

# SHIP SHAPE



*A touchstone spot overlooking the ocean keeps an extended family together*

**S**tanding in the hills above Montauk, Long Island, with views of the Atlantic Ocean and the Montauk Lighthouse down the road, you might feel like you're on a ship at sea. That was exactly the sensation architect Christopher DiSunno had when he first stood on this unique piece of land. He had been hired by Jennifer Carney Iacono to come up with a vision for her new family home, to continue and build on the seashore escape that had been in her family for years: an invaluable spot in which to gather, to relax, to bond, to play. Chris could picture the bow of a ship cutting through the waves from this spot. A perfect analogy, he thought, for a house and the family on its voyage.

**WRITTEN BY THOMAS O'GRADY PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK SAMU STYLING BY TIA BURNS**

Custom furniture-grade maple panels with battens add warmth to the interior.

A slate tile entryway and hardwood bamboo floors elsewhere help keep the home maintenance-free. (right) The bow-like east deck and a captain's lookout keep everything ship-shape.



Jennifer's parents, Don and Jane Carney, found this Montauk spot in 1962, and spent every summer here since. The house had been a family get-

a tradition my mom started," Jennifer says. "She was the driver to get a beach house to raise my sisters and me during the summer, as she and her sister had

*"This is our touchstone spot. The place that keeps the family together"*

away for as long as Jennifer could remember. So when she and her husband Richard bought the property from her parents in the 1990s, they wanted to keep it that way for her extended family, including sisters, their husbands, and a plethora of kids. "We're really continuing

been raised on the Jersey shore." Then, when a fire destroyed one of the two original cottages, Jennifer and Richard decided to rebuild, perhaps even to extend her parents' dream.


Jennifer didn't want a "typical shingle and shake" seashore house, she says. She



wanted something more dynamic and stately, more inspired, something that stood up to the test of time and the classic architecture that was the basis for Montauk. She also wanted something maintenance-free that wouldn't detract from valuable family and beach time. She wanted plenty of room for the family to hang out together, and more room to escape to privacy when that need arose.

(top) Black steel bar joists aren't just decorative; they will soon carry a glass-floored walkway and railings to the third floor lookout. (above) The open kitchen allows for maximum mingling. (left) The dining area features a wall of Cultured Stone and custom maple cabinets.





Juperana Classico/Absolute Black  
Granite countertops offset the maple  
cabinets and complement the steel  
walkway beams above.

The project was a tall order for Chris DiSunno, but he was used to demanding jobs from years working in the Montauk/Hamptons area. Jennifer found DiSunno after he designed a neighbor's house on the same hill. "It was a thoughtful, impressive design," she says. "He made the house fit the area. It echoed Montauk's heritage."

DiSunno pictured a working fishing

trawler and designed the eastern deck of the Iaconos' house as the "ship's bow." Decks wrap around the sides of the house like rigging. Huge circular port-hole windows provide views from the bedrooms and living area. High above it all, on the third floor, is a captain's lookout to survey the ocean, the horizon, even the curvature of the earth.

Of course, the house had to be more

livable than a working trawler. The entry is highlighted by a grand two-story glass-and-metal stairway. The layout is a classic "upside down" house with most of the bedrooms on the first floor and most of the living areas—and the best views—upstairs. There are three bedrooms, two baths, and a recreation room below for kids and frequent guests, while Jennifer and Richard have



*Sun fills the entranceway stairs,  
warming the white oak landing. "It's  
perfect for our cat," says Jennifer*

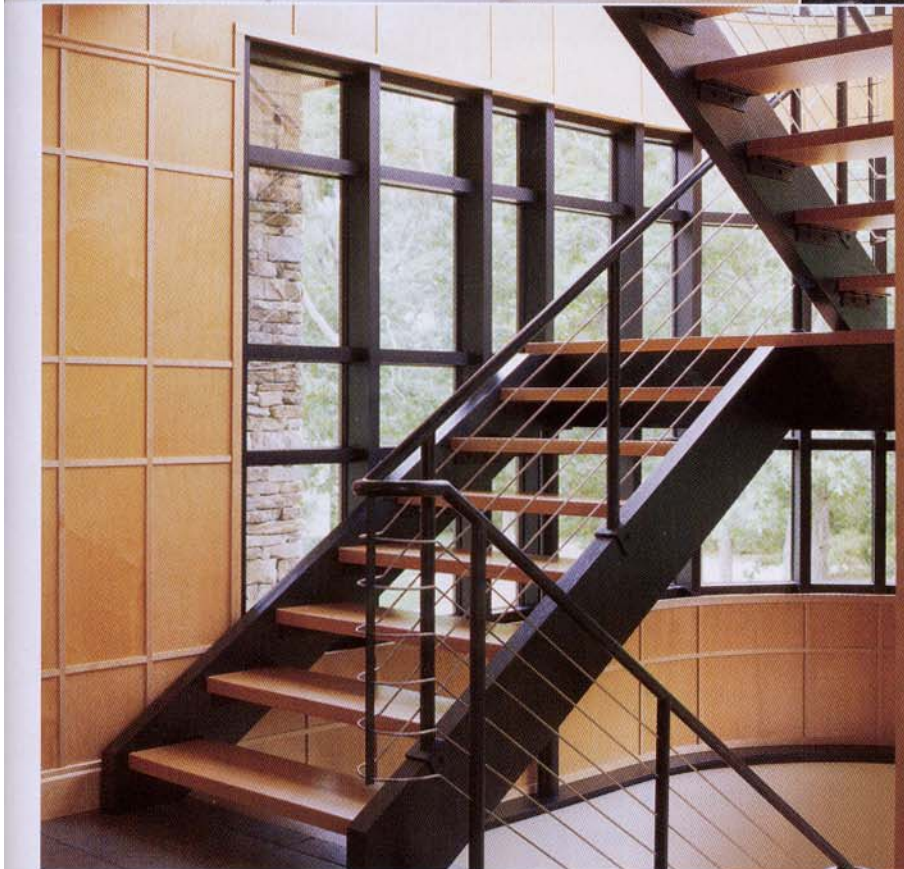


The fireplace is made of Owens Corning Cultured Stone, with a mantel and hearth of flamed bluestone. Steel fish artwork is by artist Donald Gialaenella.





(left top and bottom) Vistawall aluminum frames and custom glass let in an abundance of natural light in the entranceway stairs. (below) The captain's wheelhouse wraps around the space.



a spacious master suite above. Each room has either its own exterior deck or access to the sprawling public deck areas. The highlight of the upstairs living area is a black steel catwalk across the ceiling, ending at the "captain's lookout." The Iaconos plan to finish this with a glass floor one day to allow interior access to the lookout, which is accessible now only via outside stairs.

Chris was able to supply a maintenance-free exterior and a classic tudor Montauk look with cementitious stucco, which is a stucco finish made of reinforced cement to prevent cracking. A classic cedar roof completes the picture.

The end result is a house that pleases everyone. Now, there's room for Jennifer and her sisters' families, and even the next generation. The kitchen, dining area, and great room are all connected, making this area the center of the house. "At Thanksgiving, we all gather at this huge long table," Jennifer says. "But





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unlike in the old cottage, we have room. It isn't crowded—it's perfect."

There's even more room in the guesthouse the Iaconos added, which sits like a ship's tender behind the main house. A unique pyramid skylight is the centerpiece of the living room. "We call that Chris's I.M. Pei moment," Jennifer jokes. The cottage has its own living quarters, and is close enough to the main house for convenience, yet hidden in the trees for privacy.

Despite the large size of the house, at 4,000 square feet, it still feels cozy inside, "like my father would have wanted," says Jennifer. The furniture is simple and casually comfortable, the colors soothing and welcoming. The custom

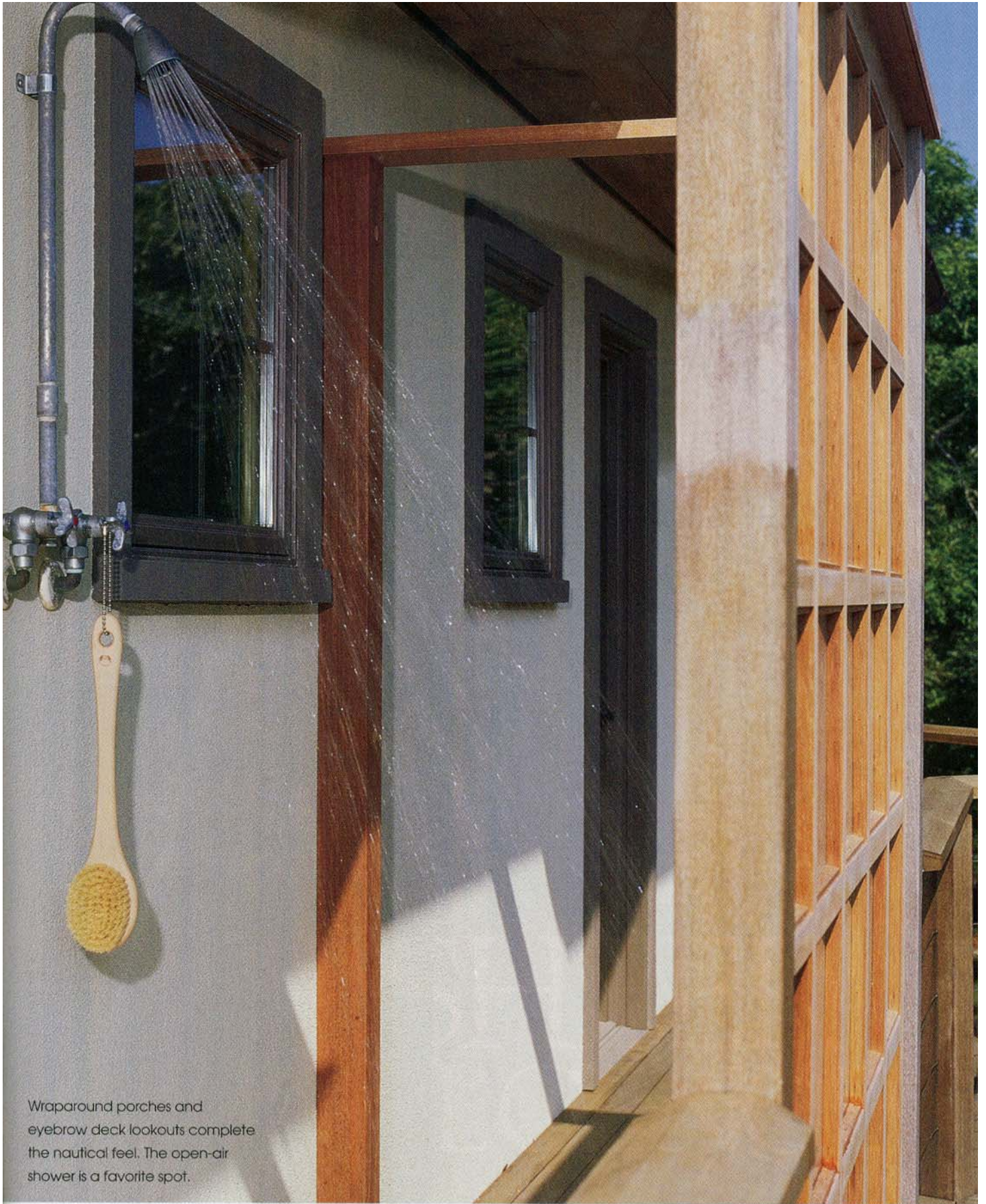
maple panels with battens have a warm and snug feel, just like the original wood paneling of the old cottages. Floors throughout are bamboo.

Standing in the captain's lookout high up on the third floor, Jennifer and Richard feel content with the sound of the children playing below, the extended family settling down after a long day at the beach. Someday there will be another generation. Hopefully, they too will appreciate the vision Jennifer's parents had when buying here, and that Jennifer and Richard had when rebuilding it into a home for the whole family. "This is our touchstone spot," Jennifer says. "The place that keeps the family together." ■

(above and top right) Custom porthole windows from New Morning Windows are set within a traditional Andersen window profile. (middle and bottom right) Corian counters, his-and-her sinks, a Jacuzzi tub, and plenty of windows make the master suite sweet.







Wraparound porches and eyebrow deck lookouts complete the nautical feel. The open-air shower is a favorite spot.