



coastal kaleidoscope

A Connecticut home gets a makeover as colorful as its past.

BY SAXON HENRY • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF McNAMARA • PRODUCED BY LYNN MORGAN



With previous incarnations as a brothel and a hotel, Carol and Michael Vaughn's Bell Island, Connecticut, home has welcomed all manner of guests. Built as a private residence in the mid-1800s, the house served clientele from a nearby gentlemen's club during Prohibition and later, in the 1940s and '50s, greeted the likes of Benny Goodman, the Dorseys, and Glenn Miller.

"There was an amusement park over on the next point where the big bands would play," explains Carol. "They'd stay here, so the house had 22 rooms when we bought it."

Interior designer Lynn Morgan modeled the living room's wavy-edged coffee table after a similar one she saw in a magazine. Its glossy yellow finish brings a bit of sunshine to the room's ebullient blue-and-white-striped rug. In the dining area, pale blue walls complement deeper shades on the chairs and draperies. For even more contrast, Lynn painted the recessed shelving's back wall seashell pink.

“My husband and I are both from New England and we grew up on the water,” Carol says. “We looked at a house in town, but we were only there two minutes when we said, ‘Can’t do it; we have to be on the water.’”

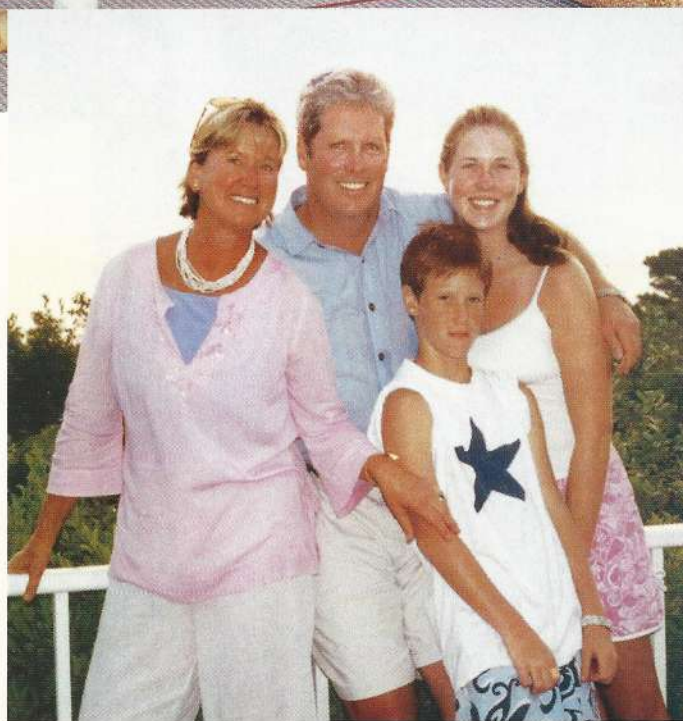


Wanting to transform the five-story maze into light-filled spaces for husband Michael, daughter Alex, son Andrew, and herself, Carol began a series of renovations. The first, in the late 1980s, added heat and insulation. In 1990, Carol tackled the baths and first floor, opening living quarters to the water views. Though the house greatly improved, she wasn't satisfied. "The design scheme was heavy. It didn't fit the water—there were dark greens everywhere and faux-marble painting," she says. "I really wanted something beachy and light."

In 2001, Carol called on contractor Susan Kipp and interior designers Lynn Morgan and Judy Hallock to transform her home into a sanctuary befitting its sound-side moorings. As their ideas evolved, so did the plans for the project.

"The [first] design was just another version of chopping up the space," says Carol. Susan's solution opened the rooms almost completely, adding structural support where needed. Because the plan reduced the number of rooms to 11, she introduced a variety of architectural elements to delineate living spaces: columns that stand where walls used to block views, a coffered ceiling just over the family room, and an arched opening between the kitchen and family room. With those changes, the house took on a newfound brilliance. Such details as fixed cabinetry, lighted newel posts on the stairwell, beaded board, and wainscoting add polish to the finished interiors.

The entire effort was an inspired collaboration, Carol says, crediting Susan's eye for building details and Lynn's and Judy's talents for color and scale. With the construction



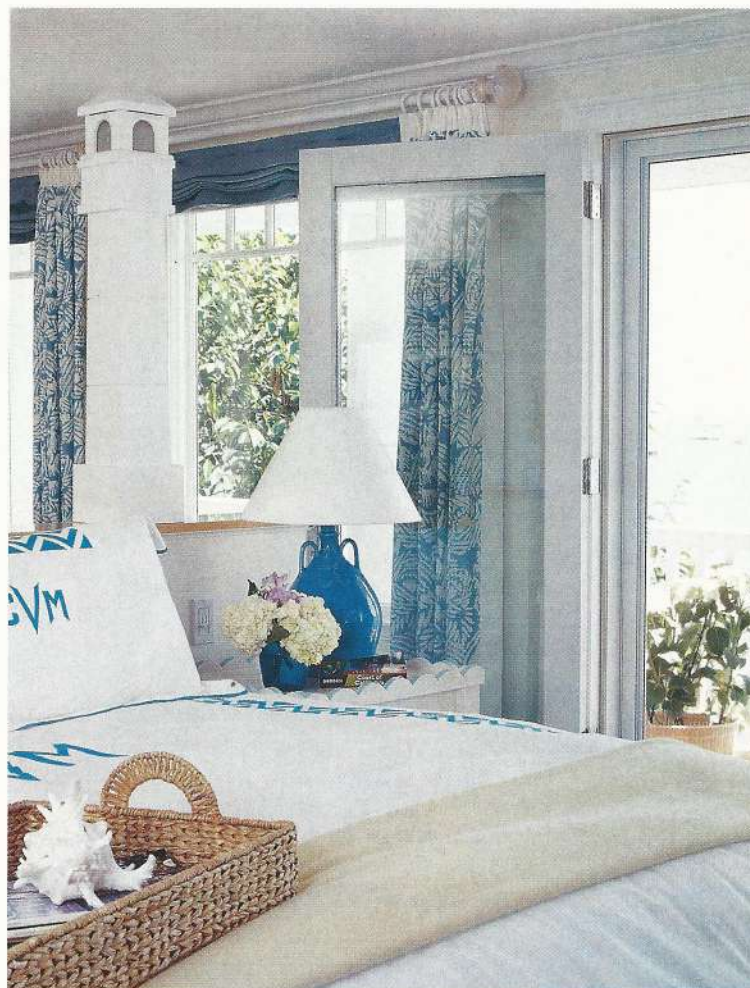
The cabana-themed breakfast room (opposite, left) is outdoor fresh with its wicker chairs and a wooden table faux-painted to resemble stone. The valance's curves, interspersed with dangling seashells, recall the lighthearted lines of a beachside dressing tent. Lynn copied the corner shelves' cutout shape from a design book. Outside, weather-resistant striped cushions, durable outdoor furniture, and a shaded table on the deck overlooking Long Island Sound create a favorite family spot for relaxing and alfresco dining. Above: An earlier renovation opened the kitchen to the family room. Bright pillows, like confetti on the coral sofa and chairs, lend lively appeal. From left: Carol, Michael, Andrew, and Alex Vaughn



Lemonade-colored walls in Alex's bedroom (above) create a summery backdrop for the cool blue and green fabrics. Vintage butterfly chairs garnish the room with even more citrus. Right: A French artist painted the pastel design on the entry hall floor with latex, then sealed it with polyurethane to protect it from wear. Opposite: A soothing mix of turquoise and lavender frames the master bedroom's stunning ocean views. The seashell side table is a veritable work of art, as are the lighthouse posts Susan designed for the built-in headboard. Scalloped end tables and crisp monogrammed linens edged in blue triangles call to mind the rippling waves just beyond the windowpanes.



The room colors were a natural choice given the home's water views. "Our inspiration came from the sea," says interior designer Lynn Morgan. "When you're in the house, you're looking out into that great expanse."



complete, the interior designers arranged an assembly of well-proportioned furniture. "Scale was very important," says Lynn. "Because the rooms are large and everyone in the family is tall, we built most of the pieces to custom specs."

Opening the space challenged the designers to choose a palette that would blend harmoniously. "Your eye does a 360 when you stand at certain spots on the main floor," says Lynn. "You see it all at once—the greens, blues, yellows, and corals—so everything had to work together."

The colors were a natural choice given the home's water views. "Our inspiration came from the sea," says Lynn. "When you're in the house, you're looking out into that great expanse." Though they were taken directly from the landscape, the pigments developed a new boldness in the designers' hands.

Keeping each room mostly monochromatic, Lynn and Judy added minimal punches of accent colors. In the dining room,

shell-pink shelving intensifies blue walls. Coral stands out against pale yellow in the family room. For the master bedroom, they re-created a combination of colors ripped from a fashion magazine. Dazzled by the image of a woman wearing a lavender evening gown in a turquoise room, they dressed the space in those tones.

Lynn and Judy topped off the beach-themed interiors with playful seashell accents: A graceful chandelier hangs in the dining room, a delicate occasional table adorns the master bedroom, and a flirty valance frames the view from the breakfast room. With their long mission accomplished, the Vaughns are now poised to infuse their home with a present as vibrant as its past. 🐚

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