

# Cool Rules

Developer Greg Strangman restores a '63 beach pad



LEFT: Host Greg Strangman with guests Dana and Jaime Rummerfield in the conversation pit of the developer's restored 1963 Ocean Beach home. RIGHT: Dana and guest John Ritt.

**L**IKE NO OTHER REGION IN THE UNITED STATES, THE SOUTHWEST EMBRACED THE MODERNIST MOVEMENT OF THE MID-20TH CENTURY. FROM THE DRAWING TABLES OF FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT AND HIS PRODIGIOUS PROGENY, CLEAN, SPARE, MINIMALIST AND INNOVATIVE DESIGN DOMINATED THE LANDSCAPE FROM THE SHORES OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA TO THE SANDY VALLEYS AROUND PALM SPRINGS TO THE HIGH ARIZONA DESERTS.



Chelsea McLean, Brianne McLean,  
Michael Jackson and Amy Cochran  
relax poolside at a Russell Woodard  
*Sculptura* patio dining set.



ABOVE: A wrought-iron chandelier illuminates the foyer of the home designed by architect Loch Crane. OPPOSITE clockwise from top left: A cast-aluminum sculpture by Holt Murray adorns a lava-rock wall in a corridor that looks out to the patio and pool. LATE North County artist Svetozar "Toza" Radakovich's hand-carved door hangs in the dining room. ORIGINAL galley kitchen remains largely unchanged. STRANGMAN found the leather and bent-metal chair at a Palm Springs estate sale.

Designed by Point Loma resident and Wright fellow Loch Crane, the Roper residence (named for its first owners) remains largely unchanged from its original inception — a testament to good taste and an enduring appreciation of the movement. Built on the sandy shores of the Pacific Ocean in 1963, the low-key structure blends into the tawny dunes just steps from the pounding surf. From its sun-bleached exterior, to its multi-level interior, the Ocean Beach abode of real estate developer Greg Strangman (creative force behind the Pearl Hotel in Point Loma, Onyx Room and, with architect Graham Downes, Thin nightclub in the Gaslamp Quarter) is the quintessence of mid-century modern.

“I can have the most stressful day at work,” says Strangman, “but the moment I get here I’m relaxed and happy. It’s a joy to come home.”

With San Diego’s near-perfect year-round weather, the residence represents the ideal of the movement’s tenets. Expanses of glass, interior green scapes and the liberal use of organic materials — like rust-colored lava rock and rough-hewn wood — successfully bring the outdoors in and take the indoors out. Of particular note are the home’s sculpted ceiling beams cantilevering beyond the roofline. Reminiscent of those found in the Shinto shrines of Japan, this was Crane’s homage to that country’s architecture after spending time there after World War II.

“The exterior beams were a feature also regularly employed by Frank Lloyd Wright,” says Keith York, curator of ModernSanDiego.com, and our region’s affirmed authority on modernism. “When Crane showed Wright photos he’d taken of numerous Japanese temples, it’s reported Wright pro-

claimed, ‘Even they (the Japanese) have copied me.’”

In spite of its relatively small, 2,220 square feet, the tri-level home is thoughtfully designed, and provided the four-member Roper family a balance of privacy and an abundance of play space.

With four bedrooms and three bathrooms, arranged around a wide-open floor plan, the house affords its third owner, a bachelor, with more of the same — but with far fewer occupants. Like his development firm, the LWP Group, Strangman’s home is defined largely by function — with an emphasis on play.

Even if the house were nothing special, the view from the top floor would be well worth the \$1.3 million price tag Strangman paid four years ago. Six steps up from the ground floor, a bank of west-facing windows offers Strang-

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man and guests spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean and near-daily spectacular sunsets.

Divided into visual halves, the upper level of the home is part lounge/rec room and part sleeping quarters. Dominating the living room is a vintage pool table surrounded by furniture that includes perfectly preserved seating by Ray Komai and metal furniture designer Salterini.



A 1960s pool table overlooks a view of the beach and the Pacific Ocean.

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A bright, modern bathroom with light blue walls and white wainscoting. The room features a white bathtub, a vanity with a curved countertop, and a glass shower enclosure. A decorative chair with a floral pattern and a white towel is placed in the center. A chandelier hangs from the ceiling, and a window with a white frame is visible on the right.

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In keeping with the mid-century theme, Strangman's constantly evolving collection of period-specific artwork and piles of reference books surrounds a shag-carpeted conversation pit with built-in seating (what swinging bachelor pad would be complete without one?) and — yeah, baby! — a roaring lava rock fireplace.

The Roper residence is filling with a steady acquisition of master works including pieces from local artists, many of which were brokered by Objects USA, a mid-century art and artifacts clearinghouse run by a trio of San Diego collectors. A recently purchased, hand-carved door by the late celebrated North County artist Svetozar "Toza" Radakovich now hangs in the dining room. The massive door is part sculpture, part functional art and bestows a sense of gravitas to an already-beautiful abode.

The master quarters — partially separated from the living room by the fireplace — includes a bathroom with a Jetsonian circular shower. Behind a head-high screen amidst three walls of closet space, the walk-in shower features shoulder-high jets, like you'd find at the car wash — just don't expect a wax job afterward.

Extending from the entryway and

throughout the ground floor, the original Italian travertine slab tiling surrounds a diminutive turquoise-tinted, kidney-shaped pool flanked by more period-specific décor and artwork. Aged to a beautiful patina, the creamy gray-white tiling unifies the home, and, at 45 years old, shows only a minimum of wear, even in heavily trafficked areas.

Remnants of the original inhabitants' specifications still remain, such as four butcher-block stools that fold conveniently out of the way in the galley-style kitchen, and a corkboard wall (once covered with Roper family mementos and now acting as "Uncle Greg's" bragging wall).

Flooded with natural light from a ceiling of skylights, Strangman's recent addition of sleek Euro appliances is the only major modification made to the cooking quarters. A built-in range featuring three electric coils is set flush in

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the same travertine used in the flooring — a nod to the hyper-efficiency of the '60s.

Built before a populace of hard partiers made Ocean Beach their preferred venue for nightly bonfires and bongo drums, Crane and the Ropers had the forethought to surround the property with a seven-foot redwood fence. Bleached silvery gray by four-and-a-half decades of Southern California

## MOTHER KNOWS BEST

When *Time* magazine proclaimed Frank Lloyd Wright the “greatest American architect of all time,” Loch Crane’s mother predicted he would one day work for the master. Armed with his drawings and \$1,000 for tuition, the nascent architect and his prescient parent packed up the family’s Model A and left Point Loma en route to Arizona, to petition Wright for a fellowship. Given the economy of the times, it was never determined whether Crane was accepted on the merit of his talent or simply because his mother had cash in hand. Nevertheless, Crane’s ongoing legacy is apparent to this day, in his La Jolla home, and throughout San Diego.

sunshine, the enclosure keeps Strangman’s pool parties a private affair.

“It’s amazing to be this close to the beach, yet still be so secluded,” says Strangman, “especially in this part of OB.”

Anchoring the outdoor space, a vintage Russell Woodard *Sculptura* outdoor dining set is the very definition of cool. You can almost hear the ice cubes clinking in a vintage martini shaker.

“It’s really a livable home,” says Strangman. “I’ll probably live here the rest of my life.” ■

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