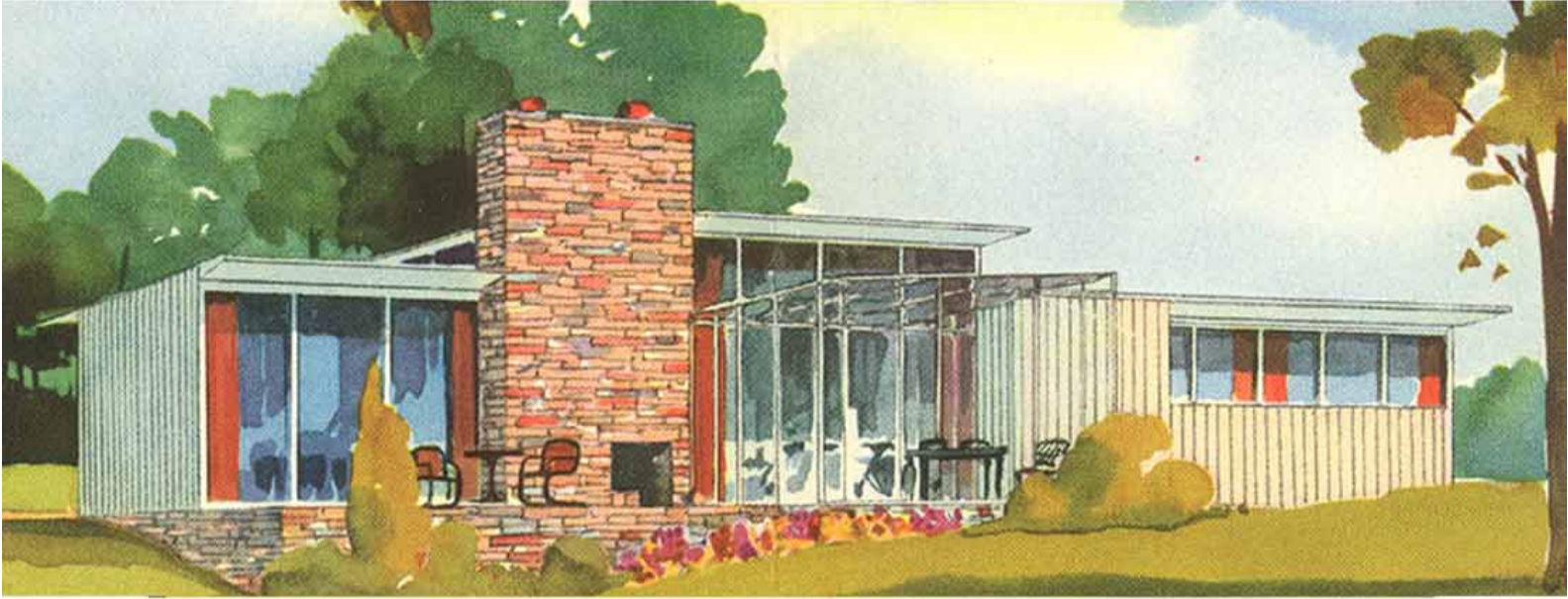


# A HOUSE TO LIVE IN

by GEORGE FRED KECK



“A WOMAN,” wrote Ring Lardner in *The Love Nest*, “can be happy in a tent if they love each other.”

It's a pleasure to quote this clever poke at our silly Pollyanna axioms about happiness. After all, the more we prattle on about hearts and flowers, the less likely we are to arrive at a solution of our problems. And if one of those problems happens to be the matter of a place to live—that being the subject of this article—then let's realize one thing with no nonsense about it: the only way a human being can hope to live in decent comfort is to build, buy, rent or steal a place that is decently comfortable. Whether he “loves each other” or not is another matter.

One-third of the nation is, to put it mildly, ill-housed. Ninety

per cent of the other two-thirds is unintelligently housed. And a place to set is more important than we think. The restless quality of American life—known to preachers as the disintegration of the family—can be attributed in major share to the lack of a resting point:

Sonny is shooed out of the house because Mother is about to entertain. But he mustn't play ball in the yard or he will ruin the peonies. He ends up at a movie.

Daughter is awaiting the visit of her current swain. Either they must go out shortly after his arrival, or the family must.

Junior slips out of the house every evening after dinner to join the gang at the corner drug store. After all, he has nothing better to do, no better place to go.

What can be done about it?

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Obviously, the house can be made a more practical, more inviting, more interesting, more comfortable place to live in; where you do not fry in summer and freeze in winter, and where the various members of the family do not stumble over one another. Your life around the house can be organized to meet contemporary requirements. This contemporary (or modern) manner of building is no style: it means building today, using the materials of today in a useful, functional manner to meet today's living conditions.

Don't be frightened. Our kitchens and our bathrooms have been treated as modern living quarters for years, and nobody has died of it. In fact, those rooms are the only ones in the average house that meet today's requirements. And this does not mean that the living rooms must *look* like the bathrooms either.

There was a time when a house served a purpose different from its present function. During Colonial days all activities centered around the hearth; in fact, the hearth was built first and the house around it. But times have changed and the house has not. It is ready to be changed, however. Some of us architects are beginning to blink our eyes in

awareness that a new approach in housing is long, long overdue.

We have discovered that contemporary materials and ideas for arranging them into a workable unit are readily at hand.

We have discovered that glass is now manufactured in sizes larger than ten by twelve inches, and has been for these many years; we have discovered that a transparent wall of glass brings the garden into the house, and also the sun and moon and stars, and all the other natural phenomena; and we have discovered that this discovery can be a thrilling experience.

We have discovered the importance of orientation to take advantage of solar radiation and the prevailing winds.

We have discovered that a thin sheet of water on a flat roof will cool the house in summer, by evaporation.

We have discovered—some of us—that electricity is here to stay and that lighting fixtures designed in the image of candlesticks are rather silly.

We have discovered that basements are an unnecessary expense and that an attractive heating unit, washing machine and hot water heater can be appended to the kitchen, making



the house truly servantless by saving countless steps.

We have discovered that the place for the garage is near the front door, attached to the house, for in this manner we and our friends enter and leave the house; and this is possible because the automobile does not smell like a horse, which necessarily was relegated to the back yard. So now the important rooms can face the yard, where there are badminton and tennis courts or vegetable and flower gardens instead of a garage.

We have discovered that radio and television have certain effects upon house planning; that reception is best in a large room; that the proper acoustical materials improve the quality of sound.

We have discovered new types of windows that operate on the principle of automobile windows, making it unnecessary to remove storm windows and screens at the change of seasons.

Well, what about all of these discoveries? They sound rather interesting, don't they? Perhaps you would like to know whether they could be put to work for you. They can, very easily—if you can afford it. And you can afford it, on the scale planned here, if you earn from forty to fifty dollars a

week. That's the minimum earning power, assuming an FHA loan, necessary to build the \$5,000 Coronet House shown in the gatefold drawing. In certain sections of the country this house would cost more than this figure, which ought to be considered a minimum rather than a median figure in planning any changes or additions to the basic specifications here indicated.

This house has really been pretty well described in the list of "discoveries." Here are some other points about it:

The colored illustration shows the south elevation of the house. Note the wide eave line; its extent is calculated to shut out the hot summer sun and admit the warm winter sun, and also to protect the house from showers when the windows are open, making it unnecessary to get up at night to close the windows during a rainstorm. On the coldest winter day, when the sun is shining, enough of the sun's heat will enter the house to heat it comfortably, giving the interior the atmosphere of a spring day. The exterior of the house is of wood and stone and glass, and has a three-level flat roof made to carry a thin layer of water.

The plan of the house is shown



on the reverse side of the color illustration. Since our day is roughly divided into three equal parts (work, play, rest), the house is divided into three areas of about equal size. The work area consists of service space, storage and garage; the bedrooms constitute the rest area; the living-dining-recreation room, porch and terrace are the play area.

The service room combines the U-shaped kitchen at the west with the breakfast table in the middle and the utilities at the east, as well as storage, back door, entrance to bedroom, hall and dining room in connection.

Note the location of the bath; it is accessible from the three areas. Junior and his pals, playing outside, can reach it through the back door, thereby avoiding living room entanglements. And the recreation room finds it handy, making it possible to use the recreation room as a bedroom when Mother-in-Law comes to town. The porch can be used as a sleeping porch.

The front entrance leads from a reception hall and closet directly into the living room, one end of which can function for more formal dining. There is a folding door to the recreation room (the room of multiple uses). It can be

used as a play room for the very young, a bedroom as noted above, a study for the family when Sister entertains in the living room, or it may be opened into the living room, providing a room forty feet long for Sister's wedding party. There is a fireplace in the living room, and a screened porch accessible from the living and recreation rooms. The outside fireplace is equipped to prepare complete picnic suppers, all the way from charcoal broiled steaks to warming ovens, near the porch, so that the oldsters, who do not like to have visitations from mosquitoes and flies, can eat in comfort.

Many of the above ideas are not new. The principle of orientation was practiced by the ancient Chinese, and wetting down roofs for coolness was an Egyptian idea of 4,000 years ago. Our forefathers came from Europe, which has a much more temperate climate than ours, and brought their methods of construction with them. They did not fit in too well with our climate of temperature extremes, so we quite naturally rediscovered for ourselves the ideas developed in other climate zones. And, although few persons seem willing to take advantage of the fact, we have also worked out



some pretty good ideas of our own to make a house a better place to live in.

*Rated among the top ten in the field of contemporary architecture, George Fred Keck has engaged in private practice for sixteen years. In addition, he has taught at the University of Illinois and is head of the Department of Architecture of the School of Design in Chicago. His most widely publicized houses were the House of Tomorrow and the Crystal House at the Chicago World's Fair.*

—*Suggestions for further reading:*

THE MODERN HOUSE IN AMERICA  
by James Ford \$5.00  
Architectural Book Publishing Co., New York

NEW ARCHITECTURE AND THE BAUHAUS  
by Walter Gropius \$1.75  
Museum of Modern Art, New York

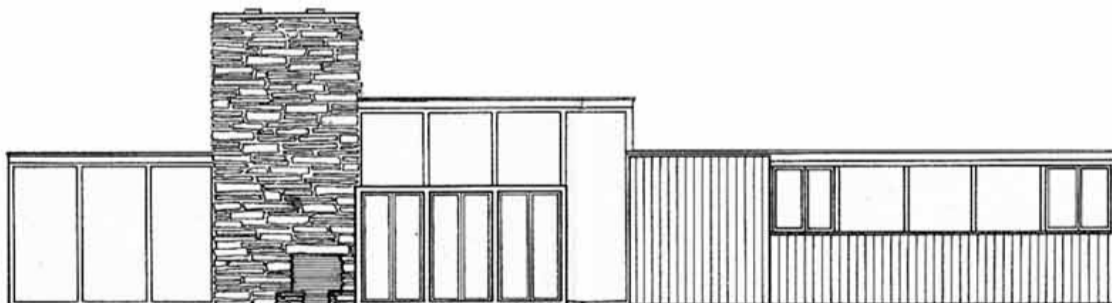
THE NEW VISION  
by Lazlo Moholy-Nagy \$3.75  
W. W. Norton & Co., New York

THE PUBLISHED WORKS OF LOUIS SULLIVAN, FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT and LE CORBUSIER and JEANNERET

# Coronet

SEPTEMBER, 1940

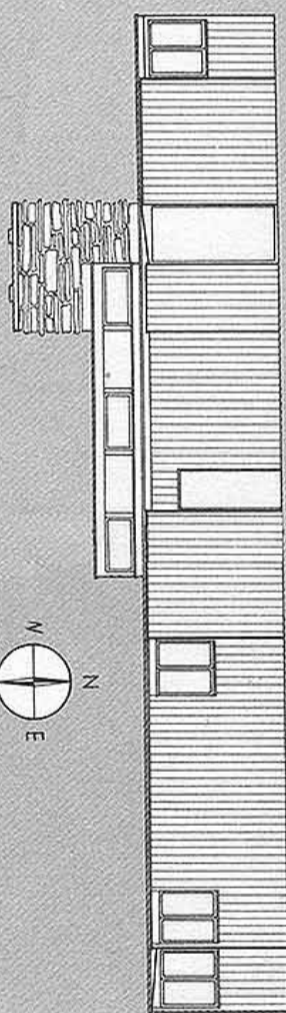
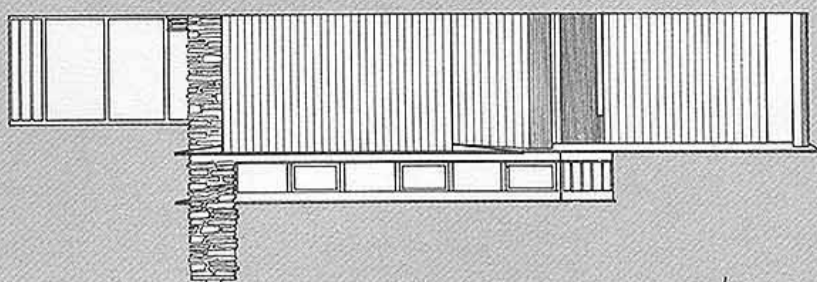
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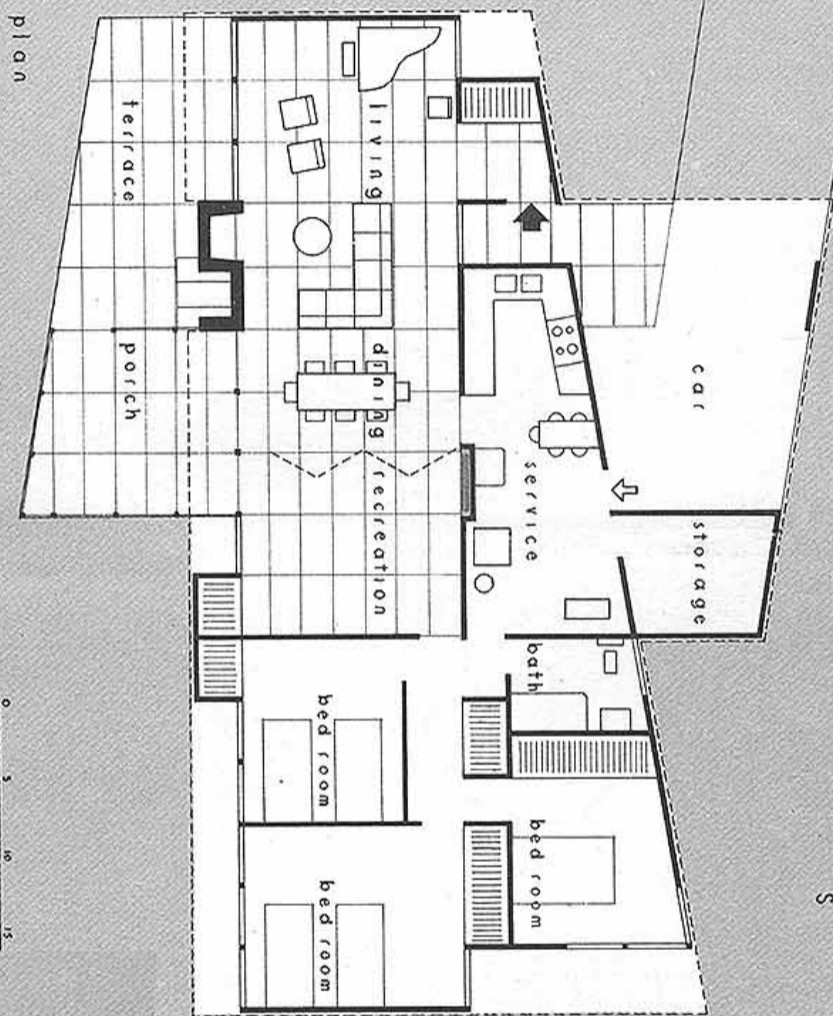
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THE CORONET HOUSE  
GEORGE FRED KECK ARCHITECT

west elevation



east elevation



south elevation

