

A photograph of a modern, two-story house at dusk. The house features large glass windows and doors, some of which are illuminated from within, showing interior spaces with bookshelves and furniture. The exterior is a mix of stone masonry and dark wood. A prominent stone chimney rises from the roofline. In the foreground, there is a stone wall and a planter box with red flowers. The overall atmosphere is warm and sophisticated.

A Real Cliff

Here's a spot where James Bond would take his martini.

BY COLIN W. SARGENT

If you were a former Special Forces operative who'd founded a geothermal firm that made you well, let's just say, comfortable, where on the Maine coast would you choose to locate your ultra-high-tech hideaway?

So often the most defensible positions—perched on cliffs, facing the sea—have been snapped up by forts. This private residence is nothing less than “a stunning architectural composition of wood, copper, stone, glass, and steel, with soaring window walls framing awe-inspiring panoramic oceanfront vistas,” according to Sotheby's listing agent Linda Briggs. Here, above the boom of the surf, when you take a deep breath of the salt air, prepare to be shaken and stirred. In spite of its impossibly meditative geographic advantages, it

hanger

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whispers with the kind of understatement that's only possible when the most skilled artisans are involved.

Andy Livingston's oceanside panorama of Bald Head Cliff on Shore Road at the tip of Seal Point in Cape Neddick is more dramatic than the Cliff House's dining room views. Because, in a Zen-like way, you are one with the view. Deployed on a precipice facing the sunrise, his house's trajectory is nothing less than astonishing; he touches a button and a glassy corner of the barrel-roofed living room disappears. Suddenly you're standing on the deck of a concrete yacht, where the indoors flows outdoors and back in again. This is the ultimate entertaining space in Maine. Even the custom-designed furnishings effortlessly accommodate 14 guests for dinner, yet the compact spaces retain a romantic coziness perfect for just two.

"That's Nubble Light to your right," the soft-spoken Livingston says as we stand above the water's edge, with his 16-week-old retriever puppy, Seal, bounding about



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the sea roses that cling to the cliff. "Then, to the left, that's Boon Island." In the distance, a looming creates the illusion that a peninsula and a sprinkle of islands are actually rising above the horizon. He points above the aquatic mirage, "That's Goat Island Light, in Cape Porpoise, and Walker's Point."

The architecture of this cliffhanger is as

aware of, and appropriate to, its site as Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater.

"Lisa DeStefano of Portsmouth is the architectural firm, with Carla Goodknight the architect," Livingston says, with interior decoration by Machado Blake of Somerville, Massachusetts, and bespoke metalwork (tables, lights, curved railing) by the

late Mike Cromier.

"We didn't want to make it too large," Livingston says, "because Donna and I wanted to use the whole house. We agreed we didn't want a house where almost no one goes to the formal dining room."

This fits the genius engineer/entrepreneur in Livingston, who has a hand in at least three businesses: a geothermal energy licensing firm; a development company creating a mixed-use high rise in Portsmouth; and, with his wife Donna, he's a restaurateur. Naturally, "AJ's Wood Grill Pizza" in Kittery is run with geothermal.

Looking at Livingston's Seal Point home, a visitor realizes Livingston is simply good at what he does. Only when asked does he reveal his black operations/Special Forces background, "when I was in the Army, from 1961 to 1965." Before that, "I grew up in Vermont, in a 1790 house." He smiles. "I was the black sheep of the family." In-between then and now is dazzling success in Washington, D.C. and Boston, where his unique geothermal licensing concept took off. "I dreamed up the idea that what makes geothermal technology exportable is outside the loop field."

In a way, the innovator in Livingston, 75, has made this kestrel's love nest his Monticello, with the innovator in him participating in key designs like Jefferson.

"I designed the hood" for the stove, that's like a piece of abstract expressionist art in itself.

"You do love the cantilever," we tell him.

"What else could I do here?"

"What I am is lucky," he says. "I like to bring people together." Then he redirects the conversation by saying, "Tom Schulz did the walls here. He's a former professor at Boston School of Fine Arts. He's used thirteen coats of various coats of paint and wax to create a sense of Tuscany in the depth of layering."

Not twelve coats. Not fourteen coats. If you stare into the walls, you can almost taste the ancient evenings. Understated and magnificent, this house, listed for \$4.5 million, is exactly perfect. Taxes are \$26,159. ■

➤ Guest house included. Address is 16-18 Bald Head Cliff Road. For more, visit portlandmonthly.com/portmag/2012/10/hom-extras.

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