

REAL ESTATE

Centerport ranch built to resemble airplane wing lists for \$949,000



This mid-century modern house in Centerport was designed to look like an airplane wing. Credit: Daniel Gale Sotheby's International Realty

By Arielle Dollinger arielle.dollinger@newsday.com February 9, 2023 5:00 am

Buried beneath receipts and monochromatic photographs long stored in chestnut-colored dresser drawers, a set of blueprints sat undisturbed. In fine lines on thick paper, the blueprints depict a ranch-style home in Centerport.

Michael Kornely was 25 years old when he drew up the plans. A Republic Aircraft and Grumman aerospace engineer, he envisioned a home for his family that resembled the wing of an airplane. An angled garage would bend the structure; an overhang would wrap around the house, shielding a stretch of wall made entirely of windows angled at 7 degrees.

It was 1956 when Kornely and his wife, Sally, commissioned an architect and a builder to translate their dreams into three dimensions. The builder was skeptical.

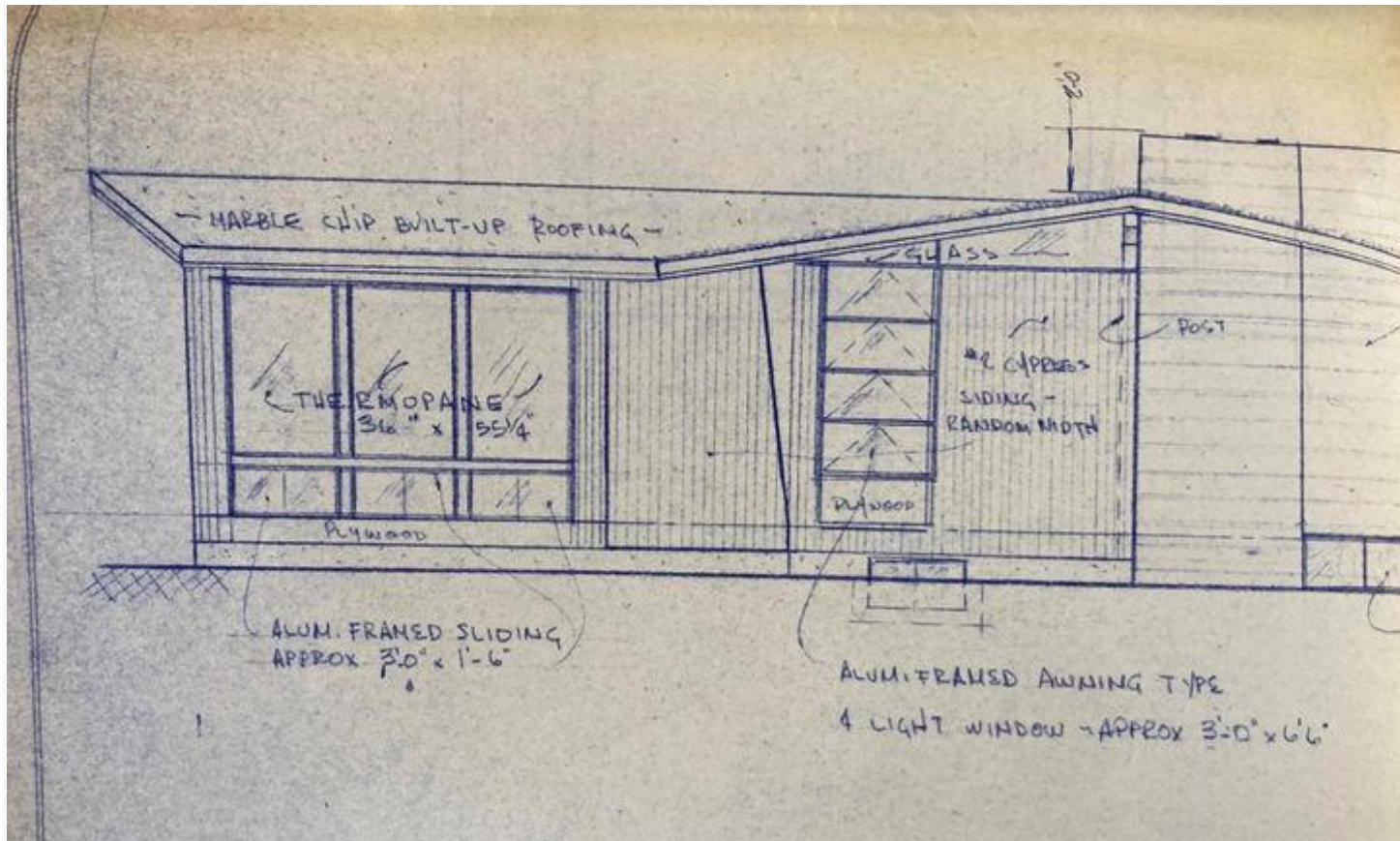


Sally and Michael Kornely in a photo taken in the 1960s at the back of their Centerport home. Credit: Kornely family

“He wasn’t sure that my dad’s design would hold up,” said his son, also Michael Kornely, “because of the back wall being canted out at an angle.”

The elder Kornely, who died in November at age 92, was certain his plans were practical. And today, nearly 70 years later, the house with a tilted wall of windows is still standing and on the market for the first time.

The house, on Glenn Crescent, is asking \$949,000 and listed by Debra Russell and Patricia Gahan Moroney of Daniel Gale Sotheby’s International Realty. The artifacts the Kornelys have found — blueprints, progress photos, notes about weather conditions throughout construction — will be left for the buyer.



A detail from the blueprints of the home, among the artifacts that will go to the new owners. Credit: Arielle Dollinger

A design vision

"It's a real time capsule," said Michael, a retired aerospace engineer himself. "He lived in it all his life, and he kept it true to the original form."

In the wake of their father's death, Michael, 66, and his brother, David, 64, have sifted through their parents' belongings. The project has yielded finds like blueprints and a notebook that details telephone, mortgage, water and fuel payments from 1957 through the early 1990s.

"I have the original receipt from the builder, for building the house, for like \$19,000 or some number like that," said Michael, who lives in Western Massachusetts.



The kitchen. Credit: Daniel Gale Sotheby's International Realty

In preparing the house for showings with David, who lives in North Carolina and works as a plumber, the pair has been getting to know their father — and their childhood home — in a new way.

“My brother and I have come to realize my dad was a visionary,” David said. The wall of windows in the back of the house faces south and is shadowed by an overhang, for instance: a design element David said was intended to keep the sun from heating the house in the summertime.

In winter, “the sun, when it’s lower in the sky, comes in and bathes the interior of the house” in warmth and light, he said.



This midcentury modern house in Centerport is listed for \$949,000. Credit: Daniel Gale Sotheby's International Realty

The concept of bringing nature into a house through glass walls and windows is characteristic of American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, said Tom Gibbs, who specializes in midcentury modern design and sells furnishings and accessories via the online marketplace 1stdibs. But the overall design of the house is “more midcentury than early 20th century,” and reminiscent of Palm Springs architecture, he said.

“You don’t see a lot of that on the East Coast because of the weather,” Gibbs said, “because of the glass and the settling and the freezing and all of that. It’s much more in the style of Charles Eames, who’s one of the most iconic American designers. Eames, [Richard] Neutra, or William Cody — all Californians.”

Kornely had spent time in California, Michael said, because Sally’s family lived there.

“I can imagine that he brought back some of the California ideas to incorporate into this house,” Michael said.



One of the bedrooms. Credit: Daniel Gale Sotheby's International Realty

A second chapter

For the Kornely family, the house holds value now for more than its three bedrooms, two bathrooms and 1.6-acre wooded plot.

“It’s a family heirloom in a lot of ways,” Michael said. “I remember, as a kid, people would drive up the driveway and ask about the house.”

With the widespread resurgence of midcentury modern design, and the paper trail that weaves its way through the home’s history, the family has renewed hope that the house will mean something to its next owner.

“It’s only been my mom and dad, and then my brother and I living in it, the whole life of the home,” Michael said. “But now it goes on for kind of a second chapter.”



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