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SIX DOLLARS

MAY/JUNE 2010



A photograph of a modern, multi-level house with large windows and a balcony, situated in a lush, wooded area. In the foreground, there is a swimming pool with a concrete deck and several lounge chairs. The scene is bathed in natural light, suggesting a sunny day.

FROM THE HEART

The Brentwood Home of Sky & Arwen Dayton

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The canyons above Brentwood create a magical setting. North of Sunset Boulevard, adjacent to the Will Rogers State Park, is a bucolic locale: just a handful of homes strung along a private road in the Santa Monica Mountains. Zoned for horses, designed for privacy and peace, it seems completely removed from the frenetic pace of the rest of Los Angeles.

When Arwen and Sky Dayton first set eyes on this property, they arrived, separately, at the same conclusion: it was meant to be their new home.

The 3.14-acre lot was virtually empty. Once the home of *Bonanza* star Lorne Greene, the house had been sold after his death, and demolition began for a new house on the property. The new owners' plans changed, and the property was put back on the market.

"The only structure left standing was the original pool house," recalled Sky. "There's a Chinese elm tree on one end of the lawn. Even though the property was just a pile of dust then, I walked over to that tree and looked back over the property - the different elevations and

The Daytons brought a wealth of ideas and impressions to the project. "The clients loved the idea of exploring architecture and the arts," Kempel recalled. "They were very open to the possibilities of what their house could become."

The Daytons took an idiosyncratic approach to the process. Most clients will snap cell phone photos of houses they admire or cut pictures out of design magazines and bring them to meetings with their architects. The Daytons wrote a journal. "They came to us with a written narrative of how they hoped to live," said Kempel. "It was about 10 pages of stream-of-consciousness prose. They made a list of things they wanted and needed: run Ethernet throughout the house; an inspired audio system to make it easy to listen to good music and control it; the ability to use every room in the house every day, down to the dog and cat doors. They wanted us to consider the sunlight at sunrise and sunset and how the light will move through the house throughout the day, and they wanted wall space and lighting to display art. They were very specific that they didn't want the rooms to be too big."

THE INSIDE/OUTSIDE NEXUS OF THE DESIGN IS SKY'S FAVORITE ASPECT OF THE HOUSE.

"I love the way they incorporated the amazing land we're situated on into their design: from my office, you look out into a grove of eucalyptus trees and it feels as if you're actually up in the trees."

the trees and the wildness of it. I felt as if I wasn't in LA anymore. I knew this was it."

Arwen Dayton is a writer, the author of science fiction novels, the latest of which is titled *Resurrection*. Sky is the founder of EarthLink and Boingo. Previously, the couple was renting a house in Santa Monica Canyon on a street filled with large and stately houses from the 1920s and 1930s. It was large, yet uncomfortable. They were looking for something different.

"I spent a lot of time looking at properties and houses," Arwen explained. "We made notes on the ones we liked best, and it turned out that two of the houses we really admired had been designed by the same firm, Rockefeller Partners."

The El Segundo-based firm specializes in contemporary design that embraces its environment, and they are experienced in building at the beach, on hillsides and in other sensitive locations. Christopher Kempel, AIA, had an almost instinctive understanding of how to design the Daytons' new home.

"Building a house is as much about building relationships and blending personalities as anything else," he said. When these clients came to Rockefeller Partners, they didn't have as much an *aesthetic* plan for the project as they did a clear vision of the emotional and spiritual outcome they expected.

"We wanted it to *look* like the canyon," said Sky. "Not overly designed. We wanted it to look like a meadow at a distance, but more landscaped closer to the house. We wanted the house to be part of its surroundings, not imposed upon them."

Sky and Arwen were not interested in creating a merely imposing structure. They wanted enough space to accommodate a family of five with frequent visits from extended family. The goal was comfort, intimacy and warmth, rather than grandiosity for its own sake.

"They had a clear intellectual vision of what they wanted," said Kempel.

Rockefeller Partners realized that vision for them, creating a 9,700-square-foot, seven bedroom, nine-and-a-half bath, contemporary house that rests lightly upon its site, built by Joel Fischer of Fischer Construction in Cheviot Hills. Kempel allowed the setting to inspire and guide him as he worked. The result is an exterior clad mostly in cedar and exposed concrete, washed gray in a color inspired by the dry leaves of the surrounding eucalyptus grove. It is intended to look very natural and to require little maintenance. The windows and doors, an important part of the overall design, are all framed in Honduran mahogany.

"Because the site is so beautiful, we planned for 270-degree views," said Kempel. "Canyon views flank it with ocean views head-on. We wanted to take full advantage of the surroundings."

The surroundings are rugged. Deer routinely stroll through the yard; at night, the Daytons can hear coyotes howl in the canyon beyond. It all contributes to a sense of detachment from urban life.

The house is divided into two wings, united by a central entryway. "By *stretching* the house, breaking it into smaller wings joined by the entryway between them, you can take full advantage of the views," the architect explained. ▶



You enter from the motor court, and in the 23-foot tall foyer, a grand staircase separates the two wings. A large stone hearth made of stacked slabs of Pennsylvania blue stone stands at the center of the house. "It's not a revolutionary idea," Kempel said modestly. "It dates back to Frank Lloyd Wright - the most important rooms in the house, the rooms where people gather, all share the experience of the hearth and its stone wall."

That stone wall in Kempel's design is part of four separate rooms in the Dayton house, and the pool. "We put additional architecture and energy into the main part of the house: the living room, dining room, family room and kitchen - the spaces the Daytons use the most as a family and share with their friends and extended family. We tried to simplify the architecture in the kids' rooms: they are contained in a simple, rectilinear box. The two separate wings of the house are connected visually using the same exterior wood: stained, select-grade cedar siding placed tongue-in-groove, not shingled."

Glass is an important part of Kempel's design. The house opens up exuberantly to the patio and pool. "We used massive areas of glass," said the architect. "The rear of the house is very open and active. And there is a 30-foot tall wall of glass behind the staircase. It was very important for the architecture to frame the grove of trees behind the entryway."

The inside/outside nexus of the design is Sky's favorite aspect of the house. "I love the way they (Rockefeller Partners) incorporated the amazing land we're situated on into their design," he said. "From my office, you look out into a grove of eucalyptus trees and it feels as if you're actually up in the trees."

Arwen also has a private sanctuary on the property - the old pool house, restored to its former mid-century glory, has become her office; it's where she contemplates and creates. The structure is all that remains of the original Lorne Green estate. "It had great bones," she said. "It just needed re-furbishing. It was very compatible with the house we built and looks as if it belongs."

The house is built on several levels; even on a single floor, elevations shift, reflecting the different elevations of the property. The kitchen and family room flow into one another, but they are separated by a two-foot grade. A half-wall divides the sunken living room from the elevated dining room. Arwen loves to cook with the entire family, so special attention was given to the kitchen. It was designed by Poggenpohl of West Hollywood, and Kempel custom-designed the banquette where the family enjoys casual meals together.

Downstairs, Rockefeller Partners built a state-of-the-art media room that has become famous in its own right, featured on HGTV's "Top Ten Home Theaters." ▶



Sky on the iPad

Since hitting Apple stores in April, the iPad has certainly become the "it" machine of the moment. We noticed Sky Dayton and his family already had one in their home, and we were curious to hear what the technology guru had to say about the popular new device.

Q: How would you describe the overall impact of the iPad's arrival on the technology and computing scene?

Sky: iPad has been described as a device "between a phone and a computer." But it's really a totally new kind of technology - the beginning of personal, casual computing. The amazing thing is we had no idea we needed it until it arrived.

Q: Any favorite features on the device?

Sky: The big screen (and it will get bigger in future models, I'm sure) and the touch interface is a joy in itself, and it leads to tons of useful and entertaining applications. Some of my favorites.

- Amazing email experience
- Movies from iTunes and Netflix
- Kindle books - we have our full Kindle library on the iPad
- Innovative games like Magic Piano, which lets you play duets with people around the world
- Wall Street Journal reader - full access to today's paper updated in real time with breaking stories
- Boingo Wireless - I love having instant access to 130,000 Wi-Fi hot spots around the world

But the applications available today are just the tip of the iceberg of what's coming. In many ways iPad is a blank slate for innovation at the level we have never seen in a portable computer.

Q: How do you envision the iPad changing technology at home, and how do you plan on incorporating it into yours?

Sky: We already have a very sophisticated home automation system, which controls pretty much everything from windows, to music and security. But when we built the house, we had no choice but to go the "traditional" route, which is a proprietary Crestron system that required a ton of custom programming at a significant cost. Now we're beginning to add iPads as controllers for the system. ■



It's also a game room with a pool table and arcade games and even a small gym attached. It is not, however, meant to be a "screening room" in the Hollywood mogul sense, but rather a casual space to hang out and watch TV or a movie, outfitted with a comfortable tiered sofa and a bar.

The Daytons worked with interior designer Alana Homesley to complete the interior spaces of their new home. Alana, a former associate of Rockefeller Partners, brought a unique perspective and expertise to the project.

"Alana was very interesting to work with because she is an interior designer with a background in architecture," observed Arwen. "She knew how to make the smallest details work to make the big picture complete. She brought an architectural point of view to her work."

The Woodland Hills-based designer listened carefully and embraced the architects' design and the clients' vision.

"The biggest request they made was to ►



create a 'timeless modern' look," said Homesley. "They didn't want anything that looked like a boutique hotel or anything mid-century modern that looked, in their word, 'Jetsons.'"

Again, the Daytons' objective was intimacy and comfort rather than ostentation. "They wanted simple, clean lines, pure forms," recalled Homesley. "I didn't use anything overly modern. My goal was to complement the architecture, not compete with it."

Homesley was delighted with Kempel's design, which provided her with the perfect backdrop. "The house is spacious, but it feels intimate," she said. "Chris has managed the space beautifully. The scale of every room is appropriate."

Arwen shared Alana's preference for neutral colors. The designer added splashes of brightness here and there with pillows and accessories. "They didn't want their house to be trendy; they didn't want it to read as any particular moment," she said. "We played a lot with textures rather than color: silk and wool blend rugs, cotton velvet and suede upholstery. The coffee table in the living room is glass and chrome because we needed some lightness and transparency, and we chose glossy black light fixtures for contrast."

That contrast is also apparent in the dining room. The weighty, walnut table seats 12, and above it Homesley suspended a David Weeks pendant light. "It's like a mobile," she explained. "It's very light and delicate and always moving."

Once the project was completed, the Daytons wasted no time in sharing their new home with friends. "We had our first dinner party ever the weekend we moved in," Sky remembered, laughing. "We still had boxes stacked in some of the rooms! We really try to use this house." He continued, "It was designed from the inside outwards so we could enjoy it as a family and have friends over. We have lots of different people over; our friends love coming here, and we love having them."

It is all part of a carefully crafted lifestyle that revolves around family and friends, warmth and togetherness. "We created this world for our family and our friends," Sky said.

Sky, Arwen and their children are delighted with the house that Kempel and Rockefeller Partners built. It exceeded their expectations. "Chris and Rocky were masterful at blending spaces," Arwen said admiringly. The architects created a home for them, a legacy for their children and a place to make memories as a family, and this, in their opinion, is as it should be.

"A house isn't so much a place to merely *be*," said Sky. "It's a place to *live* and *do*." ■

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