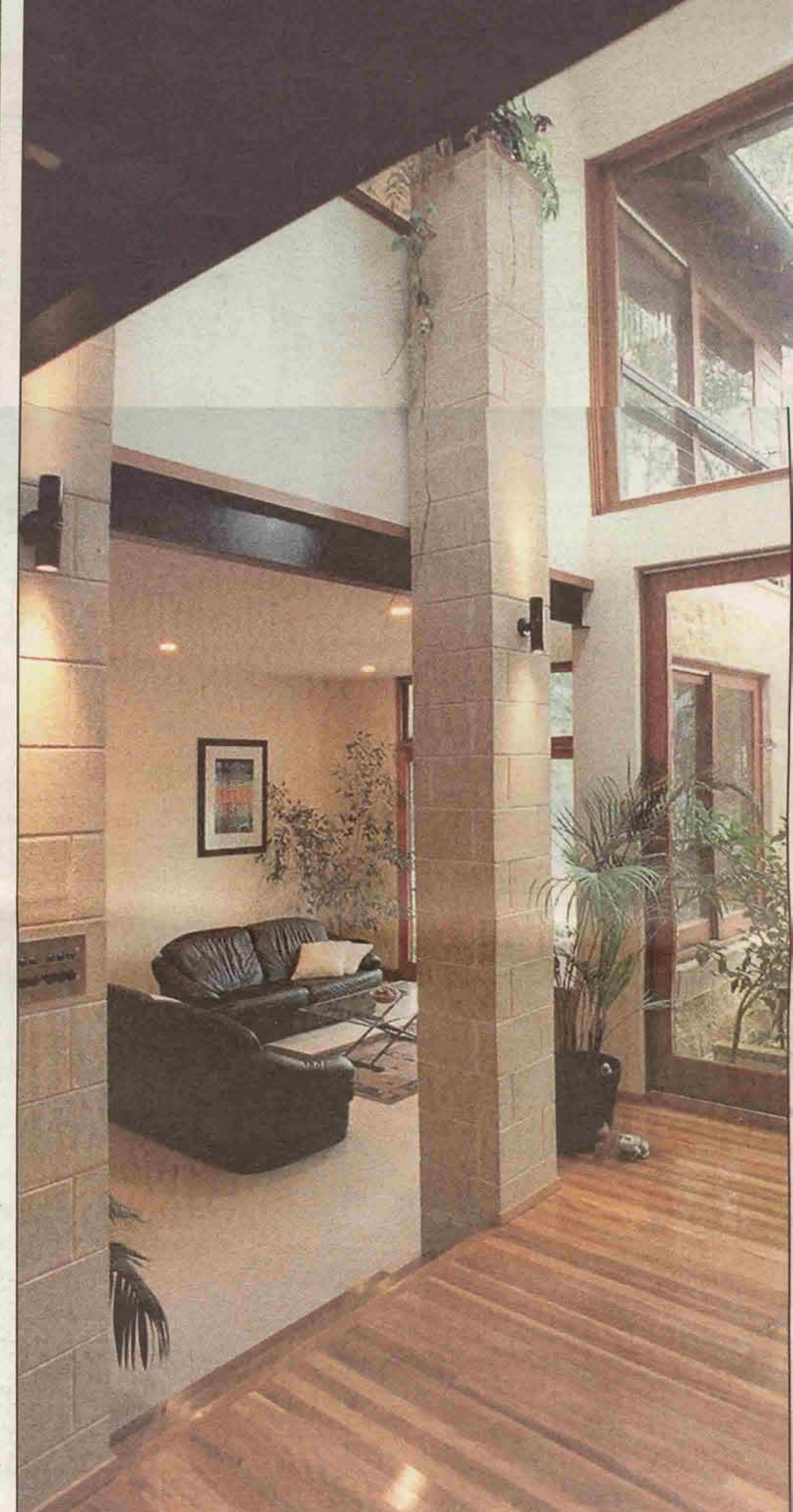
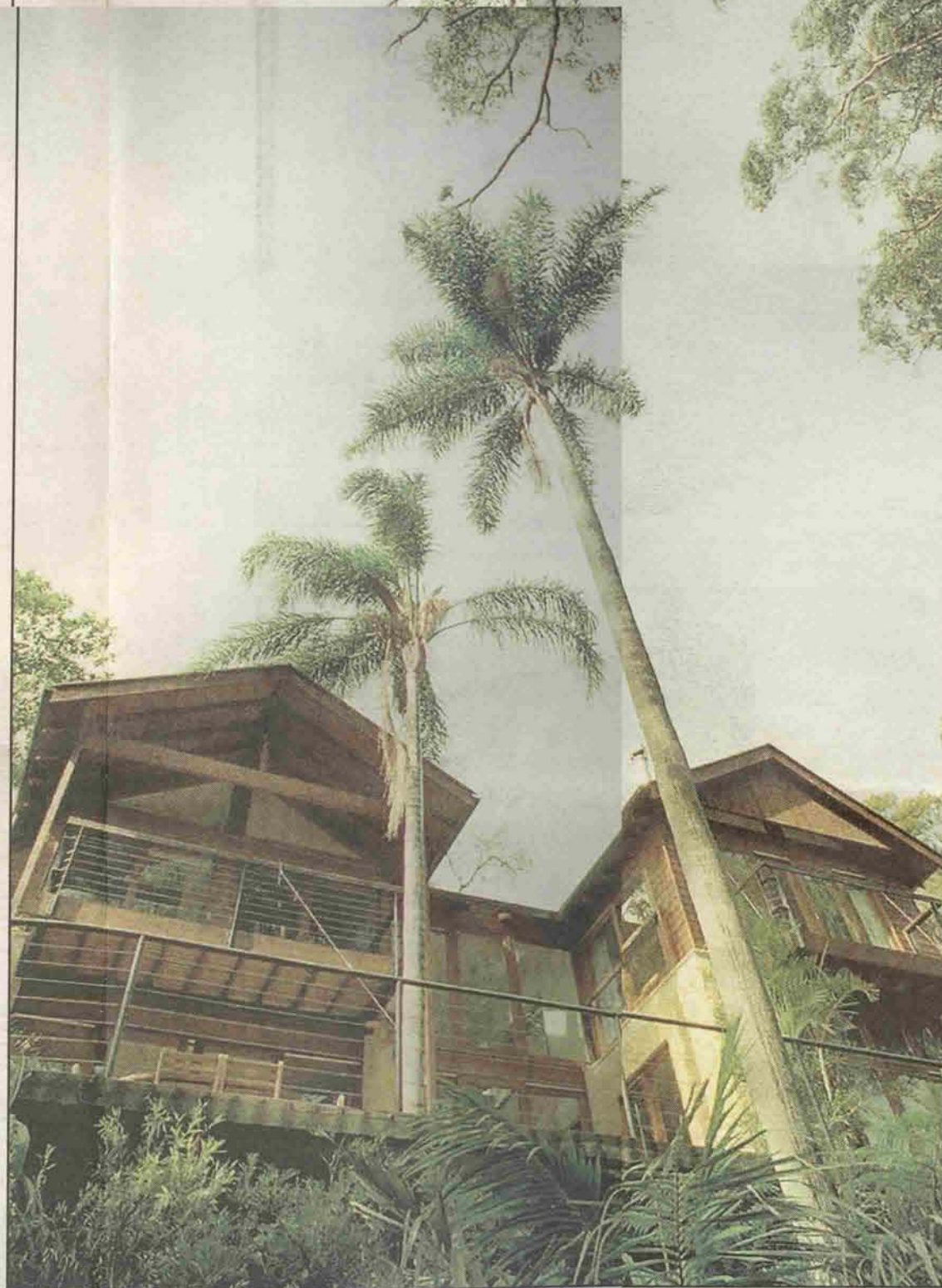


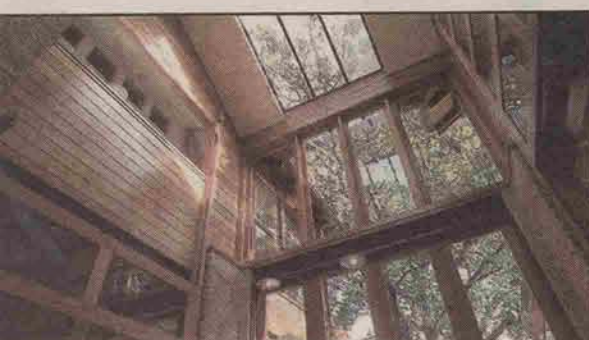
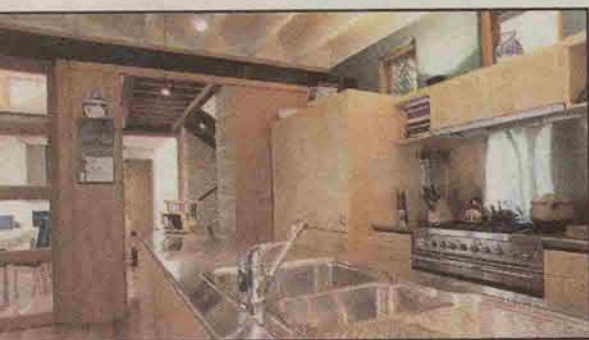


Split personality . . . council's insistence that the two houses be joined (see right) placed some restrictions on Micheal's final plans. Inside, however, there were no such problems and each couple created a stunning although quite different interior. Micheal and Penny opted for a sleek contemporary look in their home, pictured above and below, while Andrew and Kathie opted for a more traditional look, pictured far right and on the *Homes* cover page



The land of dreams

Patience and ingenuity helped architect Micheal Fountain realise his vision of building the perfect home for his family



When architect Micheal Fountain and his economist wife Penny went looking for a place to build their home, it was only natural they would look to the waterside.

Micheal is also a keen sailor, with Sydney-to-Hobart races to his credit, and is soon off to compete in the Admiral's Cup on board *Quest*, one of three boats in the Australian team to contest the races from Cowes on the Isle of Wight in July.

Penny has spent most of her life in the beautiful Pittwater area, close to the water, so it was there that they set out to look for a site.

Land, however, is pretty scarce around the waterfront in Pittwater and the couple spent ages looking for either land or an old house they could demolish to build again on the site.

About five years ago they found just what they wanted: a modest old cottage, typical of an earlier era in Pittwater before it became the very up-market area it is today.

The big advantages were the size of the block, around 1250sq m; the position on a waterfront reserve with an almost ideal aspect; and the magnificent outlook through the eucalypts to the yachts bobbing in the bay.

But finding the site was one thing, building was another.

This was just the start of a long battle to gain council permission

to build what was to be an unusual development for the area but one entirely appropriate to the site: a dual occupancy which would provide two completely separate homes, one for the Fountain family and the other for Penny's brother Andrew Hatton, his wife Kathie and daughter Rebecca.

It took more than two years before Micheal was able to convince the local council that the development would work and would not be out of keeping with the other houses in the area.

The end result wasn't quite what he had originally envisaged — instead of two similar though separate houses, the council insisted the houses should be joined.

This imposed some restrictions on the final designs and floor plans but they were overcome in different ways in each house.

The two double-storey houses appear somewhat similar from the street, an imposing pair with double garage at each end of the building, but set among tall eucalypts and palms and built from materials which blend with the local environment, they give no feeling of overpowering the site or the surrounding homes.

Micheal, whose architectural practice in Balmain, Micheal Fountain Architects, does a variety of work — commercial, alterations and additions and new homes — selected a combination

of Boral split-face concrete blocks in Sahara colour, cedar and Colorbond roofing for the construction.

And though the houses appear similar from the street, each has a completely different atmosphere and differences in floor-plan and levels, catering to the needs and tastes of each of the owners.

Penny and Micheal, and their baby Jack, four months old, have a sleek contemporary home featuring pale timbers and stainless steel.

Andrew and Kathie felt more comfortable with more traditional finishes and country style furnishings on their side.

The Fountains' multi-level house opens to the visitor with a view straight through the entry and the atrium of the central dining room to a serene pond, the trees and the water beyond.

To one side is a handsome formal living room with great expanse of windows to a sunny deck, a Jetmaster fireplace and built-in furniture in pale ash timber veneer.

It's a soft contrast to the warm tones of the brush box polished floors which are used throughout the living areas.

Both Micheal and Penny are keen cooks, so the kitchen sees plenty of activity. It's a cook's delight with a huge live stove, wide free-standing stainless steel bench and refrigerator and dish-

washer hiding behind the fish timber veneer doors.

In strong contrast to the stainless steel and pale tones of the timber are deep green walls.

The sleek kitchen cupboards, innovative bathroom fittings and the handsome ash built-in furniture were all made by Rolf Sander Interiors.

Many of the internal walls are exposed honed (smooth) concrete blocks in a pale sandstone shade. When it came time to pick other wall colours, Penny was faced with selecting from dozens of "white" shades, a perplexing task.

"The shade I liked was really the colour of the unfinished Gyprock, so we ended up with a neutral something like that," Penny said.

A few steps below the kitchen and breakfast area is the family room, where a polished concrete floor in flecked terracotta tones leads to cedar-framed glass doors opening to a stone patio.

With an open-plan house such as this, heating in winter can be a problem, but Micheal has solved this with wide glass and cedar panels on either side of the dining room which can be raised in summer and lowered in the cold weather to retain heat in the separate rooms.

Upstairs, the main bedroom is open with a gallery to the floor level and has superb views of the trees and water. There is also a

large guest bedroom which can be used as a retreat, two other bedrooms and a study.

Next door in Andrew and Kathie's house, the bedroom level is similar, with the main bedroom at tree-top level.

Kathie says that on the first night in the house, they woke in fright in the early morning with the kookaburras laughing full pelt as though they were in the room.

On the ground floor of the house, the couple chose a different layout.

Their white kitchen is part of the family room, a warm and pleasant room where Rebecca, almost two, can play or toddle out to the deck to ride on her little car.

The central atrium gives the same drama to the entry but Andrew and Kathie have their dining room to one side, overlooking the more formal living room which is warmed by a slow combustion stove in one corner.

Behind a screen wall is a cleverly designed storage unit for wine.

The duplex gives privacy to each family but makes great use of the site — a modern solution to good land use.

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— GWENDA EDWARDS
Photographs: DAVE HIGHER