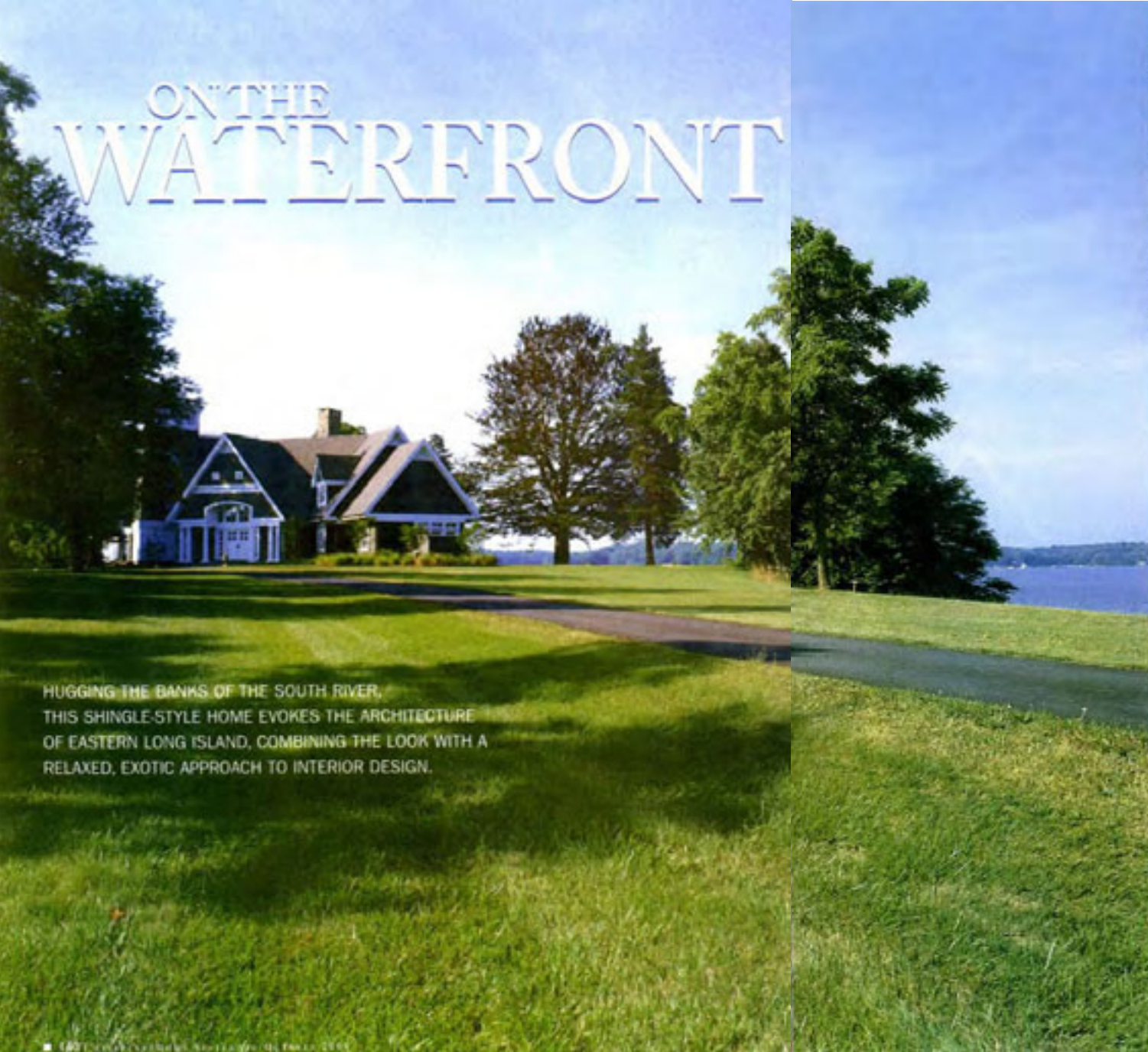


ON THE WATERFRONT



HUGGING THE BANKS OF THE SOUTH RIVER, THIS SHINGLE-STYLE HOME EVOKES THE ARCHITECTURE OF EASTERN LONG ISLAND, COMBINING THE LOOK WITH A RELAXED, EXOTIC APPROACH TO INTERIOR DESIGN.



BY LAUREN BROOKS

HAMMOND WILSON ARCHITECTS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANNE GUMMERSON

LONG. One simple, four-letter word overtakes all other adjectives when describing Jim and Chris Peterson's magnificent Annapolis home. "Long time," says Chris. "Long Island," says Jim. "Long house," says architect Bob Hammond. And together their words begin the tale of a family home that stretches beyond dream's reach, into the lullaby world of rolling river views and grassy expanses, Caribbean reflections and copper beech shade, carousel cats and Rapunzel towers. Taking in their spectacular surroundings, the Petersons, barefoot and relaxed despite the grand setting, still seem in awe of their home. "We pinch ourselves every morning."

Their story begins like many, with the right piece of property and the wrong kind of house. In search of a neighborhood ideal for raising a young child, the homeowners came upon an area of Annapolis—a small peninsula—that was once a family estate with several homes belonging to a wealthy judge and his children. The Petersons and their realtor had come to look at one particular house, but ended up

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OPPOSITE PAGE: Rather than loosing its guests arrive, the large and lengthy house reveals its secrets bit by bit. Visitors approach the house at its shortest side, greeted by bold waterfront views of the South River.

ABOVE: To construct the four-story observation tower that sides up to this Long Island shingle-style home, architect Bob Hammond and builder Bret Anderson welded together 76 steel pieces, then erected the structure with a crane.

A large expanse of pavement in the backyard would disrupt the relaxed natural feel of the outdoors and create unwanted sharp boundaries, so the homeowners arranged 3' x 3' flagstone slabs in a spaced-out grid pattern that functions as a pool patio.

A self-proclaimed "column fanatic," homeowner Jim Peterson stressed to the architect his desire for an abundance of columns in the design of his house.





putting a bid down for another property—a slender yet sizeable plot that had just gone on the market. The home, built around 1900, was that of the judge and was a charming foursquare house in excellent condition for its age.

After shaking the rush of offers placed on the house, the Petersons found themselves in a situation many homebuyers face—they had the house and loved the land, but it wasn't quite right. So rather than trying to create their dream home from someone else's past—a move they felt would be an unnecessary compromise—the Petersons decided to start anew. They began to put together the "world class" design team that would raise their perfect place on the peninsula.

Armed with memories of earlier trips to Shelter Island on the eastern end of Long Island in New York, the couple brought Bob Hammond of Hammond Wilson Architects in Annapolis to the home site. Their ideas were right up his alley. Visions of a Long Island shingle-style home reminiscent of the Hamptons were intermingled with thoughts of an observation tower and waterfront views in every room, plus a zigzagging floor plan that stretched from an outdoor shower to a six-car garage. Between the long strip of land and the hurdles of setback requirements for waterfront property, it seemed that a slender house, only one room deep, would be their best bet. And so the lengthy, 14-month planning process ensued. Not wanting to make any changes after construction had begun, the Petersons firmly established the design for their new abode before building even started. "We didn't want any surprises," says Jim.

OPPOSITE PAGE: At first hesitant about including dark woods in the light and airy home, the architect found that a dark satin finish on the white oak floor made for a warm, crisp look.

ABOVE: The main stair, which runs to the top of the four-story observation tower, is detached from the tower walls so as to seemingly float to the panoramic window above. The landings support the stair and connect to the upper levels.



As part of the vigilant preparations made for the house, Jim Peterson studied the southwestern sun exposure along the building site. "Jim would go during sunrise and sunset to make sure that the light would pour in through our windows," recalls Chris. Taking advantage of the picturesque scene along the backside of the property, each room in the house was designed to capture the radiant sun glimmering off of the water. However, as Bob Hammond notes, "an all-glass wall running the entire length of the house would be overwhelming," so he concocted an idea for a snaking structure with intimate angles that maximized the view of the river at every turn. The rear of the house would flow back and forth, graced by divided and bay windows, a screen porch, and plenty of columns.

Using a three-tiered elevation plan, from the flagstone base that runs the perimeter of the home to the second floor that peeks out from within the roof, Hammond created a rich texture along the back of the house. The top floor settles calmly under the rooftop, which is steeped with balconies and gable windows. With a serpentine-like layout that expands over quite a bit of land, the size of the Petersons' home initially threatened to be overpowering; tucking the top floor away into the roof reinforced a human scale for the structure.

ABOVE LEFT AND OPPOSITE: The homeowners' wide collection of Nancy Hammond's Caribbean paintings served as the foundation for the island effect that, when combined with the many 19th century Indian and English antiques in the living room, results in what the interior designer deems a "Zen Colonial" atmosphere.



OPPOSITE AND ABOVE: So as not to block the waterfront views in the kitchen, the homeowners opted for a double island layout and no overhead cabinets. The concrete kitchen counters echo the concrete fireplace in the adjoining family room, and the main sink faces the playroom so that the homeowners could prepare meals while keeping an eye on their young daughter.

Another matter that Jim Peterson and Bob Hammond discussed prior to construction was the view visitors would behold as they approached. "I wanted people to see the front door as they drove up, but not the garages and the motor court," says Jim. So Hammond oriented the structure on the site with the shortest side of the house facing the drive. The result? Rather than have their large and lengthy home looming as guests arrived, the house reveals its secrets bit by bit, one zigzag at a time. The approach is both relaxed and intriguing. Visitors immediately see the front door with its classy flagstone entrance, situated alongside a four-story observation tower, shaped not unlike the base of a lighthouse, that sits at the crux of the first zig. "It forms the knuckle," says Hammond.

Although the architect was hesitant to include the tower at first, Jim's enthusiasm for the concept encouraged him. "I didn't think it was going to work—I had never done anything like that before." At first, Hammond tried incorporating the tower in the roof, but it would have been structurally unsound. So he resorted to his thoughts and plans and brainstormed a tower encompassing the main stairwell. The steps were to be detached from the walls of the tower while the landings snuggled up to the sides, giving the design stability. The effect would be an artistic sculpture that seemed to float up to the panoramic windows above.

The tower also introduced the possibility of an additional exterior space. While looking over the sketches, Jim eagerly inquired about the tower's connection with the adjacent roof—"Could we get an access area out here?" Hammond was able to fringe a hidden rooftop deck that remains out of sight



The first idea that interior designer Mona Haj presented to her clients was a rustic concrete fireplace. To maintain the natural tone throughout the family room, the homeowners chose to conceal the home entertainment center with built-in cabinets and a television screen that drops out of the ceiling.

from anyone on the ground. Only a sliver of white railing is visible between the two peaks that straddle the deck, hinting at the secret kept high in the tower.

Concealing certain aspects of the home's design from first sight was a design move that would carry over into the backyard as well. Standing in the distance, visitors see a softly sloping expanse of green grass, interrupted only by an old copper beech tree. An island-style tiki bar situated in the yard, however, suggests something more, for tucked within the grassy tufts is a slender pool, perfect for early morning laps. Since too much pavement on the rear lawn would disrupt the large house/intimate feel balance that the Petersons desired, they chose to have the grass edge right up to the pool's ledge, keeping the yard looking like a yard while flagstone slabs arranged in a spaced-out grid pattern offer a subtle patio.

"Proportions on this house were everything," notes Jim, so as a final step in the planning process, the couple had a model crafted. Once the couple was satisfied, building commenced.

Every two weeks, Chris met with the architect and the contractor at the home site to ensure that construction went off without a hitch. Anything that was worrying the Petersons was brought up and discussed among the group. They talked of issues like paint colors, floor stains, and gallery walls, but the toughest and most memorable aspect of construction was when the observation tower was erected. Bob Hammond and Pyramid Builder's Bret Anderson pieced together what Chris describes as "a giant cretor set"—76 steel structures that were welded together on the ground, then lifted upright with a crane and placed on the concrete foundation. "People congregated in the street to watch it go up," remembers Chris.

Designing the interior of the house was no less time-consuming than the planning and construction phases. During the two years of preparation and building, the Petersons worked with interior designer Mona Haj to collect pieces appropriate for their "island" abode. Since Haj travels extensively, she was able to purchase furniture and textiles to the Caribbean effect, which



UPPER: The rear of the house snakes along the property, graced by a screen porch for summer entertaining, a pool that settles seamlessly into the lawn. Divided and bay windows offer views in every room.

LOWER: Knowing they would need not only a place for their cars but also storage for a boat, the homeowners settled on two three-car garages that sandwich a motor court.

she married with the numerous Nancy Hammond art pieces and the antique carousel figure, a Deneol cat, that the couple had collected, creating an air of "Zen and colonial," as she puts it.

From a trip to India, for example, Haj returned with what she felt was the "essence of what the Petersons were looking for"—a pair of long-armed mahogany and cane plantation chairs—and Jim's wide-eyed excitement when describing them attests to the powers of Haj's intuition. "Flutters used to come in from working in the hot fields, and their legs would be swollen inside their tall boots, so they would rest their legs on the arms of the chairs until they were able to pull off their boots," he says, reflecting on the fascinating history behind his favorite pieces.

In working with Jim and Chris, Haj discovered clients who welcomed furniture from different cultures, such as the antique Syrian chest with inlaid Mother of Pearl in their bedroom, and who were open to new ideas and concepts. One of the first ideas Haj presented to her clients was a rustic concrete fireplace that set the tone for the family room and adjoining kitchen. To carry the natural



feel over, the counters on the double islands are also concrete.

This spacious living area, which leads into the screen porch and a playroom for the Petersons' seven-year-old daughter, Alex, exudes a comfortable warmth that speaks of relaxed family gatherings and friendly get-togethers. Even the oversized custom ottoman in the middle of the living room beckons visitors to sit back and kick up their feet.

It's difficult to think about the meticulous planning and designing, exhaustive building and buying in a place of such decided tranquility and ease. But it's all there—in the walls, the windows, the furniture, the details. Ironic that such a long project, a long house, a long journey, is perfectly closed with the shortest of words from Alex, the smallest of the group—"Thank you for building our home." ■

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