

Wrightsville FREE

BEACH MAGAZINE

March 2009 | Volume 10 Issue 3



Wings of **SPRING**

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HOME OF DISTINCTION

Dan and Judy Rizzo's remarkable cottage-style
home on the Intracoastal Waterway

home of distinction

The newest residence for Dan and Judy Rizzo is the couple's favorite out of the many they have occupied in their 36-year marriage



Carolina Cottage style embodies the vernacular shingled beach homes that peppered the landscape 100 years ago. Attention to the details — dovetail rafters, buttressed eaves and steep rooflines, down to the whimsical privacy screen — is the hallmark of architect Cothran Harris. Right: A likeness of Hoover Rizzo is a stand-in for the the family's English bulldog, who is camera-shy.

by Marimar McNaughton
Photography by Joshua Curry

King of the Hill

Hoover Rizzo sat at the front door of his family's home gazing wistfully through the glazed aperture at the groomed landscape beyond the lawn at the end of the quiet cul de sac on Landfall Drive. At only five years old, this home is the English bulldog's fifth address. Where there's Hoover, you'll find the Rizzos, Dan and Judy, who have bought, sold and built 18 homes in their 36-year marriage.

Dan Rizzo, a real estate attorney, is the first to say that this house is Judy's. "The deed is in her name," he laughs. "I was just along for the ride on this one. It turned out. It's the nicest one we've ever done."

Rizzo has great things to say about the home's architect, Cothran Harris, and his signature cottage-style details articulated in the dramatic roof pitch, exposed dovetail rafters, buttressed eaves and the decorative banding that adds definition to





the shingled exterior.

“One of the things that we think is important,” Harris says, “is the traditional styling. The cottage look is meant to draw on and grow from the smaller shingled houses that were here in the 19th century prior to World War I; but, at the same time, we also recognize that we live in the 21st century, and the floor plans in the houses have to respond to modern living. If you look at the Rizzo

house, they have these very open plans where the rooms flow into each other, so there’s communication.”

Even though some might say that Harris has minted his own brand of Carolina Cottage architecture on the face of Wrightsville and Wilmington, he is quick to

acknowledge that he borrowed heavily from what other architects have achieved. Ligon Flynn is one that Harris credits.

“You want the house to look like it’s made of glass, but you want the solid walls to be positioned so that they block your view of your neighbor but open up your view to the



The coffered ceiling adds an element of heightened drama to the 11-foot ceilings in the waterfront living room, which was specifically designed to create the illusion of living in a glass house overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway.

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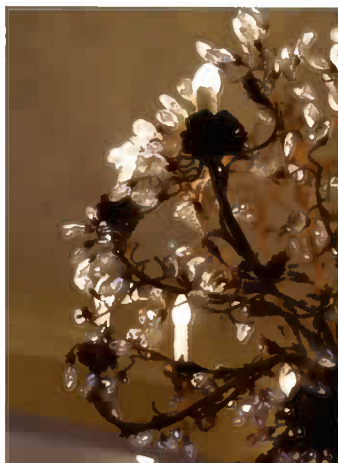


water, to give that illusion of being in a glass house and being by yourself,” Harris says.

Under generously proportioned 11-foot ceilings, the finished floor of the house is 30 feet above sea level and designed for unobstructed views of the waterway. A whimsical cut-out privacy screen separates the Rizzos from their neighbors. Instead of heavily draped windows, Harris installed a window wall

mirrored in the coffered ceiling inside the living area.

“You want to feel like you’re alone on this hill and looking out at the view and you don’t have to defend yourself from



A soothing palette of sand, aqua and coral in the living area is reiterated in the home’s open kitchen, inset, far right. Both present a foil for the formality found in the dining area, which is furnished with family antiques. The Swarovski crystal chandelier, right, was manufactured in Italy and has followed the Rizzos from one address to the next.





the houses on both sides,” Harris says.

It is the second custom home designed for the Rizzos by Harris and the second custom home built for them by Chris Martin.

Last year, Martin became a certified green building professional with the National Association of Homebuilders through its local affiliate chapter, the Wilmington Cape Fear Homebuilders Association. (He is also a member of a builders’ elite, Cape Fear Builders Guild, a local purchasing co-op for homebuilding materials.)

Martin used sustainable methods and green building materials to construct the Rizzo house. Closed cell spray foam insulation, an enclosed crawl space, 16 SEER

The drawing room dimensions were measured to accommodate a furniture group and original paintings that had formerly taken their place in the living room of another Rizzo home. Inset below: Dan’s study is papered in rough bamboo and furnished with built-in curly maple cabinets.

A photograph of a large, two-story house with a white garage and a dark blue or grey upper level. The house has a prominent gable roof and a large window on the second floor. The scene is set at dusk or dawn, with some lighting on the lawn.

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A photograph of a house exterior featuring a white railing with a decorative pattern of black dots and lines. The railing is on a porch or balcony overlooking a lake and trees. The sky is blue with some clouds.

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heat and air pump, and a recirculating, on-demand hot water heater have become standard features of Martin's custom homes.

"One of the most important aspects of designing any house is trying to decide what kind of exterior form is going to work well on the lot with the particular house plan," Harris says. "We could not afford to have the house seem to be that large on the lot. From the street, the lot would only support the appearance of a house of a certain size."

The home's proximity to the Intracoastal Waterway also posed several construction challenges. One was the setback regulation of the Conservation Overlay District affecting the massing of the 5,200-square-foot home, waterfront decking and terraced lawns.

"We had to design around that and honor those restrictions," Martin says, while singing Harris's praises.

"If he designs something, and we have a way to do it a little bit differently ... he's lenient," Martin says. "While he's a very particular person and has some beautiful designs, he's not overbearing."

Neither were the clients.

"We've developed a relationship with Dan and Judy," Martin says. "It's become



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The new color palette is pulled into the master bedroom suite, which enjoys a private deck. Stained glass windows in the bath were positioned over the tub to welcome the sunlight and protect the Rizzos' privacy. A hand-blown glass sink in the powder room is one of the many decorative touches, as is the cushioned window seat tucked into the eyebrow dormer, far left.





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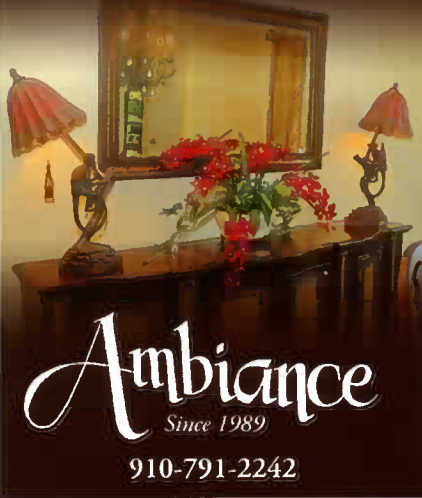
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more than just building a single house for them. It was one of the most stress-free projects I've worked on."

Interior designer Carol Amick, of Ambiance, has been with the Rizzos for more than 20 years.

"Their kids were in bunk beds then," Amick says, "I'm doing their babies' rooms now and that's making me feel old and tired."

Mindful of the Rizzos' appetite for formality in a relaxed setting, she created an interior scheme that feels quintessentially coastal with groupings of plush, comfortable sofas and chairs.

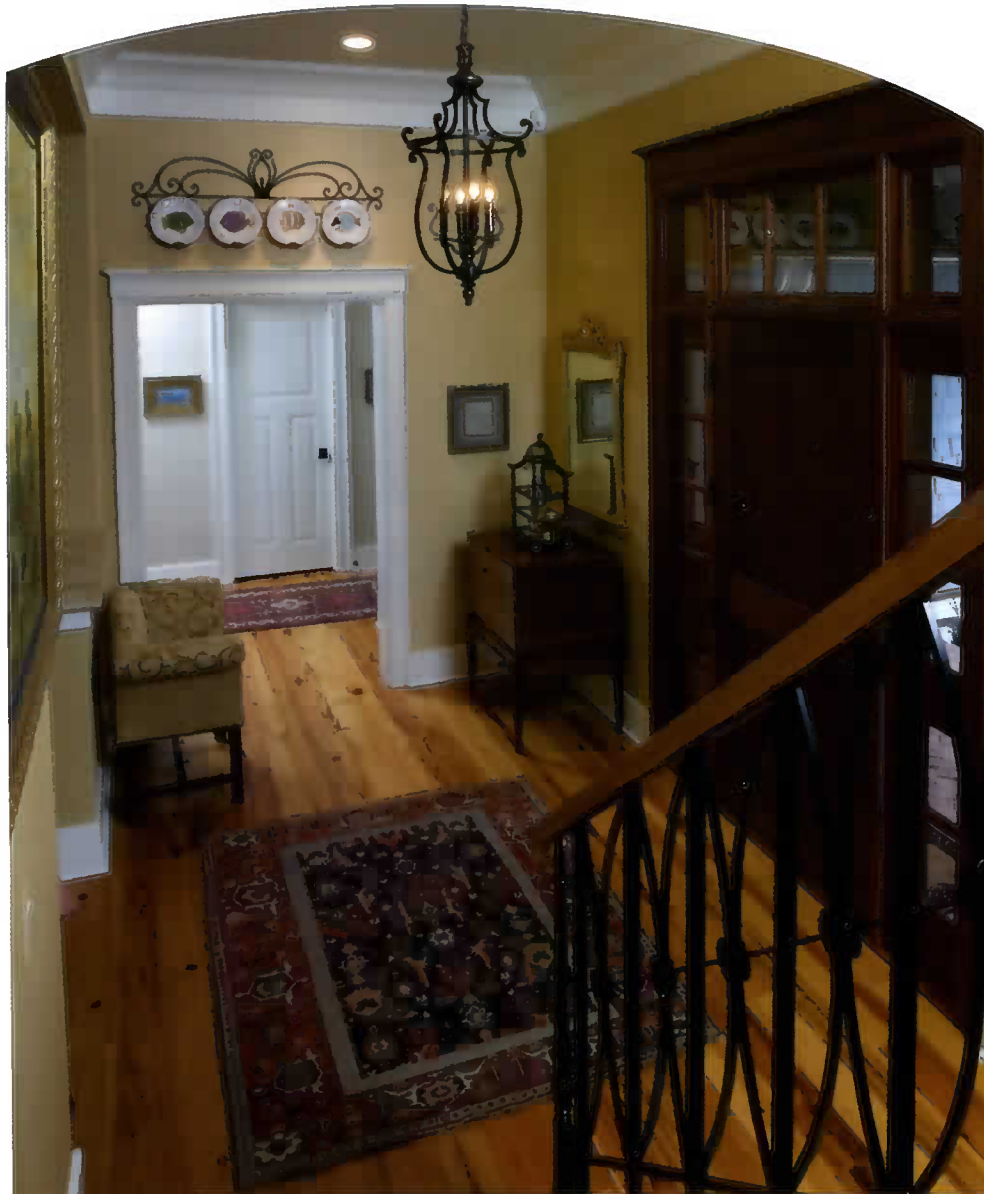
"They've got such a spectacular view, and she wanted to get something that had a beachy feeling but obviously not make it feel

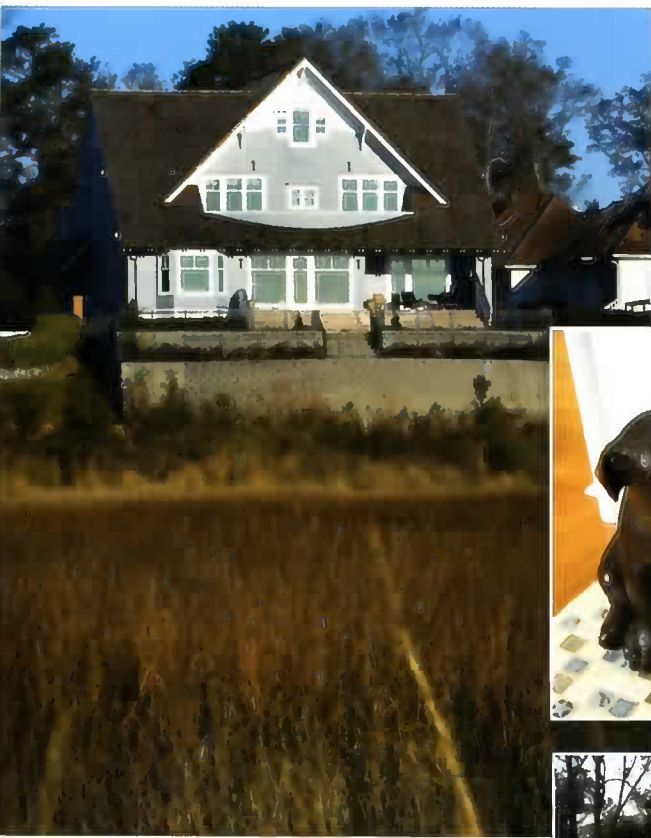
like some beach houses, with sand dollars everywhere."

The room comes together with a muted, yet vibrant palette of soothing, calm colors — sand, aquamarine and coral — reiterating the serenity of the Intracoastal Waterway at all times of year.

"I like what my faux painter did in the coffered ceiling — a reflective, light sky blue — in that back area, turned out nice and added a special touch."

Amick is also fond of the double fireplace that serves the great room and the drawing room, and the custom tile and marble surrounds. A third fireplace in the dining room marks a transition against the backdrop of a refined maple façade fabricated by Stefane





A cast-iron balustrade and chandelier downplay the formality of the foyer, and Oriental carpets over hickory floors unify the home at the ground level. From the waterway, the classic seacoast façade is a pleasant sight for passing mariners. Inset top right: The spirit of Hoover rests near the custom tile hearth. Inset bottom right: Articulating sunlight, the architect's ultimate trick.

Boissant, juxtaposed against a stacked stone hearth. Family pieces and heirloom silver are arranged beneath a Swarovski crystal chandelier imported from Italy. The chandelier is one of the elements that followed the Rizzos from a former home.

Judy's taste, Amick says, has evolved over the decades, but Dan's still a stickler for formality.

"The formalness of the house is Dan; the more casual areas are Judy's. What we've tried to do is to add some things that are more transitional, like the hand-blown glass powder room sink and the wallpapers. Many of the antique pieces found throughout the home have belonged in Judy's family."

Amick says the Rizzos have built the perfect house this time. "If it was just the two of them — and it can't be with all of the grandchildren — it would be the perfect house. It gives them exactly what they're looking for with the capability of expanding on a number of levels all the way up to the third floor. They've really thought this one out well, I think. It's an ideal home."

It is a second collaboration between Amick and Harris.

"I love Cothran's work. He has such an eye for line and so forth, but in the end," Amick says, "to me the main man is Hoover."



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