

# Do you know the way to San Jose?

A couple destined  
to live in an  
Eichler neighborhood  
—twice.

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“We were told we had this modern furniture that would fit perfectly into a California lifestyle,” says Monika Kafka about her move to the Bay Area in 1997. She and husband Tom Borsellino were intent on finding a Modernist home during their relocation from Chicago, so they rented an apartment and put themselves on the watch list for a San Jose Eichler. It was a booming real estate market and they were always overbid by \$50,000 to \$60,000. But finally, a year later, they landed a great Eichler in the Fairglen tract through Realtor Jerry Ditto, the author of *Eichler Homes: Design for Living*. The couple renovated and lived happily in that house for six years until work took them back to suburban Chicago. “We moved back thinking we’d find a Keck + Keck or some other modern house,” says Borsellino, “but most were built in the early ’50s, are tiny and are on big lots—

they are a developer’s dream. They were being sold and torn down without ever going on the market.”

They missed other aspects of their California sojourn, too. “The house we rented in Chicago was over 3,000 square feet, yet it felt smaller than our Eichler; it just wasn’t thought out well,” he explains. “Plus we missed having people to talk to with the same interests; none of our Chicago friends could understand why we were so caught up in finding a house we actually liked. ‘It’s big, it’s new, buy it!’ they’d say about the houses we’d look at.”

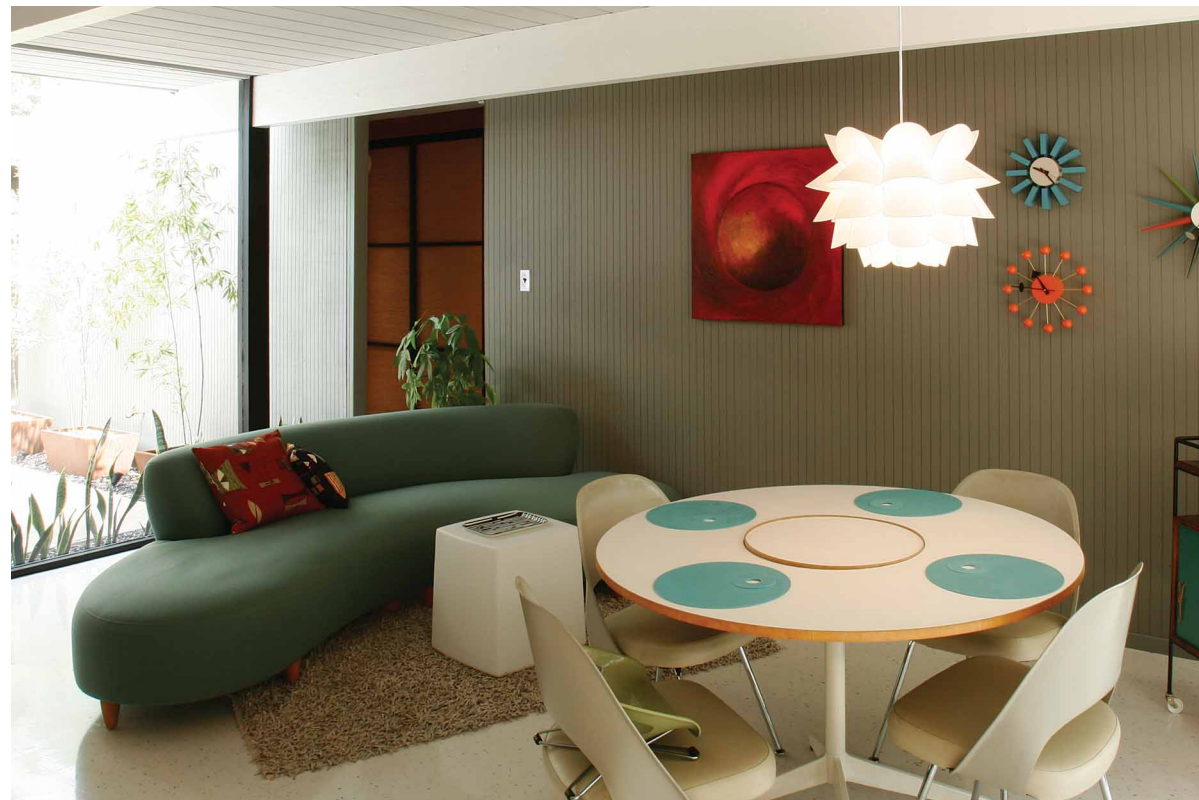
When they could, it was back to Northern California for the Kafka-Borsellinos.

### Homing Pigeons

They focused on the same neighborhood they’d left a year before and credit their tenacious Realtor, Loni

Nagwani [whose own home will be featured in winter 2008], with helping them land their second Eichler, a 1960 four-bedroom, two-bath flat-roof model. “All the neighbors already knew us and knew we would do good things with the house,” Kafka says. “Our first Eichler was a different, sexier model, as Tom calls it. It was more for single people who entertain. This house is definitely kid-friendly—the living and dining areas are small but the family room is big.”

That was important because by now the household included Bella and Ben, who were 18 months and six weeks old when their parents moved back to San Jose. Borsellino had come out house hunting, keeping his wife in the loop via e-mailed photos. “Tom saw the house and he said, ‘I’m buying it,’” the Czech-born Kafka recounts. “He sent me pictures and I said, OK, fine.”



The couple furnished with a mix of vintage, modern reissues and inexpensive kid-proof furniture from IKEA. The George Nelson/Herman Miller table with the lazy Susan in the center was bought on eBay, as was the Saarinen plastic-back side chairs. Overhead is an IKEA pendant lamp and on the wall are reissued Nelson clocks. A vintage find was the Russel Wright bar cart, bought at a Winnetka modernism show. Modern One in Los Angeles made the turquoise couch, and the suede rug is another IKEA purchase.



“Instead of a brand-new kitchen, we did a \$9,000 makeover—new counters, a sink from the U.K., flooring, paint, a sexy faucet, new fridge and accessories,” says Monika Kafka. Three years after being photographed, the couple has a Miele oven in place and is getting bids on re-creating the missing “flying coffin” cabinet over the cooktop island. The ball lights are new versions from IKEA.

