

plane living

An architect and his client have a meeting of the minds at a Cape Cod airpark

WRITTEN BY JOHN BUDRIS / PHOTOGRAPHED BY DAMIANOS PHOTOGRAPHY

RADIO ENTREPRENEUR John Garabedian is in the pilot's seat of his restored 1961 Piper Super Cub as it takes off in front of his house at the Falmouth Airpark on Cape Cod. A 2011 Piper Sport is parked in front of the door to the house's basement hangar.





To create a structure that didn't look like an overstuffed house plopped on a 5,000-square-foot airplane hangar, architect Joseph L. Luna designed a series of decks, clerestory windows, porches, and dormers.

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ARCHITECT JOSEPH L. LUNA AND HIS CLIENT, RADIO AND television entrepreneur John Garabedian — both seasoned private pilots — were a match made in the heavens. When Luna learned he could fly his single-engine Piper Cherokee from Boston's North Shore, where Luna Design Group is located in Lynnfield, Massachusetts, to Garabedian's proposed building site at the Falmouth Airpark on Cape Cod, an iconic cinematic moment came to mind. "I thought of that scene from 'Casablanca' when Humphrey Bogart puts his arm around Claude Rains and says, 'Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.'"

Few first meetings between architect and client go so smoothly. Garabedian wanted a house designed around a four-plane hangar, with a revolving carousel to shelter some of his two dozen classic and cutting-edge aircraft. He also needed a state-of-the-art studio from which to broadcast his weekend national radio shows. That's the nut of the guidance he offered Luna.

"I came back with my preliminary drawings and John immediately loved them," says Luna, "especially the runway-facing facade that incorporates the expansive hangar door, plus a multistory structure that suggests the look of an air traffic control tower, complete with a windsock and observation deck." The tower also does duty as the home's secondary staircase, "so the tower is not just an aviation motif ornament," he adds.

Garabedian has roots in two other New England towns, with a house in Vermont 40 miles from the Canadian border, and another on a slope in the woods of Southborough, Massachusetts, with views of the Hopkinton hills. The second house serves as the business and broadcast headquarters for Open House Party, his syndicated contemporary music program heard on some 150 FM stations in the United States and Canada. Both properties have private airstrips, but the Cape house is unusually set in a community specifically designed around a communal runway.

Given the technical, structural, and mechanical demands of the hangar and broadcast studio, the home "specs out more like a high-end office or university building tucked into a



BRAZILIAN MAHOGANY flooring and Meyda Tiffany chandeliers designed by Garabedian are elegant touches in the central hallway (FACING PAGE), which serves as a gallery for some of his contemporary art collection. Unstained Douglas fir beadboard ceilings (ABOVE) and stained glass lighting warm one of the winding staircases. From the street (ABOVE LEFT), the house respects the Cape's traditional vernacular — and gives no hint of its aviation accommodations.

ARCHITECTURE BY
LUNA DESIGN
GROUP



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IN THE HANGAR, a carousel holds four candy-colored airplanes. The door opens to a ramp where a fifth plane can be parked.



HAPPY LANDINGS

Architect Joseph L. Luna, who designed John Garabedian's house along its airstrip, describes Falmouth Airpark as a pilot's paradise. "It's kind of like an aviator's 'waterfront view,' but instead of watching boats from your deck, you watch aircraft." The germ of the 126-acre fly-in community was planted in 1954 when William Gallagher, a World War II Navy veteran and then mechanic at the nearby Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, bought the property with plans to create a landing strip and boat storage facility. Gallagher completed a runway, and ran the operation as the Falmouth Airport until he sold the property to a New York development company in 1985. The first houses were built in the late 1980s.

The backbone of today's airpark is a 2,300-foot paved and lighted runway — named in Gallagher's honor — flanked by homes with built-in hangars. About half of the development remains wooded. "Many Falmouth residents aren't even aware that the town has an airport, that's how secluded it is," says Garabedian. Though airparks are common in parts of the South and Midwest, the Falmouth development is the only one of its kind in Massachusetts and just one of four in New England. Its approximately 70 residents include active and retired major airline pilots as well as aviation buffs.



private home," says Luna. His aesthetic challenge was breaking down the scale of the structure so it "didn't end up looking like an overstuffed house plopped on top of a 5,000-square-foot airplane hangar."

Bleached cedar shingles and decorative white trim soften the exterior, while a series of decks, trellises, clerestory windows, porches, dormers, and the two towers adds layers to create visual interest. "You obviously can't make a 45-foot-long hangar door go away, but you can give it the look of a grand carriage house door," Luna says. By integrating gables and dormers, he also neatly camouflaged the massive flat roof in the center of the house. "By nature, a flat roof has an industrial feel, so if we can make it disappear, all the better."

Inside, the main floor is broken up with a series of transitional spaces organized around the central hall, which leads from the stairs into the great room and "martini" deck. "From both places we can critique the landings of our friends and neighbors, something we pilots can't help doing," Garabedian says with a laugh. Stained glass sconces and massive chandeliers designed by Garabedian and manufactured in Utica, New York, by Meyda Tiffany, a company whose roots go back to the early 1900s and Louis Comfort Tiffany Studios, soften the space and make the 18-foot-high ceilings seem more intimate.

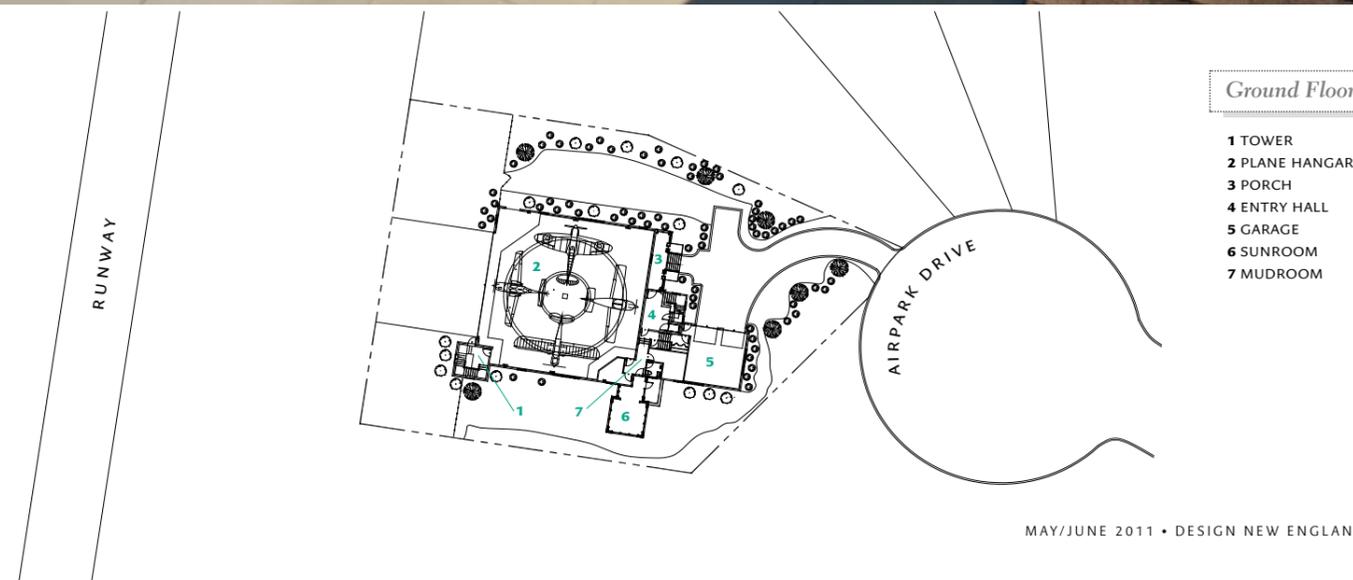
For Luna, "landing" Garabedian's airpark project had even more benefits than commuting in his own Piper Cherokee and skipping traffic snarls on the Bourne Bridge. A veteran of 170 "Angel Flight" missions, Luna combines visits with Garabedian with flying patients at no cost from Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard to hospitals on Cape Cod and in Boston.

Testing the mettle of a new home's performance is often best left up to guests rather than the homeowner. Using that measure, Luna hit one out of the airpark, says Garabedian. "When I invite my friends to Southborough or Vermont, they come for a day and evening and leave. I invite them here, and they stay for a week." ■

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THE AIRSTRIP is just across the lawn from the house. Inside the hangar (FACING PAGE, TOP), Garabedian, right, and architect Joseph L. Luna bond over Garabedian's 1947 PA-11 Piper Cub Special. From the observation tower (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM), "we can critique the landing of our friends and neighbors," says Garabedian.



Ground Floor

- 1 TOWER
- 2 PLANE HANGAR
- 3 PORCH
- 4 ENTRY HALL
- 5 GARAGE
- 6 SUNROOM
- 7 MUDROOM