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case study house
The house as seen from the crest of the entrance drive is dramatic in line and form. A long serpentine wall stemming from a group of trees near the property line enters the house several feet below the wide overhang, separating the motor court, car shelter and entry from the living terrace and grounds. The motor court drops from the road, then flattens out to provide ample space for turning and guest parking. All of this area is asphalted within a few feet of the wall to the edge of the bordering bank including also the floor of the car shelter. A concrete entrance step angles outward against the wall and is accented with a circular planting well. The weight of the flat roof is supported visually on the far side of the car shelter by the solid mass of the outside storage units, half of which are used for garden tools and equipment and the other for deep freeze and bulk food supplies. The wall wedges slightly toward the rear of the car shelter where two wide panels of translucent glass admit light from the service yard.

A line of vision from the road above determines the height of the wall. The curving in and out of this brick serpentine offers a striking contrast to the straight lines of the house. The long horizontal of the wall is broken with the repeat pattern of vertical value changes on the convex and concave surface. Fruit trees are to be espaliered against it.

The expansive grounds to the south of the house are to be terraced into several flat areas, one to hold a proposed swimming pool, and another a badminton court. The line of the terrace swells out at the areas of maximum use and recedes where extensive use is not anticipated. This form like that of the entrance step compliments the severe straight line of the roof.

photographs by Baskerville
Flush lights of the underside of all overhangs illuminate the terraces and surrounding ground, throwing a soft glow upon the house. They are arranged to prevent night reflections on the large glass areas.
The width of the overhang on all three sides was developed to cut the summer heat while admitting the longer rays of the winter sun. The terraces were also planned for year-around use. The south terrace for summer sunning is enclosed between the high wall and a solid fin extension of the east wall offering winter shelter.

The window walls are fixed glass panels interspersed with panels of louvered windows, top hinged with screens on the inside in two sections that slide over one another vertically to permit easy adjustment of the window openings. These glass walls were made on a fifteen foot module with the heavy vertical supports accented with a light color while the smaller glass divisions were minimized by using darker shades.

The north elevation of the house consists of the window wall of utility, kitchen, and living room between the wide overhang and the terrace, with the solid block of the children’s room jutting out on the east end. The wall of the service yard projects from the corner of the glass area varying the regular roof line with a forceful lower plane of horizontal redwood siding. A wide redwood fascia board concealing the gutter trims the roof projection all around the house. This contrasting with the light roof top surface and under-eave plastering extends and integrates the inside of the house with the terraces and outside living areas.

A ravine spotted with large twisted live oaks and sycamore trees as well as smaller scrub growth enriches the outlook and forms the northern boundary. The north elevation with its existing trees provides an always cool and shaded summer terrace for outdoor living and eating. The concrete on all the terraces is stained dark to minimize glare, and shaped to permit planting against the window walls in decorative patterns.

The East elevation like all the others is straight-forward in design. This side of the house is the children’s play yard, with the terrace opening off both of the bedrooms.
The general plan of the house achieves a feeling of spaciousness and flexibility. The dark stained terraces stepping out from the black asphalt floors; the plastered ceilings picked up by the plastered underside of the overhang, and the long wall pulling the inside outward, all tend to increase room sizes. The living area was not broken with any floor to ceiling partitions. The high wall enters the house and separates the entry from the living area, and is further accented by inside planting at its base which is the continuation of the outdoor landscaping. An entrance case, twelve feet long and free from floor and ceiling, is supported with a light weight column on the tapered free end. A large panel of translucent glass is used on the entry side of the cabinet and the narrowing end is natural birch plywood.

Traffic circulation is around the outside wall with a flexible arrangement of the easily rearranged furniture. The one solid wall of the living room contains the fireplace faced with split brick and capped with a lip of black soapstone. The brick hearth continues to the window wall and the line is picked up in the outside planting. The wall above and around the fireplace is paneled in birch plywood, one of the panels is split and hinged on both sides to enclose a radiophonograph; flush fabric replacing another panel above to conceal the speaker and playback. The south side of the wall is filled with book shelves several inches free from the back and a row of solid front drawers at table height hold gaming equipment, beneath which are bins for record albums.

The dining side of the divisional case has sliding glass doors and shelves for the storage of dishes and silver. A concealed fluor-
escent fixture lights the entry hall side of the case. The pass-through pantry has sliding doors and shelves above open from both sides. A horizontal strip of small drawers continuing from the base of the glass case to the bottom of the pass-through furnishes storage for linen, silver and bar accessories.

The kitchen work area is "U" shaped with range at the end. Cabinets fill the wall above the counter, concealing a kitchen ventilating fan above the stove. Bar storage on the kitchen side of the pass-through gives the counter a double function. The end of the wall between kitchen and utility has a recessed niche for electrical appliances and telephone, a bread board type shell pulls out to give added space for menu planning or kitchen eating. Two transparent glass panels slide over one another and enlarge both kitchen and utility. Above the glass is a continuous fluorescent light serving the utility space as well as kitchen.

The utility room has a micarta topped work counter. There are drawers and shelves below, and in the counter a recessed laundry tray with a flush lid. Space is provided for a home automatic washing machine and a built-in ironing board. At the end are the doors to garage and service yard. The entire outside wall is filled with louvered windows, some open and some fixed. The outside planting area is directly against the glass.

The master bedroom is on the south side of the house and two smaller bedrooms face east. As in the rest of the house, the traffic circulation is along the outside wall and the bed faces toward the south grounds and terraces. The case work from wall to wall behind the bed is filled with drawers for linen storage and clothing. The black asphalt tilled floor has a soft warm sheen, picking up reflection from outside light and does not necessitate additional floor covering, although it offers a neutral contrasting background for any color choice in rugs.

The two small bedrooms are minimum in floor area. The outside wall has windows on either side of a door. As in all rooms of the house, to-the-floor drapes may be pulled across the openings. The opposite end of the room contains a built-in wardrobe with storage overhead, and a chest of
drawers, above which is a mirror completely filling the space and reflecting the outside view.

In the architect's original plans, translucent glass was to be used in the to-the-floor louvred windows of both bath rooms. However, in the completed structure, all outside walls are clear glass. This gives the occupant full advantage of the view outside. If there is any concern over outsiders looking in, there are full length drapes which pull quickly and easily on sliding track. In the small bath room the shower is over the tub and enclosed with pebbled glass. The master bath has a separate stall for decreases in width toward the door of the both shower and toilet. The basin is recessed in a micarta topped cabinet which toilet stall.

The property for Case Study House Number 2 is over an acre of almost flat ground with large trees and a view of the distant mountains. The architect approached the problem of a way of living that would include extensive entertaining, with a plan and orientation developed with consideration of the site and the social and private life of the occupants. This house, of a comparatively moderate footage, was given the needed importance with the severe lines and extensive use of entire glass walls forcing a movement of space in and around the house and completely through the living area.