

■ High ceilings and natural light are features of almost every room in the house, including this main sitting area, creating a sense of airy openness and warmth.



BY DESIGN

THE BEST OF Both Worlds

For its owners, not only does this Truro home act as a serene escape, it also lures a steady stream of guests.

WHEN ARCHITECT JEROME ALBENBERG first explored the wooded lot in Truro where he and his wife, Bobbi, would later build a home, he was in for a surprise.

From the road that approached the then-undeveloped lot, the only thing visible was the forest of scrub pines and bearberry brush typical of rural Truro. But as Jerry wandered through the trees across the sloping lot, a spectacular view of Provincetown appeared in the distance.

Though he knew he had found the right spot, Jerry didn't have an immediate sense of what kind of house he wanted to build there. What he did know was that he wanted guests to experience the same delight he had felt upon discovering that vista. "I wanted to re-create the surprise of the site when a visitor hits the front door," he explains.

Their home away from home (the Albenbergs' primary residence is in West Orange, New Jersey) wouldn't be completed for nearly a decade after that initial visit. Construction on the house, which began in 1997, took three years to finish—but



■ Named "Panasea" for its panoramic water views, the Albenbergs' summer home is set amidst Truro's rolling hills.

BY ELIZABETH WINSTON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PATRICK WISEMAN

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■ In the sitting room, large groupings of windows reveal a dramatic panorama of Provincetown and Cape Cod Bay.

the shingled, three-bedroom home that now stands on the hillside accomplishes exactly what Jerry originally intended. As visitors approach from the driveway—walking down a path through a garden with a small fishpond—the view is obscured by both trees and the house itself. However, as they step through the front door, it suddenly unfolds: An open, high-ceilinged sitting room reveals, through large assemblages of windows, a dramatic panorama of the Truro hills and Cape Cod Bay.

The Albenbergs first ventured to the Cape 32 years ago at the recommendation of relatives “who had been coming to a place called Truro we’d never heard of,” laughs

Bobbi. They rented a motel room on Beach Point in North Truro, and enjoyed themselves so much they returned every summer thereafter with their three young children. After many years of renting vacation homes for their annual Cape visits, they began thinking seriously about creating something more permanent. When Jerry took a walk through Truro one day and discovered the lot that would be theirs, the locale seemed the ideal blend of all that the Cape had to offer.

“We wanted a place that offers solitude—not necessarily remoteness, because I like a movie now and then, and a good restaurant—but solitude in which we could come back to ourselves, get more centered,



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and be away from the hubbub of our daily lives,” Bobbi says. In New Jersey, Jerry runs his own firm, AHM Architects; Bobbi works as a psychotherapist. “A house, for me, has to be a blending of seclusion and interaction with others. This is a secluded environment, but it’s close enough to both Orleans and Provincetown that we can see people,” Bobbi explains.

The challenge of creating the house they wanted on a sloping lot was one he enjoyed, says Jerry, explaining how the design of the home came about: “It was dictated by the site. I’m enamored of more difficult, non-flat, sloping sites. The question was how to place a house into the hillside, and within the very strict limitations of the Truro building code in terms of building height, which was a major constraint. That latter restriction probably created the one-level house as much as anything, because you can’t build up without violating it.”

Built into the wooded hillside, the

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house was named “Panacea” for its panoramic view of the water, and as a play on the word panacea—“a cure for all that ails you,” Jerry says. Though relatively modest in scale, the interior design and layout of



■ The placement of Bobbi’s beloved piano in the sitting room’s window-lined alcove not only provides her with an inspiring spot to practice, it also allows her to perform for an audience of up to 30 or 40 people.

the house give it a natural flow; at the same time, its different areas feel separate and self-contained. Throughout, the structure is filled with unusually shaped rooms and spaces—corners are cut off, rooms have multiple entryways and exits, and spaces seem to curve around each other. It all combines to give the home an intentional sense of continuity, according to Jerry; rooms somehow never seem to end.

“The cut-off corners really work well. They weren’t easy to build, but I think it works,” he says. “The spaces just keep flowing. They never seem to terminate in the way we’re accustomed to.” Additionally, high ceilings, magnificent views, and natural light present in almost every room create a sense of airy openness and warmth.

From the central sitting area, which

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— margie huggard

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BY DESIGN
The Best of Both Worlds



■ In the master bedroom suite's office/library, a crackling fire laid in the stone fireplace keeps the room toasty on chilly autumn evenings.

showcases Bobbi's baby grand piano in a window-filled alcove, the master bedroom suite in the right wing of the house is entered through double doors. It includes an office/library, a spacious bedroom, a bathroom with a Jacuzzi tub, and a small dressing room lined with built-in cabinets, closets, and drawers, with the lofted study above. The left wing of the house encompasses the guest suite, with two bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a small loft built with the Albenbergs' young grandson in mind. Because of a sleeper sofa, a separate sitting room can also be used as a third bedroom.

"For me, it was important to have a guest suite that was really upscale," says Jerry. "People who come to visit us, friends and relatives of ours, are traveling a long way—extending themselves by taking a five-

Though relatively modest in scale, the interior design and layout of the house give it a natural flow; at the same time, its different areas feel separate and self-contained.

or six-hour trip—and I wanted them to feel like it truly was a worthwhile journey."


"There were certain things that were very important to us," says Bobbi, who designed the interior decor—in addition to working full time—during the three years that the house was under construction.

"One was based on our lifestyle: we wanted a sitting room that was essentially an extension of our bedroom, one that would allow privacy for our guests. We are now able to close the [master suite] doors when we wish to be alone and open them when we entertain. The other important thing is the Steinway piano, which is my passion. It needed to have a very prominent space."

The placement of Bobbi's beloved piano in its visually arresting alcove central to the main living area wasn't only about providing her with an inspiring spot in which to practice. "We have a real affinity for a space that is suitable for a chamber concert with 30 or 40 people in attendance," Jerry explains. The couple stages musicales featuring chamber groups in private homes in New Jersey. "And that was certainly in the back of my mind. I wanted it to be a place where music is alive—and welcome."

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spring morning, Jerry and Bobbi are talking, occasionally with amusement, about the long process of choosing the paints, tiles, fabrics, and furniture for Panasea, where they spend chunks of time in the summer, and weekends throughout the year. Initially daunted by the task of designing the interior of a yet-to-be-built home, Bobbi had hired a professional interior designer. However, after two months in which the couple could never seem to agree with the consultant's advice, Bobbi decided to do the job herself. Wood floors, warm colors, and floral motifs that echo their natural surroundings, and furniture, rugs, and artwork collected on the couple's world travels, fill the home. Although separate wings and rooms each have their own distinct flavors, there is a sense of simplicity and balance throughout.

"In the beginning, it was hard to have the confidence, not being a professional, that I could pull it off," Bobbi reveals. "It took three years to find everything we needed—I had a whole desk filled with ideas for this house, and a basement full of furniture. I did visualize and redecorate a million times in my mind, but the result is very close to what I imagined."

"You couldn't have done a better job," Jerry tells her. The design, inside and out, was a labor of love for both the Albenbergs, who encourage their children and other relatives and friends to use the house as their own. To their delight, their guests seem to love it as much as they do.

"I studied architecture, and I think all of us tend to believe that our professions are most significant and have a great impact on society and other people," says Jerry, who earned his degree in architecture from New



■ Jerome and Bobbi took particular care decorating the master bedroom. Besides a private deck, the room also boasts a comfortable chaise, bay window, and cozy window seat.

York's Columbia University. "But after I'd lived in our house in West Orange and, even more so, here, I realized how significantly even a house can affect your daily demeanor. We feel just wonderful when we're here. It's much better than all the vitamins and pills you can take. It's invigorating—it connects you to something beautiful outside, and you feel a part of it.

"This was the first shingled house like this that I've designed, and the first house on Cape Cod that I've designed," he adds. "So the natural challenge was how to do a spatially dramatic house, yet one that fit in with the environment. And I'm happy with it. It's unique, but it's also part of the landscape."

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
SEE MARKETPLACE ON PAGE 108.**

Elizabeth Winston is a freelance writer who lives in Provincetown. She contributes frequently to Cape Cod Life Publications.

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