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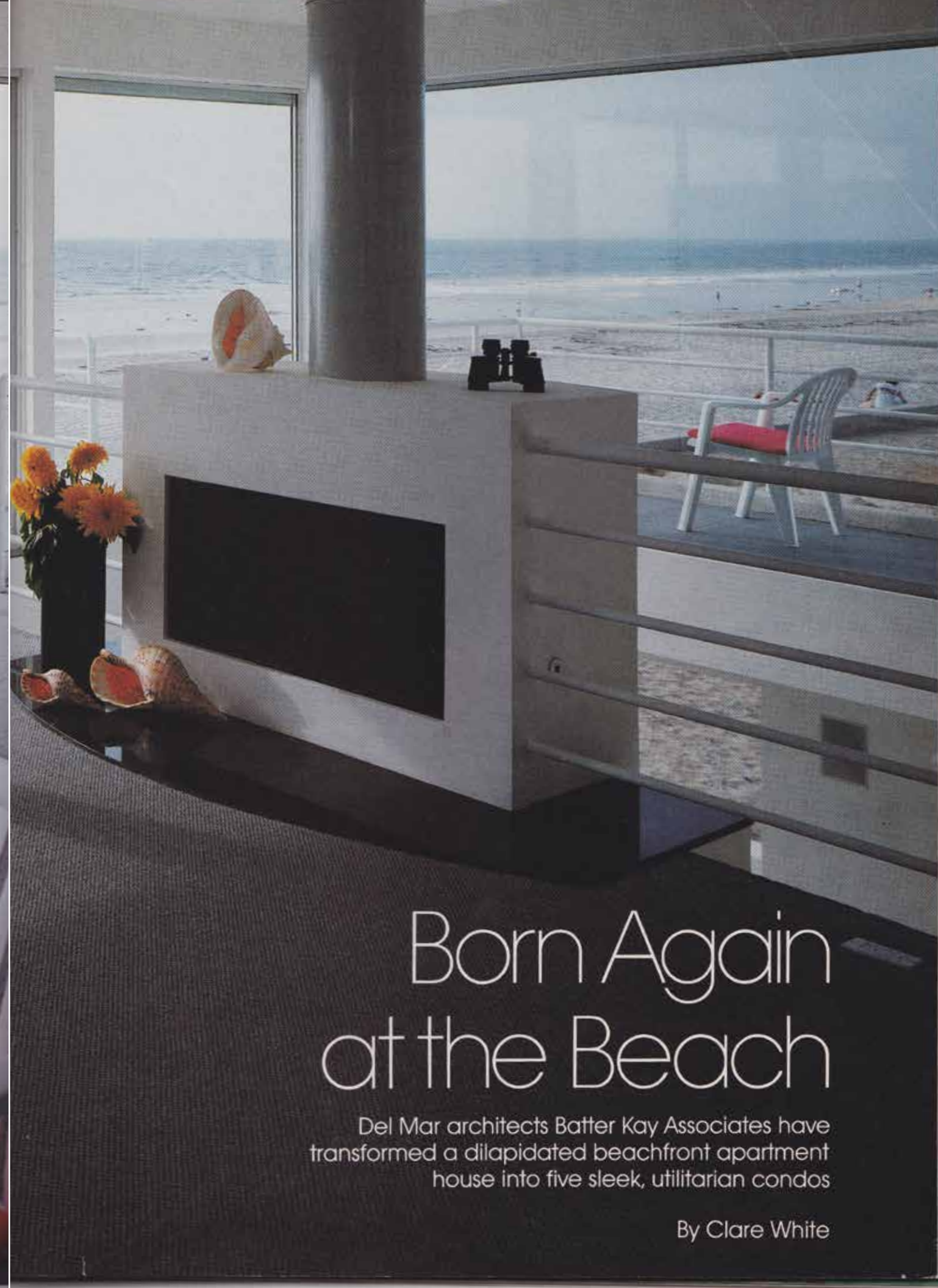
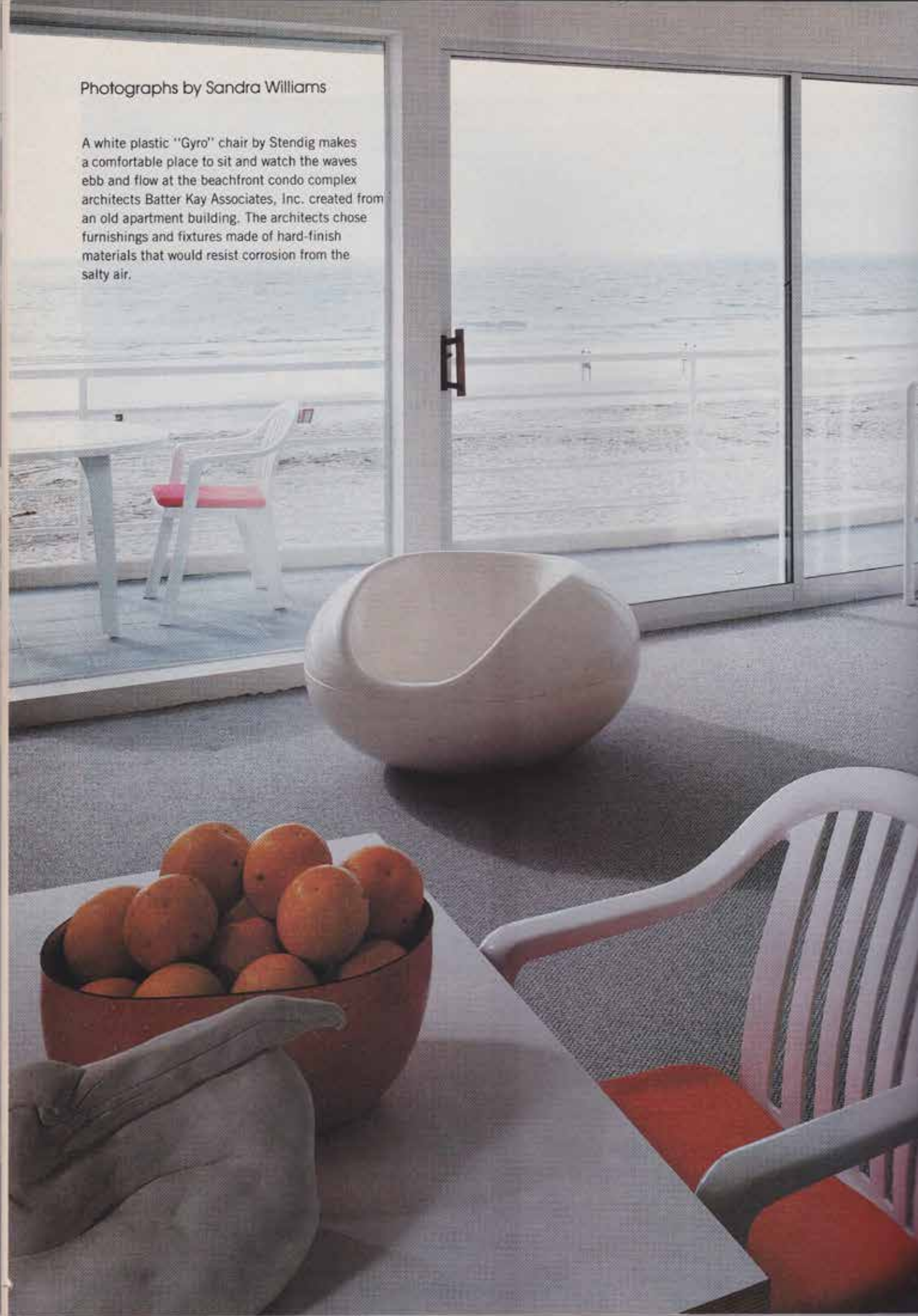


Do Off-Road Vehicles
Belong in Our Wilderness Parks?



Photographs by Sandra Williams

A white plastic "Gyro" chair by Stendig makes a comfortable place to sit and watch the waves ebb and flow at the beachfront condo complex architects Batter Kay Associates, Inc. created from an old apartment building. The architects chose furnishings and fixtures made of hard-finish materials that would resist corrosion from the salty air.



Born Again at the Beach

Del Mar architects Batter Kay Associates have transformed a dilapidated beachfront apartment house into five sleek, utilitarian condos

By Clare White



Batter Kay Associates, Inc. transformed the haggard, eight-unit, beachfront apartment building above into the sleek, International-style, five-unit condominium complex at the top of the page. In the process, they replaced the kidney-shaped pool with a secure central-entrance courtyard and five garages—a priceless commodity in Del Mar.

HANGING ON the pristine-white kitchen wall is a framed photographic reminder of the dilapidated, 1950s-era apartment building that once stood on this same beachfront site. In its place, Batter Kay Associates, Inc. of Del Mar, a husband-and-wife architectural duo, have constructed a sleekly contemporary five-unit condo complex that is perfectly suited to the demands of beachfront living.

For years, students and transient beach aficionados had inhabited the eight haggard apartments that surrounded an unsavory-looking kidney-shaped pool. The roof of the building sagged in the center, and the patio had long since been lost to winter storms. The building was so poorly designed that only two of the units actually had access to the sand; tenants of the other apartments had to exit on the street and come around the building to reach the beach.

To make matters worse, despite its prime location on the beach near Del Mar's Powerhouse Park, only four of the eight units had ocean views. "All in all,"

Janice Kay says, "it was operational but not beautiful."

A partnership of five investors bought the building with the intent of constructing a complex of vacation condominiums. Batter Kay Associates, whose office is just a few blocks away, took on the difficult assignment.

Because it was located on the beach, any new construction on the site had to be designed to meet both the City of Del Mar's and the Coastal Commission's stringent building restrictions on coastal property. To simplify the approval process, Batter Kay decided to save the building's foundation and limit construction to remodeling.

After four years, Batter Kay's design plans—which decreased the floor area, reduced the number of units and added five garages under the building—were approved. The haggard-looking apartment building was reborn as a gleaming-white five-unit condo complex in Batter Kay's own International-style architecture.

It was only after construction had begun that Batter Kay discovered theirs was



not the first reincarnation to occur on the site of the former wreck. Evidently other owners had added on to what may have originally been a single-family house and a parking lot.

Creating five single-car garages below ground made the remodeling process even more complicated. "In order to do that, we had to eliminate the pool, and the contractors had to dig below the buildings while shoring up the foundation," Michael Batter says.

"To make matters worse," Kay adds, "the kitchens were on the corners, and the only stairways were in the back of the building." So they had to start from scratch on the kitchen plumbing and new stairwells.

"Our task was to get as many condos on the sand as possible," she says. "We treated the design as a complex puzzle that could be solved by maximizing the square footage and the views."

Batter Kay's solution to the puzzle was to design five condos that are intertwined around each other like the pieces of a Rubik's Cube. Four units now open di-

rectly onto the sand, and all five units have gracious patios and views of the water.

Two of the four beachfront condos access the sand through cozy downstairs family rooms that are equipped with beach essentials—a bathroom and a wet bar. This bi-level plan removes the kitchen, bedrooms and living room to the main floor, away from sand, boogie boards and beach paraphernalia that are kept downstairs. Another bonus: The second-story living rooms have panoramic views from La Jolla to Cardiff.

With beachfront land selling for thousands of dollars a square foot, Batter Kay took care to utilize every square inch of interior space. The five condos were treated as an experiment in designing the smaller-scale housing that is the trend of the future, both inland and on the coast.

"Most architects recognize that housing will be smaller in coming years," Batter says. "Dealing with limited space has been an interest of ours for some time. We've been trying to make the most of smaller spaces by experimenting with



The five condos at top are intertwined to give maximum access to the beach. Only two of the apartments that formerly occupied the site, above, opened directly onto the sand. At night, white Solar Rolls pull down to protect the aluminum window frames of the condos from damage caused by the sea air.

Right: In the guest bath, the uniquely shaped, black kettledrum Vola sink, manufactured by Kroin, leaves extra space for seating and storage.

Opposite page: The central courtyard is designed to provide each condo with a secluded entrance. The glass-block windows provide light without sacrificing privacy.

multifunctional rooms that go beyond merely adding a Murphy bed—although Murphy beds seem to be making a comeback as well, because having a guest room sit empty for most of the year just isn't economical.

"These condos presented the perfect opportunity to try out some new ideas and resurrect some old ones. In fact, Murphy beds have allowed one of the owners in this complex to accommodate a houseful of guests without adding more square footage."

The kitchens of the condos illustrate how a small space, well planned, can be as workable as a large one. Despite their limited size, these kitchens have as much storage as a 3,000-square-foot tract home—and in some cases, more. The dishwasher is equipped with a perfectly flat door so the adjacent drawers can slide past without a hitch. Canned goods hang from racks on the inside of the pantry doors. Kitchen shelves are equipped with electrical outlets for the toaster and other appliances. And there is a drawer for disposing recyclable aluminum soda and beer cans, which are ubiquitous in most every vacation home.

In the living room, the stereo and speakers are hidden in specially designed compartments. The baths have plenty of space for storing towels and toiletries, and there is even seating to make changing from clothes to bathing suits more convenient. The single-car garages also have storage areas.

"We have enough storage for someone to live here year-round, and about twice as much as you need for a vacation house," Kay says. "It would be possible to simply move our entire family here for the whole summer."

Some vacation homes are furnished with outdated castoffs that may not provide necessary storage or be designed to meet the needs of a beachfront home. Not this one. Much of the furniture is built in and well suited to the rigors of beachfront

living. The children's bedroom has built-in beds, wardrobes and drawers with half-moon-shaped cutouts that substitute nicely for pulls. In the master bedroom, the television, reading lights, drawers, bed and wardrobes are built in.

HAVING DESIGNED other homes on the beach, Batter Kay knew that maintaining a home that is ravaged by sun, sea and salt spray 24 hours a day can be a daunting assignment. Typical building materials just don't stand up to the test. "We were able to experiment with different products because owners of vacation homes are more forgiving if something doesn't work out," Kay says.

"To reduce potential maintenance problems, we minimized the use of materials that would corrode in what is really a hostile environment," Kay says. "We spent a great deal of time researching building materials that stand up well to salty sea air. We found aluminum window frames that are guaranteed against corrosion, and exterior floor tiles that are slick-resistant. We used materials with hard surfaces, such as Formica and marble, because they are the most resilient."

Plastic and fiberglass replaced metal building products whenever it was practical. The bathroom fixtures and faucets—even the towel racks—are constructed of durable plastic or nylon. "We researched PVC plastic window frames, but they were just too expensive," Batter says. "It would be more economical to replace the aluminum frames every few years."

All the metal handrails on the exterior and interior of the condominiums were painted with a special system developed originally for tuna boats. "Although you can't get a smooth, glossy finish with this paint," Batter says, "it is more rust-resistant than regular paint and can be touched up."

To limit the possible damage from winter storms, sun and salty air, Solar Roll storm shutters were built in above the



windows. Made of PVC plastic and lined with aluminum rods, the storm shutters roll down with a flick of a switch to cover all exposed glass. They are used in Florida and other states to protect against hurricanes, as well as in many European cities for security.

"The theory is that broken glass during the beach storms causes most of the damage," Kay says. "These Solar Rolls, which can be raised or lowered either electronically or manually, should limit any damage from broken glass and water. They also protect against intruders when the units are empty for extended periods of time."

One of the problems of beachfront living that no architect can solve completely is the lack of privacy, Kay says. Although the complex is built so that each unit has an individual entrance and is shielded from its neighbors, people passing by inevitably consider beachfront homes to be public domain.

"The most jolting impact of beach living is the loss of privacy," she insists. "For some reason, nice normal people put their noses up to the window and look in. It's not that they are hostile, they are just curious. They want to see what is going on here."

Could it be, one is tempted to ask the frustrated architect, that these curious folk are just interested in knowing more about an architectural miracle that has transformed a haggard old apartment building into nothing more than a photographic memory on the kitchen wall? □

