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Viking Spirit

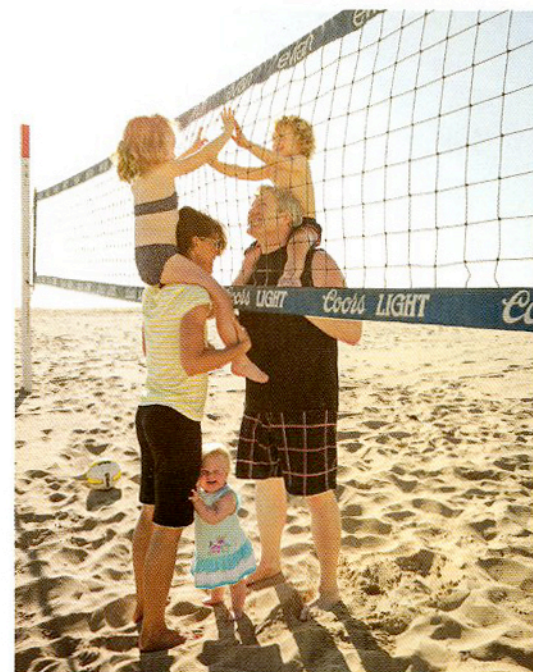
In Norse mythology, Valhalla refers to heaven as the place where only the bravest warriors who died in battle went to live for eternity, dining on great feasts every night among a gathering of the chosen dead. Scandinavian stories about Valhalla originated in the 10th century, but today another Valhalla exists in the South Bay. In 2006, renowned LA Kings hockey player Marty McSorley and his equally successful professional beach volleyball player wife, Leanne, built their own home on The Strand and named it Valhalla.

WRITTEN BY SUZANNA CULLEN HAMILTON

PHOTOGRAPHED BY FARSHID ASSASSI AND SIRI BERTING

The McSorleys had purchased an original Spanish Colonial home on the existing property that was fortuitously sited on a double lot. They rented the house out while they spent more than a year deciding whether to remodel it or tear it down and build a new home. Working with Grant Kirkpatrick, AIA, at KAA Design, they came to the conclusion that what they really desired was a new home that represented their transition from professional athletes to a family with a beach lifestyle.

When asked if their tastes in home styles were as diverse as their chosen sports, Leanne laughs and says, "Actually, we had a very similar vision, so it took a long time, but we were on the same page." The couple was engaged in all facets of both the design and building process. From selecting all of the stone and wood finishes to furniture placement, the McSorleys were involved in the creation of their home. »



Clockwise from top left: With the home's prominent Strand location, privacy proved an essential design element during the planning process; the McSorley clan enjoys a game of beach volleyball steps from their front door; clean lines, sleek wood and stone features and natural light all complement the home's beachside location.

Marty thoroughly researched builders and felt that David Baldwin of Baldwin Construction "completely understood our vision with the quality of construction and materials, and his subcontractors were superb." Marty worked closely with both Kirkpatrick and Baldwin, and together they made several critical architectural decisions that had a huge impact on the house.

First, unlike so many homes on The Strand, the McSorleys put their pool and outdoor living area on the street side of the house, so they would have privacy from the constant public life of passersby on The Strand. With the priority of visual axis in each direction, the low-profile furniture of the living area combined with soaring ceilings and custom windows and doors permit a clear view to the ocean from the pool.

Second, great foresight prevailed with the decision to put the mechanical room inside the house on the ground level, so the pool and mechanical equipment would not erode with the salt air. Finally, and most obviously, almost all the furnishings were custom-created for the McSorleys by KAA Design. From the massive square dining table to built-in cabinets, the house flows from a united vision.

Today, the house is filled with the sounds of laughter from their three young children combined with the waterfall of the pool, while the outside canvas of the ocean view constantly changes with the light. Although toys now further add to the decoration, it is evident that this is a home that was created with much love. Clearly, Marty and Leanne have transitioned from the grinding life of professional athletics to their own slice of heaven on The Strand: McSorley Valhalla. »



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Above: a private entertaining room includes its own full kitchen and a large wine cellar; **left:** Baldwin's flair for structure and composition is evident in the deep stairwell; **below:** abundant sunshine pouring in from sliding doors only enhances the soft palette and organic elegance of the master bath.



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