

# Backfill

## Marine-Quality Columns



Miami's STA Architectural Group originally planned to use solid ipe for the eight columns on this high-end residence (1), which is currently under construction in Bal Harbour, Fla. But when logs of sufficient size turned out to be unattainable, the firm asked Orleans, Mass., boat-builder Suzanne Leahy to build the columns out of mahogany.

Leahy began by making a precise and ingenious jig (2) — itself a two-week effort — on which to assemble and epoxy-glue the hollow staved pillars in vertical half-sections (3); the components were produced by fellow boat-builder Tom Olsen on a CNC router. After

installation, the segments' deep vertical and horizontal banding reveals will receive bronze channel infills.

The columns are of two heights — 18 feet and 27 feet 6 inches — and measure 30 inches and 36 inches, respectively, at their widest points. The 18-footers weigh close to 700 pounds each and the taller ones more than 1,000. Leahy ships them as they're completed, every three weeks or so. On site, the halves are installed around 8-inch-square structural steel supports and joined with concealed screws and epoxy (4). The overall cost is unimaginable (and undisclosed).

— *Dave Holbrook*