

The lifestyle magazine for Mobile and Baldwin counties

March 2011

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Retirement Retreat

A breathtaking waterfront home provides the perfect oasis for the Smith family to kick back and relax.

text by D. FRAN MORLEY • photos by ERIC MARCUS





When Prentiss and Beverly Smith hosted their daughter's wedding at their Perdido Key condo in 2004, Prentiss, a radiologist in Brookhaven, Miss., was struck with a thought. "I realized that now both my daughters were married, and their weddings were paid for. One daughter had finished her master's, one was about to graduate with a doctorate, and our son was about to graduate from law school – and all their education was paid for. The next day at breakfast, I said to Beverly, 'Now it's our turn. Let's go look for a retirement house.'"

At the time, the Smiths lived on an 80-acre farm in Mississippi. The couple decided to downsize and find a place on the water. Their search ended on the Eastern Shore. "We looked all over the Gulf Coast," Prentiss says, "and finally Beverly said, 'What about Fairhope?' You know what I think she really liked about Fairhope? The shopping!"

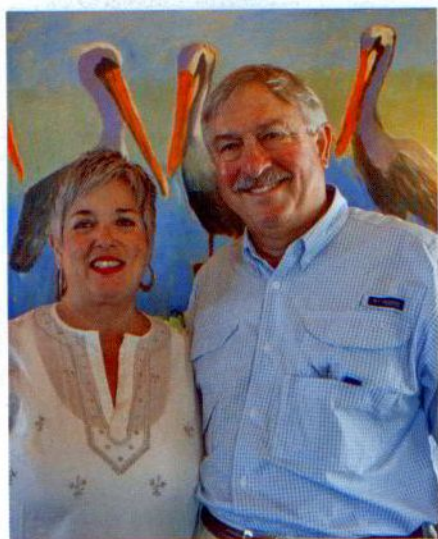
After donating the existing house on the lot, the Smiths started on their dream home, which was completed in December 2008. The architects crafted an L-shaped house to take advantage of a variety of sweeping Bay views. A hallmark of the house is the open living room and kitchen, with space for all of the extended family. "We're big on family, so we wanted a room where everyone could get together. The guys and Beverly love to cook, and the daughters and I love to watch – and to eat," Prentiss says. He designed the kitchen bar to include a small table that slides out for extra space and more seating. "We spend a lot of time around this table with the grandchildren," Beverly says.

OPPOSITE The three-level boathouse on the pier features a full kitchen, Adirondack rockers and a loft play area for the grandchildren.

TOP Mossy oaks and towering pines frame the L-shaped house. Photo courtesy of Walcott Adams Verneulle Architects.

ABOVE The bayside porch is a perfect entertaining spot, with comfortable seating and a cozy fireplace. A copper mirror with patina ties to the interior's teal accents.





The home's design and decor combine new items (including many paintings by local artists), treasured family pieces, and unique architectural details, such as massive, antique columns that soar in an entryway, and two stained-glass cabinet doors in the wet bar that Prentiss has had since he was a young medical school student. A huge porch overlooks Mobile Bay (a "must-have" for Beverly) and a smaller street-side porch connects them to their neighbors. "One thing we love about Fairhope is that we've made so many friends here. There's such an eclectic bunch of people in town, we figured we would find someone to fit in with," Prentiss says.

"This was the first home we built from the ground up," he continues. "We couldn't be happier with the way it turned out."



OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP The great room is a comfortable gathering place for all of the extended family. The spacious, open kitchen allows room for all the cooks in the Smith family. A set of antique paddles and art by Bill Harrison, of Point Clear, decorate one of the guest bedrooms. Homeowners Beverly and Prentiss.

ABOVE Prior to construction, Beverly bought two antique columns that would grace the entryway into the family room, dining room and open kitchen space. They now serve as the foundation of the home's color scheme.

on the dock of the bay

text by CATHERINE DORROUGH

To find the heart of the Smith property, look to the waterfront. Prentiss and Beverly Smith fell in love with the Bay when they moved to Fairhope, and their custom-built home is designed to celebrate their prime spot on the shoreline.

The pier is central to the Smiths' lifestyle. It features a three-story boathouse and all the amenities for a satisfying day on the water: a swing, a bar, space for crabbing, and a boatlift. But beyond the creature comforts it affords, the pier is an important architectural element.

When Walcott Adams Verneuille Architects drew up plans for the property, they crafted a design wherein the pier became a visual anchor for the home. Visitors who walk through the front door have a clear line of sight straight through the house, and when they look beyond the back doors they can see down the length of the pier. It is the home's central axis, the line from which the rooms of the house branch off.

Moreover, because of the home's L-shaped design, the master suite, kitchen, living room, dining room and outdoor living area all look out onto the shore. Whether inside or outside, the Smith family is constantly reminded of their picturesque coastal surroundings.



TOP Frank Potter, of Potter Construction, designed and built a pier with narrow slats to offer less resistance to waves.

RIGHT A rain chain hangs from the porch, awaiting an approaching storm.

ABOVE Bits of sea glass make a colorful display on the steps.