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# taking the plunge

An indoor pool is designed to be totally integrated into the daily life of a family home on New Hampshire's Lake Sunapee

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**THE GLISTENING 12 FOOT by 4 foot pool is soaked in sunshine year-round thanks to a partially retractable glass roof. "The house adjusts to the seasons," says architect Jeremiah Eck. At the far end of the room, a sunken seating area and fireplace provide a comfortable nook for reading and conversation.**



“IT’S ALWAYS SUNNY IN THE POOL ROOM” IS NOT A PHRASE that is likely to pass the lips of a New Englander. Especially in New Hampshire. Especially in February. Yet it’s the song sung by numerous children and grandchildren as they race through the Lake Sunapee home of Dean LeBaron and Donna Carpenter, leaving a trail of snow boots and fleece pullovers as they head from the front door directly to the glistening long, narrow indoor pool. Which is exactly how LeBaron and Carpenter like it.

After LeBaron, a retired businessman and philanthropist, and Carpenter, a writer, visited Carpenter’s brother in Sarasota, Florida, where pools inside homes are common, they thought, “Why not bring a bit of the Sunshine State up North?” In the process, the couple, who also own properties in Boston and Switzerland, transformed their seasonal vacation house into a year-round home.

With a vision of exactly what they wanted — a pool that was completely integrated into the existing house yet felt as if it was open to the outdoors — LeBaron and Carpenter turned to architect Jeremiah Eck of Eck/MacNeely Architects of Boston, who had designed the lakeside house and with whom they had a client relationship of almost 20 years.

But a vision is one thing; executing it is quite another. The design challenges were numerous, ranging from how to keep the entire house from feeling moist and smelling like a swimming pool to how to compensate

**THE POOL WING, which was added about 15 years after the original house** was built, was sited (ABOVE AND INSET) to take advantage of views of Lake Sunapee. Dean LeBaron and Donna Carpenter love to entertain, so a second kitchen (FACING PAGE) was added on the same level as the pool, allowing the cook to be part of the action. Tile flooring from a German quarry surrounds the pool and is carried into the kitchen and throughout the first floor to provide a sense of continuity.









for changes in air pressure so that the fireplace at the end of the pool would ignite.

"I think everything's possible structurally in architecture," says Eck. "It's just a question of learning how to do it." For a year and half, the team, which included Eck and his associate, architect Steve Mielke, contractors, pool specialists, electricians, and specialty woodworkers, persevered. Slowly but surely, solutions emerged. LeBaron found an odorless ionic water cleaning system that negated the need for conventional chlorine purification. "That made all the difference in the world to the project," says Eck.

One large dehumidifier lies under the pool, with a smaller dehumidifier sited under the nearby living room to catch residual moisture. Glass installed around the fireplace counteracts changes in air pressure. Specialty furniture makers moved onto the property for six weeks to assemble the wooden structural frame that was measured and stained off-site. ("One of the men said it was the largest piece of furniture he had ever built," recalls Carpenter.)



**NO DETAIL WAS** overlooked when it came to designing the pool. A mosaic topography map of Lake Sunapee on the pool floor (**ABOVE LEFT**) is surrounded by tiles the exact color of the lake as reflected through the home's windows (**FACING PAGE**). An infinity edge (**ABOVE RIGHT**) at the pool's far end provides a calming transition to the fireplace seating area just a few feet away. An in-floor fountain (**INSET**) next to the heavy granite diving rock counteracts the rock's weight with its playful movement.

The result is a pool that surprises visitors with its mere presence because, until you actually see it, there's no hint that it exists. There is no odor or excess humidity in the main part of the house, which thanks to separate temperature controls, is kept at a comfortable 70 degrees while the pool room is a constant 78 degrees. The temperature of the pool water is a relaxing 86 degrees. Sliding doors can close the pool off from the rest of the house, but the pool is so unobtrusive that they've never been used.

With the mechanics handled, attention turned to the design features. "None of us wanted the 'ye old barn' look," says Eck. Instead, the team used as much glass as possible along with lots of cherry and fir, two woods that are prominent in the rest of the house.

LeBaron and Carpenter love to entertain, so a second kitchen was added on the same level as the pool, allowing the cook to be part of the action. The tile flooring from a German quarry that surrounds the pool is repeated in the kitchen and throughout the first floor of the house for a sense of continuity. The tiles at the base of the pool mirror the color of Lake Sunapee and are crafted into a topography map of the area, complete with a red-tile house to mark the home's location. Despite concerns that it would topple from its own weight, a large granite diving rock has held its perch regally, while the smooth infinity edge, the burbling fountain (a favorite among the younger crowd), and the flat-screen television that drops from the ceiling with accompanying underwater speakers to transmit sound complete the look and confirm the pool's status as the most popular place in the house.

Come evening, the setting sun reflects on the pool's surface. "It's like swimming in a sunset," says Carpenter. "Absolutely gorgeous." 🏡

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