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COASTAL Lifestyle

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2025 | coastallifestylemagazine.com



WATERFRONT WONDER: A MODERN MEDITERRANEAN RETREAT ON ONO ISLAND

Nestled between two tranquil bodies of water on exclusive Ono Island, sits a modern Mediterranean masterpiece representing more than just a home, but decades of vision, dreams, and curation manifested. Chris and Kathy Keene vacationed in Orange Beach for over 30 years before making their dream a permanent reality.

By Meredith Amon | Photography By Derek Keller Photography



"We bought a condo in 2012, but always admired the sense of community and the beautiful homes on Ono," they said. "If we ever built a home here, it would be on Ono Island."

Finding the Perfect Spot

Realtor Tucker Shaver guided their three-year search, using his extensive knowledge of Ono Island real estate to lead them to the perfect property. "We thought we'd end up on the south side along Old River," they recalled. "But Tucker and our builder encouraged us to consider a unique lot on the north side, with water views in both the front and back, and the peaceful setting of the Ono Harbour neighborhood. We fell in love instantly."



A Collaborative Dream Team

After purchasing the lot, the Keenes partnered with builder Phillip Vlahos of Vlahos, DeBogory & Tuck Construction (VDT), a connection introduced by Tucker. "After our first meeting with Phillip Vlahos, Scottie Tuck, and Barb Brown, we felt confident in their expertise," the Keenes said. "We genuinely liked them and knew we could work well together."

VDT was excited for the opportunity to bring the Keenes' vision to life. From the beginning, Chris and Kathy had a clear idea of how they wanted the home to feel, even down to how guests arrived in their home. VDT collaborated closely with the design team to refine every detail and stayed present during construction to bring their ideas to life.

A Vision Realized

The Keenes credit their builder for introducing them to custom home designer, Bob Chatham. With decades of experience in Gulf Coast architecture, Bob transformed a blank sheet of paper into a design that captured the full potential of the lot.

"Bob's understanding of the site and our goals made all the difference," they shared. "He met with us multiple times, evolving the concept, and ensuring the house aligned perfectly with the property, and our desire to maximize water views from every room." Lead Designer, Kathy Heard, further refined the architectural plans, working in sync with the builder and design team to carry the vision through to completion.

Interior designer Melanie Martin and her associate, Grayson Burch, were an essential part of Keenes' dream team as they managed the build remotely from Houston, Texas. "We had general ideas," they explained. "Melanie and Grayson guided us through each step, presenting thoughtful options and managing the heavy lifting, especially during the supply chain delays caused by COVID. Their sense of style is amazing; we couldn't be happier."

VDT's experience building along the Gulf Coast significantly contributed to the project's success. The team takes pride in focusing on details and remains committed to quality, regardless of perceived challenges. Their motto, *Compromise Elsewhere*, speaks to their refusal to cut corners in custom homebuilding.



Design Details That Inspire

This Modern Mediterranean estate stands as a bold yet elegant waterfront retreat, featuring a sleek metal roof and stucco exterior, built over a robust ICF (Insulated Concrete Form) construction by Force 5 Walls under the direction of Rodney Hubble. The Keenes prioritized storm resilience from the beginning. "After Hurricane Sally, structural integrity became our top concern," they said. "ICF added time and cost, but it gave us strength, insulation, and sound control. It was the right decision."





A charming courtyard entry leads to a motor court flanked by two detached garages. Inside, a floating glass-railed staircase rises above a recreation-oriented ground level, which includes a casual family room and game area that opens to a serene pool deck, outdoor kitchen, and fire pit. The main level features a soaring two-story living and dining room, underlined by rustic wood cathedral beams, with 10-foot-tall sliding doors framing panoramic water views.

"We wanted to see water from every room, and Bob Chatham delivered," they said. The primary suite on the main level offers private porch access, dual owners' closets, and a spa-worthy freestanding tub. An elevator and stunning glass-encased stairwell lead to the third floor, where four private suites, and a bonus room, each open to balconies designed to capture the Gulf breezes.





Living the Coastal Lifestyle

For Chris and Kathy, the home is not just a retreat, but a place to gather, share, and enjoy. "We love to entertain," they said. "The first floor is all about fun, and the house handles a party beautifully."

Beyond the architecture and design, it's the quiet moments bringing the most joy. "Having coffee in the morning or wine in the evening while watching the water from both the front and back of the house, that's everything."

The Ono Island community has also been a meaningful part of their journey. "It's incredibly welcoming," they shared. "We've enjoyed meeting neighbors and making new friends. It truly feels like home."

From concept to cocktail hour, this home reflects carefully curated design, trusted partnerships, and a deep appreciation for Alabama's Gulf Coast. As the sun sets over Ono Harbour, it's clear this isn't just a house by the water. It's a dream realized.





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