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Swept Away

We interrupt this magazine for a live feed directly from the Secretary of Defense's house.

BY COLIN W. SARGENT

During the Reagan presidency, everyone on Earth knew that Secretary of Defense **Caspar Weinberger** (1917-2006) kept a getaway place up in Maine.

But it was more something imagined than actually seen. Far fewer knew where it was, or how luxuriant it was, or that it was once owned by Mary King Auchincloss. Listed for sale this summer for \$2.15M, "Windswept," built in 1910, enjoys a classic view of Somes Sound on Mount Desert Island. Positioned to advantage at 584



A Chat With Caspar W. Weinberger, Jr.

Caspar Willard Weinberger, Jr, known as "Cap," is the son of Caspar Weinberger, prominent statesman and, most notably, U.S. Secretary of Defense under the Reagan administration from 1981 to 1987. Cap's mother, Jane Weinberger, was an author and publisher from Milford, Maine. Born in 1947, Cap studied at Harvard—his father's alma mater—and earned a B.A. in Modern British History in 1968. He lived in San Francisco for many years, working as an award-winning producer, director, and writer of documentary films for an NBC affiliate. Cap settled in Mount Desert in 1997. Today he is a writer and lecturer, as well as running Windswept House Publishers, started by his mother in 1984.

He takes us inside Windswept as both a loving family member and a keen observer.

Q. If there were a documentary film on Windswept during the Reagan years, what scenes would they show? We'd like to see your father in action.

CW: I remember he had one event early on in the Reagan years. He was communicating with forces in Iraq, or the Gulf, or somewhere unheard-of in the Middle East. Maybe it was Saudi Arabia. He was talking into an enormous phone like the one Michael Douglas had when he walked out of prison as Gordon Gecko in *Wall Street II*. There was an uplink to a satellite. I watched him talking outside on the deck. He had a long conversation of some import that was completely secure. Maybe.

The oldest part of Windswept dates roughly to the Civil War, so the documentary would show scenes there. My mother prized that room, the heart of the house. So there was quite a bit of activity here, with seating for up to 20 guests and views to the sound. Gen. Powell was up here, of course, and Gen. Vessey. Olympia Snowe, a lovely friend of the family, was here often. She spoke at my dad's funeral.

A documentary film would show my dad in his first-floor library. It was a lovely gift given to him by my mother. It's Pentagon-sized. My dad was quite a bibliophile, a lifelong writer. He was born in San Fran-

Continued on next page



Sound Drive, Mount Desert, its handsome aspect conjures up images of a Mount Vernon plucked from Virginia and nestled with jeweler's precision into a savagely beautiful setting.

Somes Sound is the only fjord on the East Coast of the U.S. Excuse me, Somes Sound was the only fjord here until it was downgraded to a fjard, something of a geographic embarrassment. (Just ask former planet Pluto to what that feels like.) In any case, the most profound of Somes Sound's indigo depths kiss the bottom at 175 feet. The Sound,

which nearly divides Mount Desert Island in two, is still magic.

The dock, suitably, is long enough to tie up a *Spruance* Class guided-missile destroyer. Approach it from the water, guests traverse the plunging green lawn toward the nine-over-nine Georgian windows and the elegant front door.

Touring the 20-room house results in an echoic sensation, because it's completely empty. (Honestly, how could you restage the Reagan years?) Eight bedrooms, six full baths, and two half baths round out the

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cisco, as was I. He started reviewing books for the *Chronicle* in San Francisco when he was very young. His desk in Windswept was once owned by Winston Churchill, a favorite of my father's. If you're seated at the desk and look left, you look straight down *Somes Sound* all the way to Beach Mountain, which is absolutely gorgeous. There's a presidential feeling to the room. I remember flags. The HEW flag was there, with book and snake entwined (my father was also Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare), plus the American Flag.

A documentary filmmaker would have to take to you to his tiny writing room off a bedroom suite that had his old double writing desk from his days in California. He also had a stand-up inkwell writing desk made by prisoners at Fort Leavenworth. It was decorated with bronze coins showing each branch of the service. From that desk, he could look down the whole length of the sound.

Do you feel personally connected to this house?

CW: Yes, along with my sister and our respective families. I live next door, in a house called Gull Rock, so named because there's a rock deposited by a glacier on which so many gulls sit. It's the start of the fjord.

Don't you mean fjård? (Must everything be downgraded?)

CW: That happened a few years back, when my dad was still alive. My dad wanted no part of it. He thought that was crazy. The Sound was always a fjord to him... ■

Fjord: "Long narrow arm of the sea, commonly extending far inland, that results from marine inundation of a glaciated valley."

Fjård: "Rocky inlet of the sea, usually found along relatively low-lying coasts. Formed by the submergence of a glacial valley, fjårds are characteristically more irregularly shaped than the fjords. Like fjords, they may be quite deep and may have thresholds at their mouths. Fjårds are often connected by mazes of channels but are not typically river-fed estuaries."—britannica.com

creature comforts. The entire structure is just an eyelash over 8,500 square feet.

There's an elevator and an in-law apartment. Our favorite place is the paneled library, big enough for a game of jai alai. Secretary Weinberger's wife, Jane, an author and publisher, must have loved curling up here with her famous collie.

Here those who kept the world secure had a moment of rest to feel secure themselves. It's vaguely satisfying to know that the kitchen of one of the most powerful men in the Western world needs, by all accounts, a complete redo. Otherwise, this is an astonishing property for those who dare to think big. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

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