding up pretty well,” Denzer inspects. “The whitewash makes the wood the color it will naturally turn as it bleaches out from the sun and ocean air. As it dries out, Douglas fir naturally goes from a yellow wood to more of a gray. The whitewash just speeds up the process.”

Out on the courtyard, the breeze is filled with the smell of salt air, a reminder that Kailua Bay laps onshore just on the other side of the home’s fence. There is beach access, but it is not public. The owner explains, “Our fence is on Chad Castle’s land. He granted us permission to have a gate there to get to the beach until we die. When we go, that right of way goes with us.” ✨

“SERVING HAWAII SINCE 1985”



Residential & Commercial Design/Build

3builders, inc. (808) 478-6969
www.3buildersinc.com

P.O. Box 657, Haleiwa, HI 96712 • Fax (808) 637-7529 • nick@3buildersinc.com • Lic. BC-23342/BC-18821