Just before night's dark curtain draws full across the domed sky, the breeze goes still. Palm fronds hang straight down like tired hands at the end of a hard day's work. The sun's last fierce light relaxes into blue-black velvet, and the sea quiets its applause. Times like these call for front-row seats at the shore. A place so enchanting that you can slip into a pool for a nighttime swim and, while floating, gaze at constellations so embroidered with stars you have trouble finding Orion.

As soon as you fall in love with Baja California, Mexico, the recurring dream of having a house where the desert meets the sea takes over. For Fred and Patty Duckett of Rancho Santa Fe, California, that dream goes back to a time long before the modern-day fame of a place known simply as "Cabo." Their half-century of adventures in Cabo San Lucas, on land and sea, are as much a part of their home's fluid design as the mortar and block walls that now lift it out of granite bedrock above the waves.

The Ducketts honeymooned in the area in 1952, a decade after Steinbeck's famed narrative The Log from the Sea of Cortez was first published. Few Americans other than avid fishermen knew about it. To them, and to the Ducketts, Baja California was a piscine utopia. Fittingly, in 1976, Fred and friends founded The Fish Market restaurants, the first one in Palo Alto—(widely known for their mesquite-grilled fish, the group now includes seven restaurants in California and Arizona.) Fulfilling patrons' orders gave Fred even more reason to head south.

Getting there in those days was half the adventure. Patty remembers how she and Fred would fly from Tijuana to La Paz. "There were dirt landing strips right behind the hotels," Patty says. "The idea was to land before dark because the strips didn't have any lights."

Continued on page 124
sea, sky, serenity

California couple Fred and Patty Duckett build a breezy retreat by the sea.

By Peter Jensen
contents

Sea, Sky, Serenity
After falling in love with Mexico’s Baja Peninsula, a California couple builds a breezy retreat by the sea.

Little Wonders
Hidden from the crowds, stretch of Mexican beach is a handcrafted haven—Cabanas Las Conchita.

Skid Row

TRAVEL

Water Skiing
Lovers of snow and surf, take note: This is the only East Coast mountain where you can see the ocean while you ski.

Happy Campers
Dad’s boat serves as school bus, the Pacific, a playground. The Kerns live abundantly on Santa Catalina Island.

IN EVERY ISSUE

From the Editor
We look forward to the New Year (and our fifth year of publication) with hope.

Currents
Who, what, when, where, how much? Browse for the latest.

Coastal Home
Our board-and-batten Whitefish Retreat was inspired by 1930s fishing cabins.

More Info
Names and numbers of the people, places, and products starring in this issue.

CONTENTS

Capture the Coast
Our First ever photo contest.

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coastal living