

# family fusion

EAST MEETS WEST IN

BY P. J. BREMIER PHOTOS BARBARA RIES



# TIBURON AND HAWAII HOMES



**ARCHITECT:**  
Kyle Thayer,  
Thayer Architecture

**CONTRACTOR:**  
Bob Kantner,  
Dominican Real Estate

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:**  
Eugenia Jesberg,  
EJ Interior Design

**LANDSCAPE  
ARCHITECT:**  
Diane Licht

**LANDSCAPE  
CONTRACTOR:**  
Phil Walters



**L**ionel Achuck, son of a Chinese father and a Caucasian mother, has always lived a life that celebrates the beauty of both cultures. Born in San Francisco but reared in New York City, the Tiburon real estate investor and developer commuted for years with his parents between the two cities, spending vacations and long weekends with his extended Chinese family in their Sea Cliff home.

This same fusion of Occidental and Oriental, of tradition and modernity, is reflected in both the Tiburon and the Hawaii home where Achuck now lives with his wife, Stacy, and three kids: Tyler, 5, Aiden, 4, and Greenley, 10 months. "I like that our children are surrounded by both of their heritages in the environment where they live," says Stacy, who owns the Mill Valley Baby & Kids Company furnishings and accessories store. "The Chinese pieces bring history, tradition and culture into our home and tell a story to both our children and friends of who we are. Design-wise it has allowed us to blend old and new together, making the house feel comfortable and livable."

The couple moved to Marin five years ago with then-infant Tyler, drawn by the local emphasis on family and nearness to the water. "Besides, my sister (chef and cookbook author Farina Wong Kingsley) had just moved to Tiburon," Achuck adds, "and we got a good education (about the area) from her. We're fortunate to have our extended family close by, in the city, so we often all get together and barbecue at our home and enjoy the sunny summer weather of Marin as opposed to the fog in the city at this time of year."





Their recently completed five-bedroom, 7,000-square-foot Tiburon home is transitional-style and very American. "It's big with an open floor plan... and artificial turf," Lionel says with a laugh. It also has a library, a gym, and family, media and play rooms.

Mill Valley interior designer Eugenia Jesberg selected contemporary furnishings from both Holly Hunt and McGuire, but included subtle Eastern suggestions such as heavy wood beams, a soothing sense of darkness and Asian artwork. To make the house child-friendly, "we kept things simple," Jesberg says. She covered kitchen seat cushions in designer outdoor fabric, selected wool rugs in

a forgiving color for the living room carpet and added soft rugs for playtime in the family room.

The house also manages to be eco-friendly, with a large solar panel system, deep-set eaves to shade windows, ancient reclaimed mahogany for flooring, dual flush toilets, and CaesarStone countertops. "I've been in the building industry and I've seen so much waste," Lionel Achuck says. "My philosophy is if you can do it, you should, and it benefits the kids; we can educate them about living healthfully."

Outside, the couple wanted drip irrigation and native, deer-resistant and drought-tolerant plants for an easy-to-maintain landscape along with that artificial turf. "I love

OPPOSITE: Lionel and Stacy Achuck with children Tyler, Aiden and Greenley. ABOVE: Family room and kitchen open to outdoor patio with barbecue.



it,” Lionel says. “The kids and the dog love to run around on it and it doesn’t get destroyed and it stays dry. It drains quickly, so when we blow up the waterslides it doesn’t turn into a mud pit.”

The property “is a great place for entertaining,” he adds, “with lots of space for kids to play and lots of privacy, and yet it’s so close to everything. There are beautiful sweeping views—from Napa in the north to Oakland in

the south—and I love that the house disappears into the hillside because of the colors we chose.”

Besides family parties and informal get-togethers, the couple hosts cocktail parties at home for friends and supporters of the various boards Stacy serves on: she’s president of Bookmarks, the children’s program at the Belvedere-Tiburon Library; co-chair of the Belvedere-Hawthorne Nursery School’s Annual Kitchen Tour; and event chair of Southern Marin Mothers’ Club.



LEFT: Outdoor dining with view of East Bay cities and the San Francisco Bay. BELOW: Kitchen with marble counter on center island; artificial turf proves to be easy to care for and attractive.



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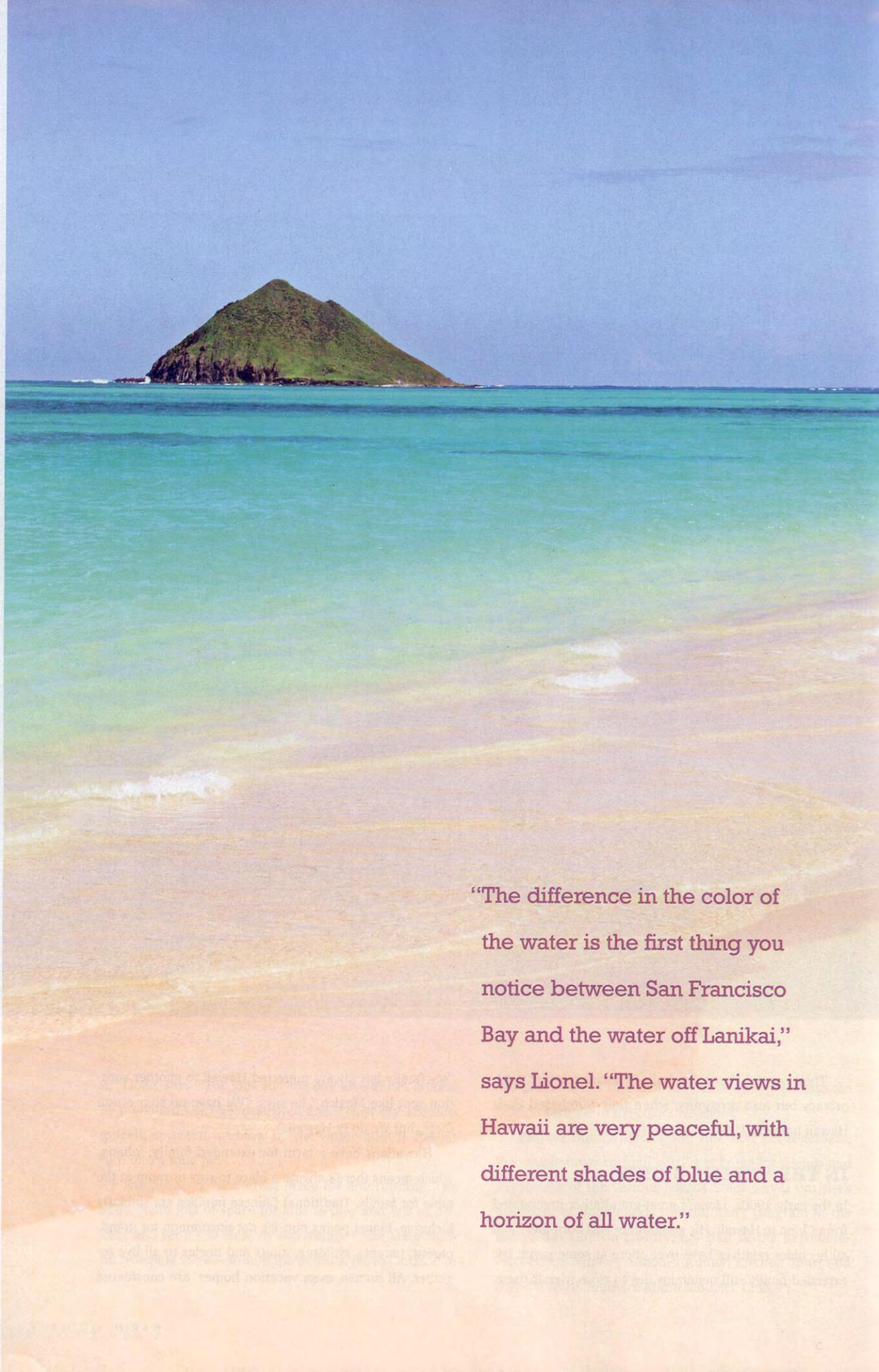
They wanted that same built-in social comfort, with privacy but also proximity, when they purchased their Hawaii home in 1991.

### IN THE 'OHANA SPIRIT

In the early 1900s, Lionel's great-grandfather immigrated from China to Hawaii. His grandfather was born there and all his older relatives have lived there at some point. His extended family still maintains ties to close friends there.

"My family has always preferred Hawaii to another vacation spot like Mexico," he says. "We have no connection there, but we do in Hawaii."

Hawaiians have a term for extended family: 'ohana, which means there's always a place to stay or room at the table for family. Traditional Chinese families are similarly inclusive, Lionel points out: it's not uncommon for grandparent, parents, children, aunts and uncles to all live together. All homes, even vacation homes, are considered



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“family” homes. “They’re open to everyone in the family,” he says. “It’s unusual in today’s society, but it’s what I grew up with and what I’m used to.”

The Achucks’ Hawaiian home is on the windward side of Oahu in the town of Lanikai, about a half hour from the airport and from Honolulu (where they like to head to “Chinatown for some good, authentic Chinese food”), and only minutes to the town of Kailua for quick shopping. While it has one of the top-rated beaches in the United States, Lanikai retains a local feel. “I love the relaxed lifestyle and the pace of life there,” Stacy says. “You can slow down and truly relax since everyone is so easygoing. We are able to be in paradise with all the amenities of a city within a short drive.”

Their contemporary-style beachfront home has everything they wanted: an open floor plan, a phenomenal view, a large courtyard for extra parking, a separate two-bedroom caretaker villa and, when they bought it, a neighborhood still undiscovered by celebrities and tourists.

They left the interior decor choices to Richard Achuck, Lionel’s uncle. “We turned over the keys to him said ‘do it.’” The elder Achuck shipped everything from the mainland, including Chinese heirlooms from the family home in Sea Cliff, contemporary pieces found at the San Francisco

Design Center and other items spotted in the city’s antique shops. “Within two days he had everything in place, including pictures in the picture frames and beautiful flower arrangements,” Lionel says.

The result is a sophisticated residence with tasteful antiques, light colors and lots of glass. It might be considered an “adult” home, but Lionel insists it’s not. “It’s very workable with kids. It’s furnished nicely, but nothing is that fragile and it’s easy to maintain.”

Throughout the house, seating areas encourage relaxing, visiting and the enjoyment of views, which include two bird sanctuary islands just yards offshore. “I love the house with all of its big windows and postcard-picture views,” Stacy says.

The difference in the “color of the water is the first thing you notice between San Francisco Bay and the water off Lanikai,” Lionel adds. “The water views in Hawaii are very peaceful, with a different blue and a horizon of all water.”

And while “it has to be a really warm day” for the children to be able to go tubing in Tiburon behind the family powerboat without a wetsuit, in Hawaii they can swim year-round. “It’s the big activity,” Lionel says. “There are many fun places for the kids to go to in Hawaii, but they love playing in the sand on the beach the most.”

LEFT: Lanikai Beach  
ABOVE: Achuck’s home in Lanikai on the windward side of Oahu.