California is known for its anything-goes attitude. But amidst the traditional log homes of Lake Tahoe, a modernist retreat stands out.

BY VANESSA GRIGORIADIS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY VANCE FOX
Larry and Rosemary Ward’s 4,000-square-foot home is the most controversial in North Lake Tahoe’s gated community of Lahontan, Calif. It’s not every day, after all, that a modernist house is built on a golf course: “Everybody who walks in says, ‘Whoa!’” says Rosemary, who, with husband Larry, a private equity investor, built the second home for their Laguna Beach-based family. The Wards knew that if they were ever to build a home, they would make a statement. But they never envisioned that statement would be so dramatic. “We’d been dipping things out of magazines for 20 years, thinking we were going to build a modernist first home,” says Rosemary. “Then we thought, why don’t we do it here?” The result turns heads—a crisp geometry among Tahoe’s typical log homes. “Lots of people have more traditional views on architecture. And those houses are beautiful. But this is what we absolutely love,” she says. The home’s location—a flower-lined drive from Northstar-at-Tahoe and on the edge of the Lahontan Golf Course—is “heaven,” says Larry. He grew up skiing in Ohio and Colorado, and he and Rosemary became serious skiers while living in Orinda, Calif. They taught

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WIDE ANGLE Clockwise from top: The Wards’ living room flows into the raised kitchen and dining room, as concrete floors give way to clear maple trim. In the living room, with Lookout Mountain rising in the background, modernist furniture—including a circa-1952 Hans J. Wegner lounge chair and a Modernica reproduction couch and daybed—sets off the exposed steel beams, custom light fixtures by Lightspan and a stainless-steel fireplace fabricated by an artisan in Bainbridge Island, Wash. In one of their daughters’ bedrooms, the Wards designed a yellow cube to serve as a headboard with a vanity and dressing area hidden behind it. The cube allows the room to be sparse with furnishings, hides the bath from the main space, adds a block of lively color and interacts with the angled ceiling to create eye-catching shapes. A concrete block wall marks movement from the dining room into the guest master suite, a strategy the architects used to demarcate public and private space in the home.
TROPHIES

their four kids—now 13, 16, 18, and 20—to ski from the ages of 2 and 3 at Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows (and are pleased to report that none has switched to snowboarding). Larry and Rosemary are also avid golfers—for rapid, if you will,” jokes Rosemary.

Once they had settled on the lot, they hired architects Kurt Reinkens of MWA Inc. Architects and Gerry Rodriguez of Robert Marr Construction to design and build their home. “They were dream clients—very educated,” says Rodriguez. The couple worked closely with the architects and contributed significantly to the blueprint. “This is a site- and client-specific design,” says Reinkens. “It’s the ultimate unique home.”

The team incorporated modernist elements like steel beams and concrete walls. They also chose materials that would blur the relationship between the indoors and out. They poured concrete floors inlaid with slate in both the living room and patio, and opened up every room with windows that boast views of Lookout Mountain. A stainless-steel fireplace and kitchen hood are skewed at interesting angles. The mudroom bench is a plate of steel resting on boulders.

After hitting the slopes, it’s family night in the bright living room. The linoleum is almost every day they’re in Tahoe. Larry even goes out on Christmas and New Year’s Day. (“That’s the best,” he says, “because everybody else is hung over.”) They don’t plan to add much to the home over the years, except maybe hang one of their daughter’s paintings in the foyer. “We don’t want lots of gizmos,” says Rosemary. “It’s perfect here as it is.”

OPEN SPACE Clockwise from left: The kitchen’s stainless-steel hood, also made by the Washington-state artisan, is angled to respond to the rotated fireplace across the railing in the living room. Matching cabinets, appliances and backsplashes align the walls and provide contrast for the honey-colored wood. Topped by a four-inch end grain butcher block, the kitchen island slavishly hides the power and gas lines. The maple banister allows for minimal physical separation from the dining room, which was important to Rosemary, who didn’t want to be away from the party while she cooks. The Wabi maser bedroom, with reproduction Alvar Aalto chair and art on loan from the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, has a bed that faces large French doors, which lead to a private patio. The clean-lined south-facing master bath catches the winter afternoon sun, with outlets and bath sundries hidden behind built-in mirrors.