

HOME

ISSUE FOUR

SUMMER 2010

“SUMMER AFTERNOON, summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language.” —*Henry James*

DAY NINE

Henry James also said, “Life is a predicament that precedes death.” So, even though we’re working hard, paying bills, raising families, worrying about our kids, watching our calories, cholesterol, blood pressure *and* still contributing to our communities, we have to admit we’re fortunate—in fact, very fortunate.

Let’s face it, we’re living good lives, perhaps even great lives. Still, we’ve got to acknowledge we want that new 48” stainless steel Viking gas BBQ with separate burners, rotisserie and 861 square inches of grilling surface! We’re certain it will improve our

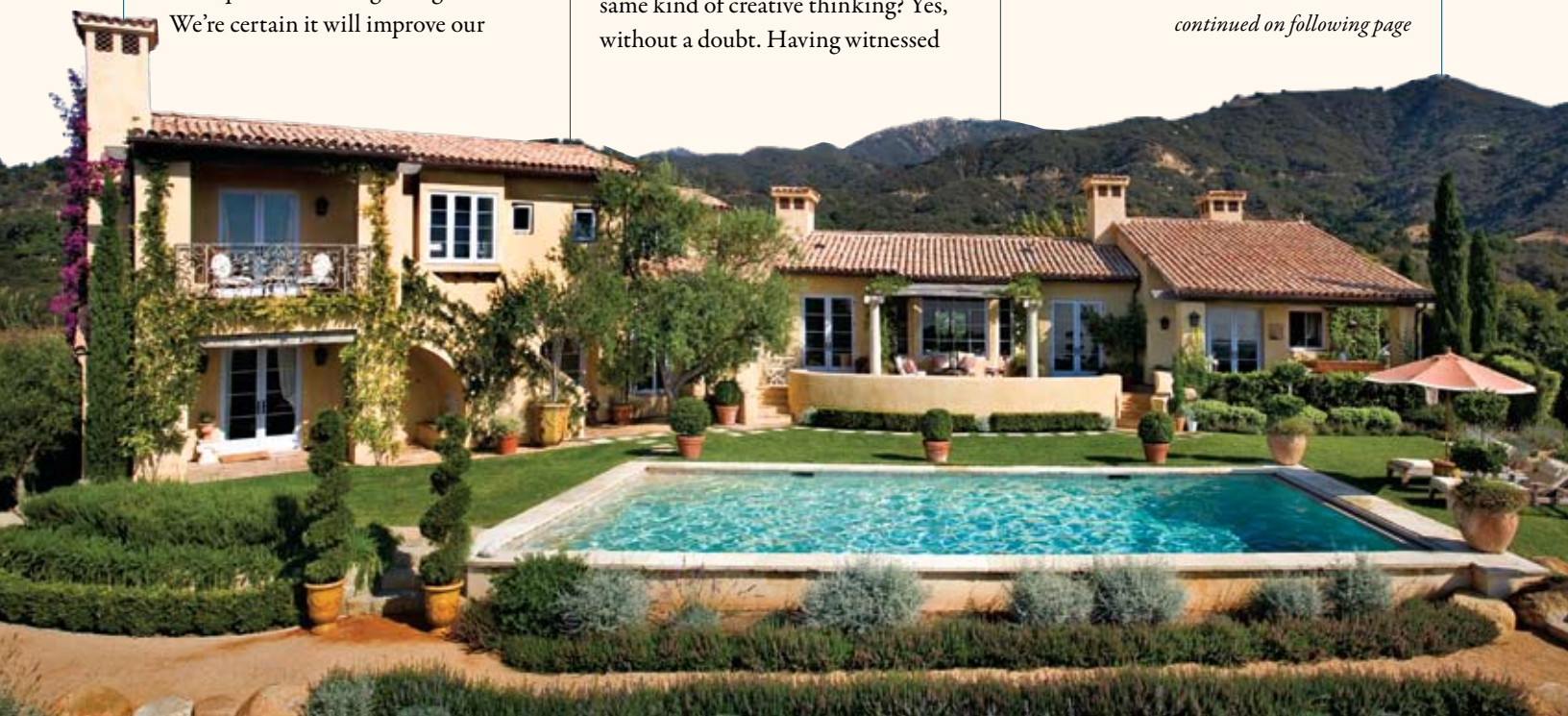
creative spirit and, therefore, our lives. At least that’s what we tell our spouses.

After all, don’t you find that some of your finest thinking occurs when you’re doing your absolute best to relax? Haven’t you found that some of your most brilliant ideas—those “Aha! Moments”—about improving your life, your business and your community—happen on day *nine* of your vacation?

Is it possible to design similar situations and venues into everyday living that continually foster that same kind of creative thinking? Yes, without a doubt. Having witnessed

first hand the difference that a well-crafted environment makes in the lives of our clients, we know that it is absolutely possible to nurture creativity. For example, the outdoor covered loggia with comfy seating that sparked the idea for the new business venture. The patio where the extended family gathers for holidays. The poolside al fresco dining area that combines healthy play for grandchildren, communal meals, and fireside chats. The garden terrace where the community is welcomed for charitable functions. The meditative spot in the garden that

continued on following page



Day Nine *continued from cover*

leads to quiet introspection. The hot tub with the breathtaking vista that provides an inspiring overview of life.

The investment required to create a place on your property where those Aha! Moments can happen is well worth it. The ongoing recharging that takes place makes you a better person and, by extension, also benefits those around you. In short, inspiration thrives in the great outdoors.

The best outdoor spaces, whether simple or elaborate, enable you to experience all the elements while also providing shelter from the sun, wind and mist. Outdoor cooking and entertaining factor heavily into planning these spaces, so ready access to the kitchen also makes sense. A patio table set over a hard surface, such as flagstone or pavers, is easy to serve from and clean up around. Comfortable lounge furniture will encourage everyone to stay longer.

“Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under the trees on a summer’s day, listening to the murmur of water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time...”

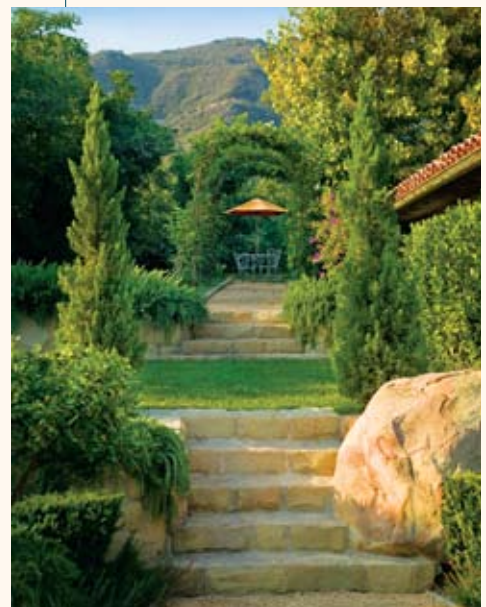
—John Lubbock

In our climate, warm by day, cool by night, outdoor living takes a little forethought. If you’re near the coast and subject to the wet evening fog, some sort of roof covering extends your enjoyment. It may be a veranda, a loggia or a porch, depending on the style of your home’s architecture, but the end result is the same—outdoor refuge.

In the foothills, strong sundowner winds are more prevalent. Consider placing your outdoor living space on the lee side of your home for additional shelter.

In either micro-climate, outdoor heating will be appreciated, whether it’s fireplace, firepit, or radiant heating, either in the ceiling, on the wall or in the paving surface.

Water elements are great features. Keep in mind that swimming pools need to be located in sunny areas and away from the canopy of trees. Good visibility from the family’s home out to the pool is required for keeping an eye on little ones as well as enhancing the sense of enjoyment surrounding a pool.



Cover and this page: Architecture by Chris Dentzel, landscape architecture by Katie O’Reilly-Rogers, design by Tracey Shannon. **Left:** A comfortable south facing, wind sheltered, covered patio works well for entertaining. **Right:** A garden table at the end of a walkway combines two elements—a focal point and a place from which to see another view.

Not enough space for a pool?

The sound of a fountain and the visual movement of water are great additions to any outdoor space.

So how are you contributing to your own life? Your family's sense of well-being? What things are you doing at home to keep yourself recharged and energized?

Much of what we've learned over the past 25 years has been shared with us by great landscape architects, designers, architects, masons, fountain builders, landscapers and you, our clients. Your understanding of creating pleasurable outdoor experiences has enlarged our knowledge and expertise, thereby enhancing our ability to contribute to our community.

If you've been thinking about creating one of these spaces, please feel free to call us. We'd love to come by, consult with you, recommend good landscape architects and help bring to life your own outdoor sanctuary! After all, having created innumerable special places, we've seen the difference they've made in the lives of our clients and, by extension, our community.

—Bruce Giffin

This page, top to bottom: In this classic California beach house, a patio off the kitchen provides a great setting for Sunday brunch, with architecture by Hugh Twibell, interior design by Sue Aldrich, landscape design by Alida Aldrich. In the hedgerow district of Montecito, this outdoor living room invites nightly use from a warm fire to take the chill out of the air, with architecture by Jason Grant, design by Jill Hall and Elyse Pardoe.



CUSTOMER SERVICE Q & A WITH GEOFF CRANE

Giffin & Crane is known for its commitment to outstanding customer service. Co-founder Geoff Crane talks about the company's customer service philosophy.

Q Who were or are the major influences on your customer service philosophy beliefs?

A It started on my first jobs back in the mid 1970s. Working with a framing contractor up in Alaska, I was very impressed with how he rolled out the red carpet when owners arrived at the site. Another early influence was a local builder/architect named John Kelley. I worked on his home, where every detail was carefully thought out and executed, then helped him build some spec homes with the same thoroughness. When the homes sold, we were on-call to service them, and as additions or remodeling came up, there was no

question as to who would be doing it! Bruce and I worked together for several years prior to forming Giffin & Crane in 1986, and we share the same integrity and philosophy about customer service, quality and creating an enjoyable building experience. Since then we have been fortunate to have found many more people—from our project managers to our laborers—with same values.

Q What are the primary components of great customer service for a builder/remodeler/renovator?

A When people pay for a service they expect the best. Poor customer service can ruin a relationship—



*Above: With a built-in barbecue and fireplace, and space big enough for both eating and seating, an outdoor great room nestled between family room and pool offers a lot of enjoyment. Landscape architecture by Katie O'Reilly-Rogers, architecture by Bernard Austin, Harrison Design Associates, interior design by Francesca Wolfe. **Top right:** A dramatic verandah offers views to the east overlooking an infinity edge pool. Architecture by Tom Meaney, garden design by Francis Shannon, design by Virginia Vanocur.*



and customers have memories! The trust we work so hard to achieve can very easily be lost. From start to finish, we stay engaged in our work. We are not “paper contractors” sending subs out to do a job and hoping it goes well. Giffin & Crane’s personnel know that our clients, their spouses, business managers, and employees deserve the best experience we can offer.

Q What role does that quality assurance play in customer service?

A Quality assurance starts immediately in our estimating department. It’s our job to be sure we are building the correct things into a home, which doesn’t necessarily mean the most expensive things. When we solicit bids from sub trades, we give them all the same scope of work with a specific format to submit



their numbers. This enables us to find any discrepancies or missing components within a bid, and it also gives us an idea of how each sub is looking at a particular job—their level of interest, the quality of goods they're specifying—all of which plays an extremely important role in quality assurance. Toward the end of a job, our QA person and project manager do a preliminary walk-through to surface any items that need attention or correction. The next walk-through occurs at substantial completion with the project manager, QA person and client. Any items needing attention are noted on our QA form and the project manager then has an agreed-upon time to address those items. Additional walk-throughs occur at three months and 11 months after final inspection or certificate of occupancy.

Q Where do you strive to see the company make a difference in providing outstanding customer service?

A When we hear about what went wrong or poor customer service provided by our competitors, it's a golden opportunity to learn and improve. The challenge then is to make sure that our personnel also learn those lessons.

Q What does it take to make that happen?

A Know your products, be accessible and be responsive to calls, or call clients on your own. We are fortunate to live close to our work, so why not just say, "I'll be right over." We all like it when someone is there to answer our call or returns our call promptly.

Q Companies are made up of human beings and, therefore, sometimes fall short on delivering top quality customer service. How do you address that?

A By doing the right thing! This might involve repairing or replacing something at our own expense, or working that out with our trade contractors. Sometimes, personalities do not mesh and adjustments may have to be made in staffing, but with regard to any disrespect or negativity, we simply don't tolerate it.

Q Why does great customer service matter to you?

A We all experience great satisfaction from hearing good things about our company and our employees. As we enter our 25th year in business, we

can all be proud that we have built a legacy right here in beautiful Santa Barbara. This is a very small town—we see our clientele all the time. As two multi-generation locals, it's nice to know that we have managed to earn a good place in our community and we never lose sight of how fortunate we have been. Our sincere thanks to our clients, friends and those who continue to refer Giffin & Crane with confidence. ▲

HOME MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST: SUMMER

Walk perimeter of structures on your property and inspect for the following:

- Wash the dust off of solar PV panels with a high pressure hose.
- Check irrigation system, either drip or spray, for effectiveness after the spring growth.
- Add additional mulch in planting beds.
- This is a good time of year to wash windows.
- Clean dust bunnies off of refrigerator and wine cooler air intake grilles for more efficient cooling.
- Check garage door photo eyes for safe operation.

Call us at 805.966.6401 if you would like assistance with these or other home maintenance projects. We'd be delighted to help.



FEATURED HOME:

A Quintessential Family Beach House that Just Happens to be a Mile from the Beach!

Although there is no such thing as a “typical” Santa Barbara remodel/renovation, certain types of projects do appear more frequently than others. Here’s a successful example of a renovation project of a home that was originally built in the ‘50s, added onto seven times over the interceding years, last updated in the late ‘80s and then left to quietly molder in a creekside setting since then.

The house had serious moisture problems, the roof was shot and the dirt was high up around the perimeter walls. Worst of all, built on a slab foundation, next to a year-round creeklet, groundwater was constantly migrating through, giving the home a distinctly wet and musty smell.

Additionally, due to the hodgepodge

nature of the numerous additions and remodels over the previous 50 years, the rooms were cut-up, the mechanical systems old and ineffective, the ceilings were low, the flow was off and the best views were not captured from the interior of the home.

However, there were a number of positives: the lot, the privacy, the setting, the overall square footage already in place and the neighboring proximity to the family’s grown children and grandchildren.

Under the tutelage of Tony Spann, principal at Harrison Design Associates, with Suzanne Tejada as project architect, along with Barbara Lowenthal’s invaluable interior design work and Eric Nagelmann’s landscape design, a remarkable transformation took place.

After much analysis, the existing second story was removed. The first floor slab was cut, and French drains were installed strategically around the perimeter and under the floor to make it easier for the ground water to properly drain away from the house. Additionally, a special sealer was applied to the top surface of the slab foundation. With three winters’ worth of real life testing, the end result is a dry and comfortable home.

Existing first story walls were strengthened and the floor plan re-vamped to take advantage of the site’s assets. The second story walls were re-built a foot taller and all new state of the art lighting, media, HVAC and plumbing systems were installed. The husband, a trained gourmet chef, required a kitchen that not only provided a theatrical flair but also functioned at the highest level. The outbuildings on the property were updated as well to match the main house, with the old workshop now serving as the couple’s office. The pool was re-built, a better connection between the pool area and home was established, an outdoor fireplace added and the landscaping re-themed.

Using as a touchstone treatise the book, *The Barefoot Home* by Marc Vassallo, the clients’ desire was to create a casual family home, their “beach house” that just happens to be a mile from the beach. It’s a place where multiple generations can gather in an informal and casual setting to enjoy each other’s company and create memories for years to come. 🏡



A bridge made of Cherokee stone, with a handrail of local eucalyptus, ties the gardens together.



THE TEAM

Suzanne Kortz Tejada
Project Architect,
Harrison Design Associates

Lynn Howard
Structural Engineer

Steve Litchfield
Project Manager, Giffin & Crane

Eric Nagelmann
Landscape Design

Barbara Lowenthal
Interior Designer,
Harrison Design Associates



Clockwise from left: 1) With the ceilings a foot taller and additional skylights, the living room is light and bright with adequate room to display the client's collectibles. 2) The family media room, just off the garden play area, is a great place for the grandkids to watch Saturday morning cartoons. 3) The outdoor eating area located halfway between pool and kitchen is warmed by a fireplace and shaded by an oak tree. 4) The upper level master bedroom, with views into the gardens through the oaks, is an inspiring place to wake up each morning. 5) The kitchen, with a Spekva butcherblock countertop, is designed to handle any gourmet cook's requirements. 6) The guest bath has a playful beach theme.

DAN FORMANEK FITS PIECES, PLAYERS TOGETHER ON THE SITE

DAN FORMANEK'S title is Project Manager, but he's really a choreographer. As the on-site supervisor of some very long and complex building projects, Dan is responsible for making sure that as many as two dozen subcontractors at a time work nicely together.

"It's quite a bit of coordination," says Dan, a genial giant who began learning how to build houses as a youngster while working as a carpenter for a neighbor in Henning, MN. Stints in construction in Alaska and Arizona followed, with Dan winding up in Santa Barbara and going to work for Giffin & Crane 20 years ago. Since then he's been involved in at least 20 projects, some as small as a bathroom remodel and one home so elaborate that construction stretched over two-and-half years.

Working with clients as their project takes shape is a major part of Dan's overall responsibilities, and here, too, each situation is different.

"Some clients don't want to be involved with what they think of as minutiae, and some want to be involved in almost every decision," he says. "I don't try to force anything. My goal is to make it as enjoyable an experience as I can for them. Of course, everything doesn't always go perfectly, but when that happens I try to be as diplomatic as possible. The key is to try to get everyone's expectations aligned at the very beginning."

Although a lot of what Dan does involves nitty-gritty details, he also has a bigger vision of what's occurring.

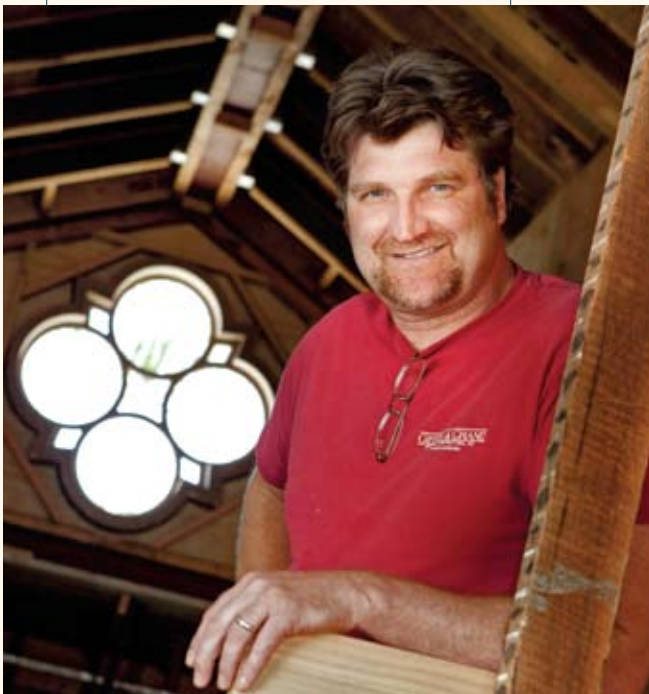
"At Giffin & Crane, we're not just building a house for someone," he says. "What we're building is an extension of each client's personality. It's the place they're happy to come back to, where they sleep, where they enjoy spending their time, and where they have the things that are meaningful to them. We always want to be sure that our clients feel comfortable in the places that we create for them, and I keep that in mind when I'm working."

When friends visit, Dan often takes them by some of the homes he worked on.

"I can look at the homes and know that I helped make the client's dream a reality," he says. "That's very satisfying to me."

Passionate about reading in his off time, Dan easily stays current on new trends and developments in building. He also works on his own home, a California-Mediterranean in the Mesa area. It's actually his longest project.

"I bought it in 1991," he admits, "but it's almost done." 🏠



Here's just a partial list: excavators, foundation and steel contractors, framers, insulation contractors, drywallers, finish carpenters, electricians, plumbers, roofers, tile workers, window and door suppliers, cabinet makers, flooring subcontractors, audio/visual specialists, heating/ventilation/air conditioning specialists, appliance suppliers, countertop contractors, landscapers ... you get the point.



GIFFIN & CRANE
GENERAL CONTRACTORS, INC