

[house tour]



modern love

SURROUNDED BY WATER, BUILT WITH STYLE



Shelley LeBoff had been falling for modernist furnishings for a while when she was shown a piece of property on Blue Heron Lake. She and her husband, Jay, had built and furnished a traditional home on Hook Road in Bedford in 1989, but soon after, she found herself drawn to a mid-20th-century aesthetic. Little by little, she pared down the interior of the Hook Road house by removing architectural extras and replacing her traditional furnishings with relics of the modernist age. During this time, the LeBoffs were raising their three children in the heart of Bedford and enjoying the convenience of the village and the kids at Rippowam Cisqua. But from time to time, Shelley would mention to real-estate agents that she and her husband had a fantasy of living on the water.

Straddling the border of Bedford and Pound Ridge, Blue Heron Lake was simply swampland until the early 1900s when the addition of a dam at its southern end transformed it into a hundred-acre

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER LOPPACHER

STONE, GLASS, STUCCO

A trio of primary building materials are all present in this walkway and the den beyond.



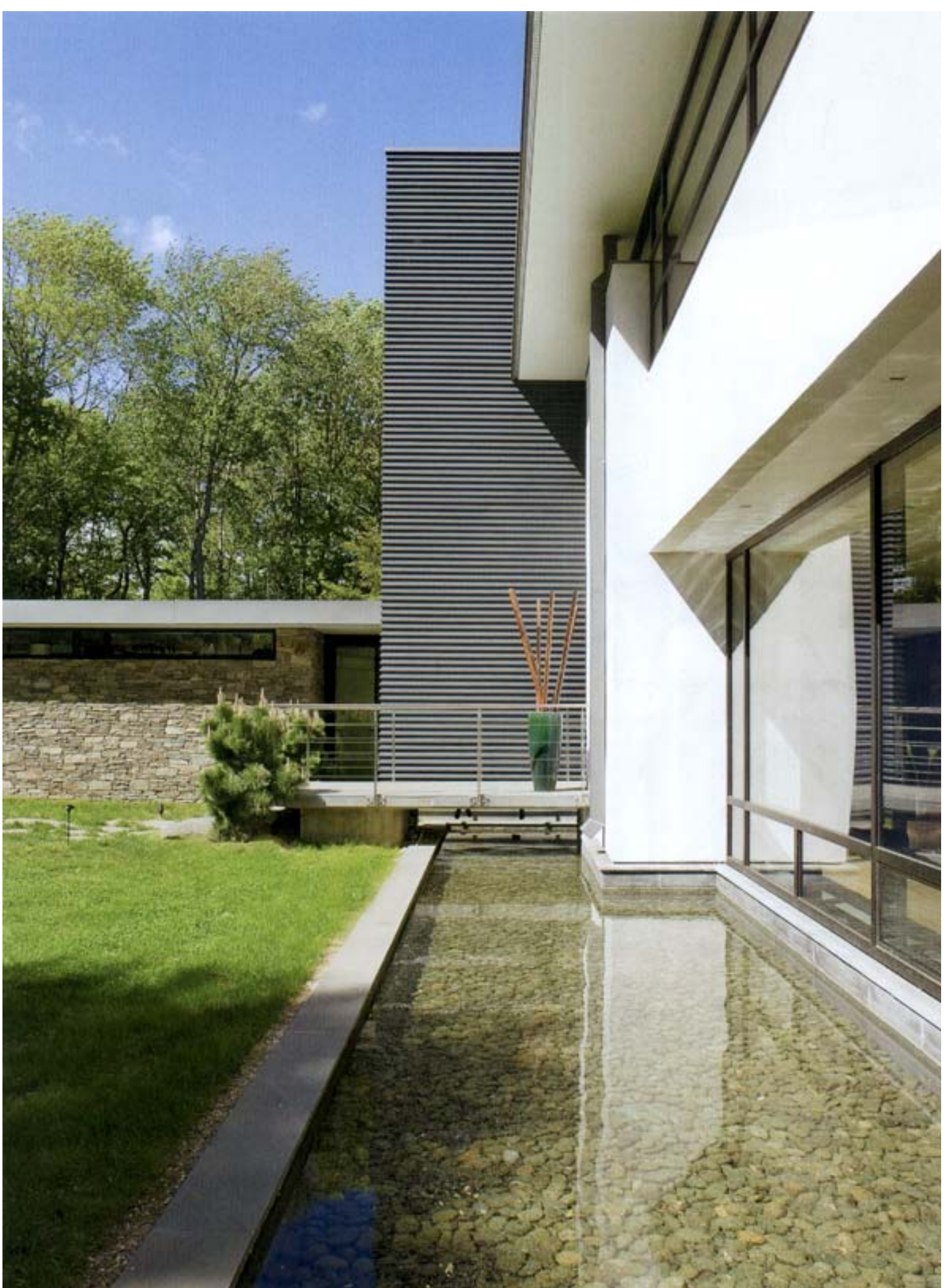
INTERSECTING PLANES
Ceiling heights (left) vary to create dramatic intersections of horizontal and vertical planes outdoors. Stone steps lead from the lake to the home (below). The reflecting pool was designed to collect rainwater and to contribute to the feeling of being on an island (right).

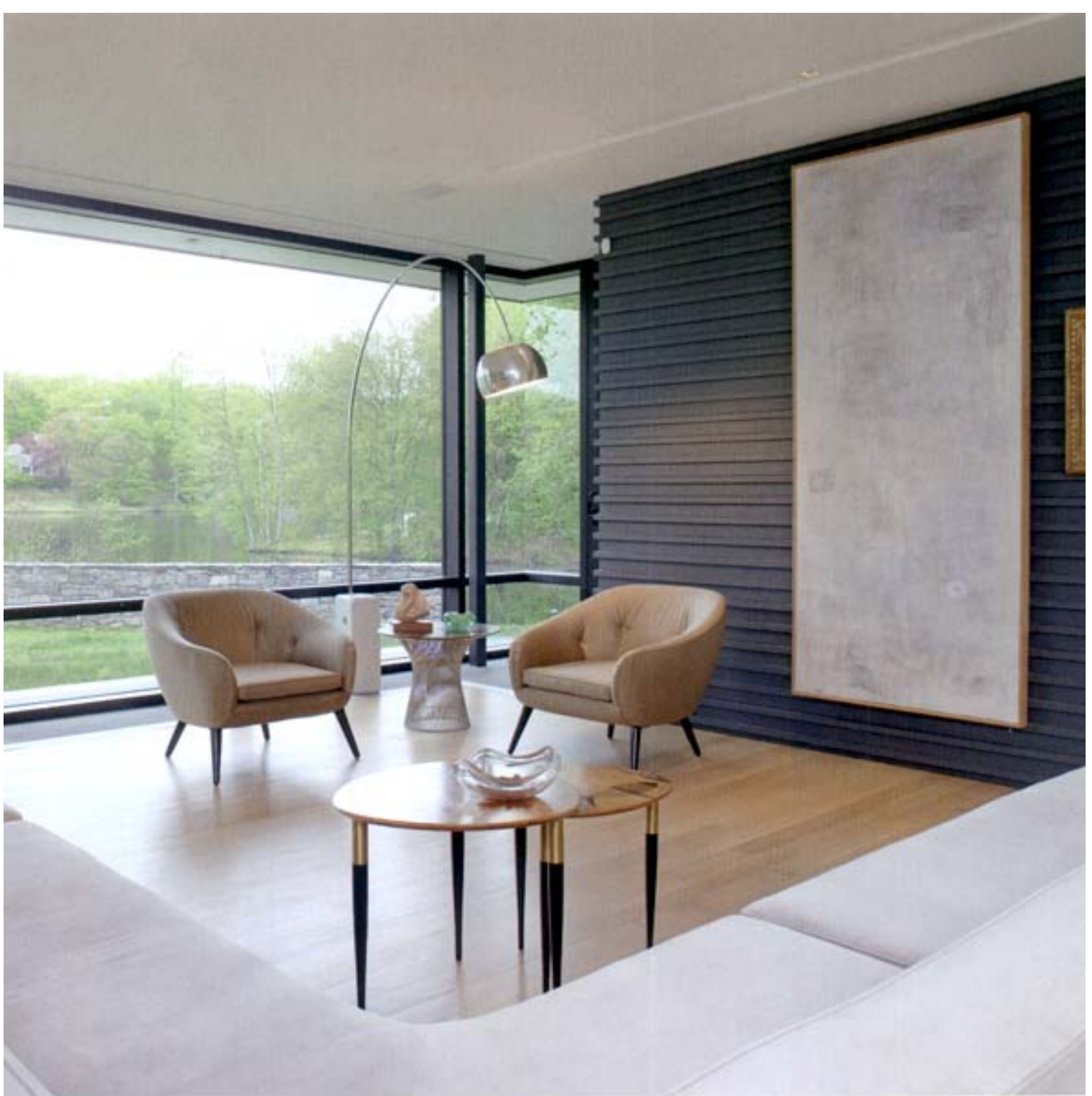
body of water with several small islands. In 2000 the Leboffs were introduced to the peaceful lake where 12 homes and the Morgenthau Preserve now share its shores. Their response was immediate: This is where they wanted to be. "It was the water. We both had a vision of a modernist house that would take our collection of furnishings to the next level," explains Shelley.

The waterfront property with mature trees and expansive lawns was the allure. In fact, so great is Jay Leboff's love of water that he has laid claim to being the founding (and sole) member of the Bedford Yacht Club. When the lake is frozen, the LeBoffs enjoy walking across it with their golden retrievers, Cody and Magic, for hikes in the Morgenthau Preserve. Once the spring thaw hits, Jay rigs up one of his boats and heads out for a daily sail.

Inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater house in Pennsylvania and Richard Neutra's Desert House in Palm Springs, the LeBoffs teamed up with New York architect Steven Harris. Their joint concept: three pods made of stucco, wood, and stone, connected and enclosed by a glass skin. A second architect, David Abelow of Abelow Sherman Architects, and contractor Paul Reiss of Berkshire Wilton Partners made the pieces come together. "Designing the house was a collaboration," explains Shelley, "a give and take of wish lists and practicalities. It was a challenge because there are very few walls and very few enclosed spaces, making the concealing of mechanicals tricky."







Like scenes out of nature, Wright's Fallingwater suggests a waterfall cascading down to the river, and the Leboff home suggests an island surrounded by water. The stone walkway, reminiscent of a dry riverbed, leads visitors to the bridge-like front entrance. Straddling a reflecting pool which runs along the west side of the house, the bluestone entrance continues under the door and into the house. The lake, which runs along the east side, completes the feeling of being encircled by water.

Attention to detail is apparent from the moment a visitor crosses the bridge to what is actually a four-bedroom home. Interior walls that separate the pods from one another are extensions of exterior walls. For example, a dark gray cedar wall that begins outdoors near the entrance, pierces through the glass side of the house and becomes a divider between the living room and the kitchen. Stucco ceilings above the terrace continue over the exterior glass wall and into the kitchen. The terrace's bluestone tile floor flows in a similar fashion, under the walls and into the kitchen. After a while, one forgets the glass is there at all, that there's nothing to separate one from the beautiful surroundings. And inside, the careful coordination of materials creates a neutral backdrop for the art collection and furnishings that



LOVING THIS LIVING
The neutral palette of the exterior allows the vibrant colors of nature to decorate the living room (left). A favorite wall unit by Gio Ponti and a fuchsia Artfort chair sit in this gallery-like space (right). The dining room fills a comfortable nook off the living room.





COOKING IN AND OUT

The kitchen terrace's bluestone-tile floor flows under the walls and into the kitchen itself, where the homeowner enjoys views from the marble countertops. After a while, she says, one forgets the glass between spaces is there at all.



"YOU ARE REALLY IN THE



Shelley already had. Friends initially wondered if they were looking at newly acquired pieces, only to discover that Shelley's timeless modern favorites were the same, enhanced by their new environment.

"Everything is original—American, French, Italian—although sometimes upholstery has been replaced," she says. "It's an eclectic, mid-century trove that I've pared down to the pieces that I really love, and in fact, a few of them inspired the dimensions and layouts in the new house. My most treasured piece is a Gio Ponti wall unit of goatskin and glass from the 1940s. We designed the bluestone platform in the entryway of the house to accommodate it, and yet once we moved in, we found that the piece looked better on the living-room wall."

The kitchen is Shelley LeBoff's favorite place to be. The space feels clean, spacious, and warm, due to the natural materials, and it is conducive to cooking and entertaining. The oversized island offers enough space for working and eating, with a wine cooler that's been installed underneath for easy access. Its marble top has an uncommon but sleek Platner edge, inspired by the edges on some Warren Platner tables that LeBoff has in the house. An outdoor entertainment area, with amenities such as a gas fireplace, comfortably stylish seating, and a television almost make it feel like it is an extension of the kitchen itself.

Down a couple of steps is the lakefront dining room, filled with prized pieces such as the enormous map collage painting by John Spinks, Italian blue-glass sculptures by Venini, a puzzle-like German candelabra by Nagel, a painting by William Pachner, and chairs by Schmiege & Kotzian. The open floor plan allows the living room, dominated by a Vladimir Kagan couch

MIDDLE OF NATURE AT ALL TIMES," LEBOFF SAYS. "IT'S MAGICAL."



and a fuchsia Artifort chair by Pierre Paulin, to unfold into the other living quarters.

A first-floor bedroom suite for the Leboff's teenage son is personalized with snowboarding equipment and electric guitars, while the guest bedroom has morphed into Jay's playroom, where he keeps a prototype of one of his inventions, the HotSeat, a surround-sound video and gaming chassis. Amid Jay's odes to his passions for sailing and car racing, Shelley's modernist aesthetics are not lost, thanks to the presence of an enormous white Archizoom sofa, an Italian relic of the 1970s that can be pieced together like a large stuffed puzzle to make a guest bed on a moment's notice.

The cozy den off the bedrooms features a limestone fireplace that matches the bluestone hearth, a sisal wall hanging by Calder, and a glass table by Noguchi. It is a gathering place for the family and one of the few rooms in the house where all the primary building materials are present in one space. Midway between the den and the living room is a chartreuse staircase where white oak steps connected by brushed metal railings lead down to a powder room and up to the second floor.

Upstairs there are unobstructed, 360-degree views of natural beauty. From the master bedroom, one can watch the sun rise over the lake and set over the western





lawn. Doors are built into the glass walls here, as they are throughout the house, for easy access to the outdoors. Behind a partition, the master bath includes a dressing and exercise area, as well as a shower with river rock on the floor to massage one's feet, and etched glass walls with a strategically placed clear panel to view the lake.

Now that the two oldest children are grown and have moved out, Shelley uses the second upstairs bedroom as her office. Both of these rooms have sliding glass walls that serve as doors. When open, as the doors are usually kept, one can see from one end of the house to the other. This house is not about privacy; it's all about the views. "When it snows, you feel like you're in a snow-globe," says Shelley. "It's magical. The scenery changes daily, and you are really in the middle of nature at all times. The early morning in spring and fall when the mist covers the lake is an especially magical time." ■

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THE GREAT OUTDOORS

When summer rolls around, dinner sizzles on the outdoor grill and is enjoyed on the blue-stone patio after a day of sailing at the "Bedford Yacht Club."

