



Welcome *e komo mai*

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At Home

Living with Style in West Hawaii

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Cover Photo by Giselle Thompson:

Eileen Levin's Waipi'o home unveils
majestic views from the living room, where
furnishings from Plantation Living in
Kailua-Kona take center stage.



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Homeowner Eileen Levin with her poodle, Mr. Peaches.

Edge of Glory

Cliffside Home Offers Stunning Views of Waipi'o Valley

By Kristina Anderson
Photography by Giselle Thompson

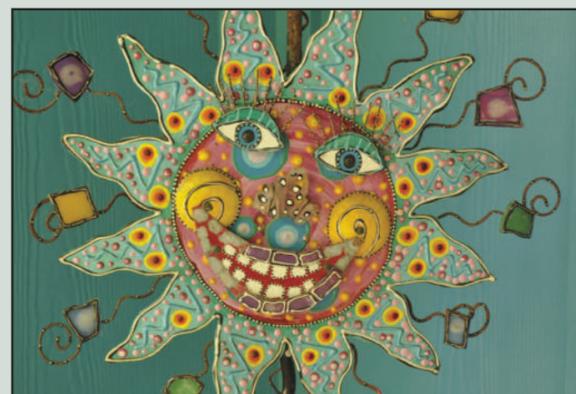
From every room of Eileen Levin's Waipi'o Valley rim home, the entrancing views of the legendary Valley of the Kings almost shock the senses into jaw-dropping disbelief. About as close as you can get to the Lookout without putting your car in 4WD, this six-acre property even showcases views of the entire island of Maui during the clearest sunsets.

A site this unique deserved a house that could take advantage of the magnificent vistas, so Eileen hired Waimea-based architect Clem Lam to design the ideal home for it. Camping on the land to study the orientation, Clem came up with a low-profile home that incorporates traditional plantation-style elements common to the Hamakua area while featuring ▶

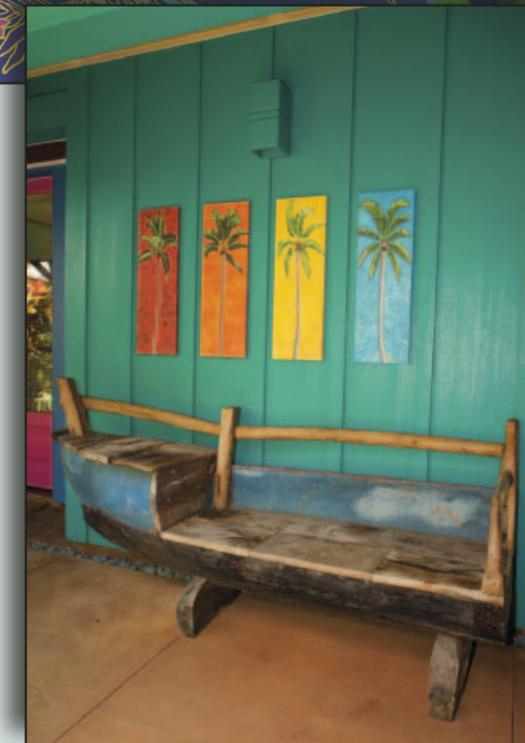
This outdoor sitting nook is just one of many spots at Eileen Levin's Honoka'a home that offer incredible views of Waipi'o Valley and its waterfalls.



Eileen purchased the table from the Amish community when she visited Pennsylvania. She had it hand-painted by a colleague of local interior designer Shirley Wagner, of Waimea, who helped source some of the furnishings in the home.



Made by an artist in Florida, this metal sun sculpture greets visitors at the front door.



Eileen found this unusual bench from Jeanne Marie Imports in Kailua-Kona.

dramatic picture windows that frame the views as precisely as any picture postcard could.

A meandering entrance unfolds into a supremely surprising moment as visitors enter the home and get their first look at stately Waipi'o Valley from the living room. As the architect describes it, the beauty also came with a serious set of physical obstacles to overcome.

"The site, because of its steepness and close relationship to the cliff, was a big challenge but also a unique opportunity to build a house that allows you to feel like you are living on the edge of the world," Clem said.

Eileen and her now ex-husband did not intend to buy a place when they visited Hawai'i "on MasterCard points" in 2003. But instantly, they fell in love with Hilo Town, the rustic Hamakua Coast and especially Waipi'o Valley.

"While driving around Kukuihaele, we saw a real estate ad for the 'Talking House,' a little abode for sale that was once part of this property," she said. "So we decided to go take a look at what the Talking House had to say."

As soon as they experienced the majestic views from the humble cliffside deck, Eileen and her ex decided to buy the Hawai'i property, sell everything they owned in Florida, and move their family of six over.

"I thought maybe eventually I could turn it into a corporate retreat, vacation rental or B&B," said Eileen, who has just recently made the home available to vacation renters on VRBO. "So I told Clem Lam what I wanted: The real deal. And color. Lots of color!"

Local interior designer Shirley Wagner, ASID, assisted with fabrics and finishes. When referencing the "screaming" bright color palette that Eileen requested, Shirley recalls: "Eileen took me to the very edge of my comfort zone!"

"I don't do beige, brown and ivory," Eileen explains. "Paint is the world's cheapest way to decorate. You can do so much with it — and then paint over it if you change your mind." ►



Architect Clem Lam designed the home for maximum ventilation. When it came time to paint the interiors, Eileen imagined a rainbow of colors.



From Kaloko Furniture in Kailua-Kona, the dining room table features coconut inlay in the center, edged with ancient teak. The carved "pineapple" chairs came from Plantation Interiors in Kailua-Kona.



Like a tropical oasis, the pool (built by Kai Pono Builders of Waimea) features a set of lava steps leading up to the entrance of a water-slide tunnel.

Photo by Karen Anderson

"This house is lots of fun! Turn the music on and have a party!"
— Eileen Levin, homeowner



Situated as though it's perched at the edge of the world, the master bedroom features the work of Hawi woodworker, Don Wilkinson, who crafted the bed out of monkeypod and mango. The etched-glass inset was created by glass artist, Gary Wagner, of Waimea.



Throughout the home, acid-stained concrete floors prove pretty and practical. The American Standard clawfoot tub came from a local distributor. "I got it 'cuz it was cheap," Eileen said.

Perfect for a large family, the five-bedroom residence features a separate, three-bedroom “cabana pod” adjoining the pool. Complete with whirly-water tunnel slide, the pool, constructed by Kai Pono Builders in Waimea, is every kid’s dream. Says Eileen: “I couldn’t have hired a better babysitter!”

Wired to play music throughout the entire home and pool area, a stereo system encourages upbeat party moods or soothes with mellow Hawaiian tunes.

Adding to the fun, there’s also a “secret” hidden room located up a flight of stairs in the crow’s nest. “I always challenge kids to find the secret room first,” says Eileen.

A retired physician specializing in anesthesiology, Eileen owns and operates Ride The Rim ATV tour. Today, it’s grown into one of the more popular ►



A picture-perfect day overlooking Waipi'o Valley. Eileen named the house Hale 'lo after the hawks that fly over the property. The site was once owned by Kamehameha IV.

East Side visitor adventures. While she may enjoy getting muddy with her guests, Eileen’s girliest hobby is collecting limited-edition Marilyn and Lady Diana dolls, showcased inside a spot-lit cabinet in the living room. “I’m a 60-year old woman with a doll collection. Yes I have issues,” Eileen quips.

Indeed, the tour-de-force home and its owner are truly one of a kind. Eileen’s favorite thing about the entire property is savoring the ever-changing views from the lanai.

“When the weather is rolling through, you can sit here and watch all these magnificent clouds and colors change minute to minute. And if it’s been raining a lot, the coastline gets nine waterfalls,” she says. “No wonder the Hawaiians had 4,000 gods!” **AH**



In the kitchen, cabinets made of mango and coconut add a distinguished look. They were designed and built by Aristocratic Cabinets in Seattle. The DCS six-burner grill includes a griddle and a built-in wok. Backsplash is from Davis Tile & Marble in Kailua-Kona.