

## Southern Style

### It's All About the View

By Diane Lea

Gordon and Sally Grubb's Home on Figure Eight Island Blends Artistry and Comfort

"We bought this house for the view," says Raleigh developer Gordon Grubb.

The Raleigh real estate developer and his wife Sally made the decision four years ago while looking for a vacation home on Figure Eight Island. The views from the upper-level deck of their newly refurbished sound-side home are indeed spectacular. From the home's upper deck it is possible to look north and see Wrightsville Beach across the aqua waters of the Intracoastal Waterway meandering alongside peaceful marshes.



"You should see the sunsets," exclaims Grubb.

The Grubbs are Figure Eight veterans. "Sally's family must have been one of the first to build on Figure Eight Island during its development in the '60s," says Grubb. "Their house is on the south end of the island and the family still spends summers there — only now the family includes Sally's parents, their seven children, their children's spouses, and 20 grandchildren!"

Grubb's family's beach house was on the north end and was sold after Gordon's mother, Rochelle, passed away a few years ago. "Sally and I didn't meet as a result of our families both owning Figure Eight houses, but we did get engaged here, so it has special meaning for us."

Gordon and Sally and their three children had enjoyed owning a condo behind Figure Eight. They loved the convenience of having their boat and kayaks nearby; when they began looking for a larger house, they wanted a boat dock as well as a view. That meant sound-side living. The house they chose had been a rental for several years and needed freshening. Grubb approached the home's architect, Cothran Harris of Wilmington, to consult on the renovation and up-fit. "We had a good structure and a classic Shingle-style beach house to work with," adds Grubb.

The home radiates warmth and comfort and a floor plan that accommodates the Grubb children, daughters

Stuart and Darden and son Robert. The main-level entrance opens through a game room flanked by bookcases to a full-length covered deck overlooking the cleverly designed infinity edge pool. A blond-finish game table is surrounded by chairs covered in camel-colored leather. A striped sisal rug and comfortable chairs in a lime and blue color scheme invite bare feet and casual living. The bookcases are filled with baskets of perfect pairs of cockle shells collected on Figure Eight's pristine beach by Grubb's late father. The children's bedrooms are on either side of the game room. The girls share a bath and their sun-filled rooms are made even brighter by bold colors and fabrics. Lime green walls with pink-patterned fabric for Stuart, and a lilac and orange color scheme for her younger sister. Son Robert's room features navy blue ticking and a fine impressionist painting by a family member who taught at the Rhode Island School of Design.

### **Views Everywhere**

Ascending the stairs to the home's main living area is a treat. A large window at the landing fills the staircase with light that shimmers on a metal sculpture of hanging fish by artist Michael Van Hout. The home's wonderful view is again the focal point in this soothing great room, which blends beautifully with the subtle and sophisticated décor throughout the rest of the house.

Raleigh's Martha Dunnagan of Dunnagan Design consulted on the home's décor. A sitting area before the fireplace is set with two cushiony



arm chairs in a distinctive fabric striped with delicious tones of chocolate, lime, peach and a deep winey grape. A wing chair set casually facing the pair is upholstered in a soft white with a wine-colored Matisse-like pattern. Nicely sculpted white rattan lounge chairs are back-to-back with the formal seating arrangement before the fireplace and display a burst of lime green in a sensuous chrysanthemum pattern. Two oriental antiqued chests and a tall rustic side piece set with a watermelon lamp add a touch of the Orient to the room, as does the elaborate Balinese fire screen. These pieces are the legacy of Grubb's mother who was a noted designer. In a sentimental aside, Grubb states that the house was originally built and shared by two families, one of whom was a Grubb family friend.

"My mother helped prepare this house when it was featured in Metropolitan Home," he says.

Adjacent to the main living area is the Grubbs' master bedroom, a private retreat in soft tones of gray and brown with textures and patterns, again reminiscent of the main room's Oriental undertones. A lovely linen coverlet on the bed plays well with an armoire and bedside tables in a dark finish set with narrow bands of bamboo. Floor-to-ceiling draperies on two sides of the room draw upon the free-form Matisse-like pattern of the

wing chair found in the main living area. An interesting accent to this serene space is the tub-shaped reading chair covered in an Op-Art fabric in shades of charcoal.

### **Starting From Scratch**

Though the home was structurally sound with wonderful polished pine floors and skillfully wrought moldings and wainscot, there were the usual up-fits needed after enduring 15 years of rambunctious beach-goers.

“We redid the bathrooms and gutted the kitchen and started from scratch,” says Grubb.

The result is a finely finished and functional space that fits well into the open floor plan of the main living area. The simple but well-crafted kitchen cabinetry is painted to match the glossy white moldings and paneled wainscot that appear throughout the house. A two-tiered island wraps around the kitchen on two-sides, topped with marble in tones of gray and white with flecks of wine. Tall dark rattan chairs provide island counter comfort for morning coffee. The tiled kitchen backsplash is in an interesting woven pattern in tones of pale caramel.

The dining area is a bit of space out of time — like being aboard a ship. The views from the narrow table, set with glass bowls of candles, are both toward Wrightsville Beach and the Intracoastal Waterway. Open work shield back chairs give airiness to the borrowed landscape of water, marsh and sand. The home’s fine views were once filtered through multi-paned windows, but no more. Grubb worked with his architect and contractor David Jones to design a largely open window-and-door style with only the barest suggestion of mullions.



Though there was much accomplished in the interior renovation, the restructuring and replanting of the house's exterior was equally extensive. To shield the front of the house from the cul-de-sac, Classic Landscapes of Wilmington created a maritime forest with lush vegetation set in a graceful hillock. At the rear of the house, slate pavers border the dock and provide a place for benches for viewing the family's Grady White boat and a kayak or two. Grubb went to considerable effort to re-sheath the infinity pool in a soft gray marble tile, which looks more in keeping with the gray shingled house. He and his team also concealed a hot tub and louvered