

Life & Leisure on America's First Coast

June 2007

WATER'S EDGE®

coastal castles

Step into the house of light
+ A cottage conversion
+ Condo with a Golden view

99 Ways to
make your
porch rock!

>>> Return to nostalgia
>>> Plants make it cozy

TAKE IT OUTSIDE
Pack for the perfect picnic

BEACH BABIES
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Karin Sufeko (right) shows me photos of weddings for which she and her staff at ST Treasury in St. Augustine, Florida, have created formal designs. The beautiful garden wedding (Page 38) is Karin's creation for Water's Edge.

Castles in the sand

During one of my frequent trips to Amelia Island, Florida, I saw an oceanfront home going up. Even in its early stages, I could tell it would be spectacular when finished.

So, I stopped the car, got out, gave the foreman my business card and asked him to have the owner call me. Within a week or so, I got a call from Francis Lott in Douglas, Georgia. He said he and his wife, Diane, would welcome *Water's Edge* into their home when it was completed. The Lotts' home in Douglas was featured several years ago in *Southern Living*, so they knew it would be a fun experience.

Until Francis' call, I didn't know that the architect was Bill Morgan. We've featured several of Bill's homes in the magazine and appreciate his sense of aesthetics. Readers have told us they enjoy seeing inside his clean, livable spaces.

The Lott home (Page 50) is one of three featured in this issue, all oceanfront, but all very different.

Sharon and Dale Gaines' home in Jacksonville Beach is a traditional cedar-shake home — on the outside. Once you step inside, traditional gives way to contemporary. The interior of the 8-year-old home was completely reworked to improve the flow.

When I met with the Gaineses about featuring their home (Page 41), Sharon said her parents used to be my neighbors. Sharon, Dale and their three children were living in San Jose, California, during the time her parents lived four houses from us in Jacksonville's San Jose area, so we'd never met. Small world.

The description of a typical condo normally doesn't include 4,000 square feet, three master suites and a five-car garage. But that's exactly what John and Terri Ramsey's condo in St. Simons Island, Georgia, offers. They split their time among their primary residence on Lake Tobesofkee in Macon, Georgia, their mountain home in Highlands, North Carolina, and the condo, where you can always find them on Florida-Georgia weekend. Oops. I mean, Georgia-Florida weekend. Read the story (Page 46), and you'll understand why I corrected myself.

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PORCH TALES

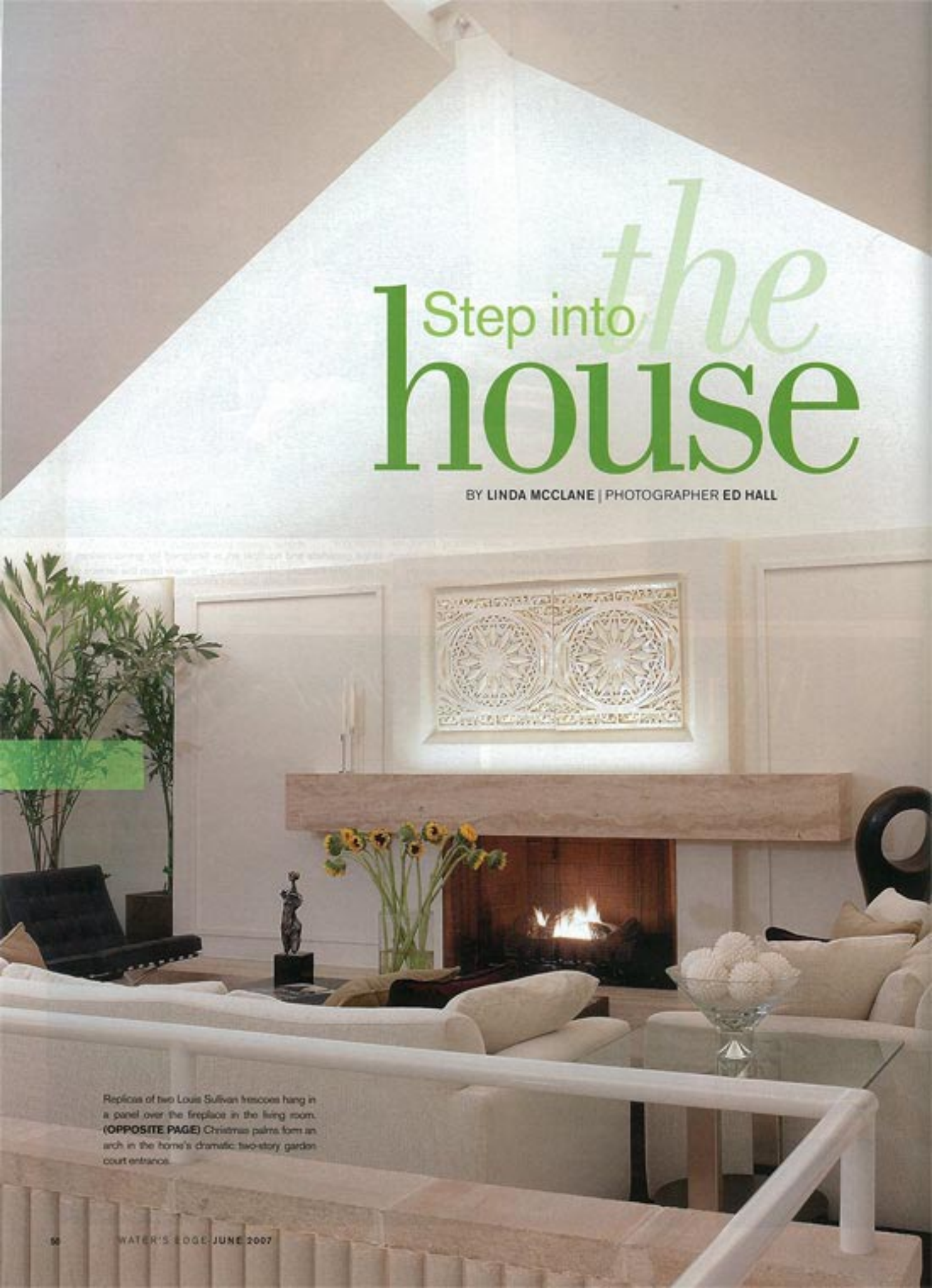
The stories on porches (Page 61) had our editorial staff exchanging their memories of porches. Mine centers around the wicker rocker on our front porch. Sitting there, in my mother's lap, I learned social graces as we exchanged greetings with neighbors walking by on warm summer evenings. It's where Mother corrected behavior by "having a little talk with me," which lasted much longer than the sting of a switch. That porch rocker consoled me when, at 15, I was told of my father's death. Now, the rocker sits in our home, in a room overlooking the St. Augustine Inlet. There isn't a chair in the house that is as comfortable, or that holds as many memories, as that porch rocker.

WEDDING BELLS AND WHISTLES

On America's First Coast, weddings are Southern-traditional, with a twist of the tropics. Picture a bride in an elegant gown (Page 27), as she walks down the aisle through a wedding garden (Page 39). At the couple's waterfront reception, a groom's cake (Page 101) can be formal or have team spirit. Because rice is not a green choice, lavender is thrown as the couple leave the reception and prepare to sail (or jet) away to the islands for their \$100,000 honeymoon (Page 93).

Step into *the* house

BY LINDA MCCLANE | PHOTOGRAPHER ED HALL



Replicas of two Louis Sullivan frescoes hang in a panel over the fireplace in the living room. (OPPOSITE PAGE) Christmas palms form an arch in the home's dramatic two-story garden court entrance.

of light

Francis Lott believes that for a truly significant house, everything starts with a creative architect and the design concept.

"You must have a strong sense of your own taste before selecting an architect," Francis says.

For Francis and his wife, Diane, clarity and boldness were elements they wanted to express in every aspect of their home. They found the perfect match with Bill Morgan of Jacksonville, an award-winning architect, who shares their love for clean, simple lines and uncluttered design.

ABOUT THE HOUSE

Homeowners: Francis and Diane Lott

Location: Amelia Island, Florida

Architectural style: Classical contemporary

Primary residence or second home:

Second home

Architect: Bill Morgan, FAIA, William Morgan Architects, Jacksonville

Builder: Russell Tomasini, Fernandina Beach, Florida

Structural engineer: Mark Keister, PE, Atlantic Engineering Services, Jacksonville

Interior design: Larry Wilson, ASID, and Rebecca Divisnon, ASID, Rink Design Inc., Jacksonville

Mechanical engineer: Robert Hinkle, PE, Powell & Hinkle Engineering, Orange Park, Florida

Landscape architect: Chazz Cox, ASLA, Chazz Cox Associates, Oviedo, Florida

Homeowners' favorite design features:

The dramatic views of the house and from the house.

Guests are really impressed by: The two-story garden court and central hall and the expansiveness of the second floor.

Most unusual feature: The structurally engineered skylight, which runs the 50-foot-length of the ridge, terminating into light wells that anchor each end of the living room.

Most useful features: The elevator, which can be used for groceries and packages, and the trash and laundry chutes.

Most frivolous feature: The hydraulic lift for one of the outdoor grills. In the sunken position, the grill is unobtrusive; the lift raises the grill to the proper height for cooking.

The Lotts' primary residence is a contemporary house in Douglas, Georgia, designed by Blake Ellis, and once featured in *Southern Living*. They knew that they wanted a contemporary beach house for the Amelia Island, Florida, property that had been in Francis' family over 25 years. Francis had even spoken with Bill 25 years ago about building a house on this same property. Although Francis has a degree in architecture from the Georgia Institute of Technology, he chose to pursue a career in real estate development. He speaks of Bill with great admiration.

"This is a highly architectural house, and William Morgan is an architect with a love for the art of his work," Francis says. "His entire career has been in pursuit of excellence in contemporary design."

The Lotts' house is the first one on Amelia Island to be designed by Bill. Another is being built nearby.

Francis and Diane spent a year in design consultation and then two-and-a-half years with construction. The 5,900-square-foot house, which they call Sealoft, has a pair of two-car garages, four bedrooms and five-and-a-half baths. The Lotts traveled to Amelia Island from Douglas once a week while the house was being built and, toward the end, talked on the phone daily with Russell Tomasini, the builder and construction superintendent, who lives in Fernandina Beach, Florida.

"He is the most capable, conscientious construction person I have ever been associated with," Francis says. "I consider Russell a friend for life."

The architect refers to the residence as a house of light.

"Being on the beach, the natural light can be blinding, dazzling and cause a terrific glare. And with the roof extending like the broad brim of a sun hat, the light can be brilliant at the edges, but gloomy in the center of the house. It was our task to balance the natural light in the house, so that it was ever present, but not overwhelming," Bill says.

The ridge skylight system helped to accomplish this.



(TOP) A skylight along the roof's ridge provides direct sunlight to palms in the first-floor entrance and floods the second-floor living and dining areas (ABOVE) with natural light. A custom-built table and buffet (OPPOSITE PAGE) were commissioned for the dining room, which overlooks the kitchen and out to the ocean.





Colored glass art that catches and reflects the sunlight is displayed on shelves in the kitchen. "We found them in St. Augustine [Florida] galleries and in North Carolina," Diane Lott says. Wide windows provide a picture-perfect view of the beach and Atlantic Ocean.

The exterior of the house is fluted concrete block. As a hurricane defense, there are 70 auger-cast concrete pilings 40 feet down in the ground and poured concrete in the walls.

When guests approach the ground-level entrance, a sensor doorbell announces their arrival. The glass front doors open into an indoor garden court, which is decorated with four Christmas palm trees, each with three trunks, in large copper containers. Diane and Francis hope the palms will grow up to the sec-

(BELOW) A sliding glass shoji screen separates the master bedroom from the master bathroom. The bedroom has lots of built-in features for a smooth, uncluttered look. A remote control opens a cabinet built into the footboard of the bed to reveal a flat-screen television that can be raised for viewing or lowered for a view of the Atlantic Ocean.



ond level of the house in the two-story court.

Visiting children and their parents find the lower level most accommodating and child-friendly. In fact, young guests feel as if they have their own space with a mini-kitchen that includes a microwave, icemaker, refrigerator and a booth to eat in. The first-level den, which opens out to the swimming pool, has a computer, television and video games available, as well as a magnetic dart board for inside entertainment.

The first floor also includes bedrooms, a workout room and a pool bathroom.

It's the sheer wonderment on guests' faces that Diane and Francis enjoy when they climb the stairs to the upper level and step into an illuminating space with broad views of sky, dunes and ocean. The open design has formal and casual seating areas and spacious kitchen and dining areas.

"We love the brightness and openness of the second floor and the views of the ocean," Diane says. Because of the openness of the house, the Lotts met with a member of the Amelia Island turtle patrol to check out the lights at night from the turtle's perspective. Their house is built with a tinted glass on the oceanside to reduce nighttime illumination that could confuse nesting turtles or their hatchlings.

"It can be difficult to have a highly contemporary house that is also livable, warm and friendly," Francis says.

They wanted the house to have a clean look and be straightforward, but not boring, so they looked to their designer, Rebecca Davisson of Rink Design in Jacksonville, to be bold and bring in warmth and color.

"We tried to be respectful of the architecture of the house," Rebecca says. "A lot of the texture of the exterior was brought into the interior, such as the fluted block and the saturnia floors, and we layered on to this with highly tactile fabrics and finishes."

She chose natural cherry as well as natural and ebonized maple for cabinets and millwork pieces. Brushed and polished stainless steel was used for reflection.

"We covered furniture pieces with simple, but highly textured fabrics, and special features such as mosaic- and beach-glass tiles were added to rooms for extra sparkle," Rebecca says.

The kitchen, overlooking the ocean, has conventional, convection and warming ovens and a double dishwasher, with a pantry off the kitchen.

Francis' office also is off the kitchen, looking out to the ocean, and features an architectural drawing table, rather than a traditional desk.



(ABOVE) Francis and Diane Lott with their dog, Daisy, in the living room of Sealoft, their Amelia Island, Florida, home. (TOP) A front exterior view shows the fluted concrete block construction and the glass entryway flanked by two-car garages.

Francis and Diane had fun selecting furniture and original artwork for their home. They were pleasantly surprised that it was accomplished much quicker than the three or four years they expected it to take.

A focal point in the dining area is a painting in four panels by Larry Davis of Neptune Beach, Florida. Francis and Diane met with several

Northeast Florida artists before commissioning Larry for this large, striking work.

Children like all the gadgets in the more casual den, where at the push of several buttons, a screen drops down, a projector emerges, and blackout curtains enclose the area to make it a private home theater.

There's an easy, flowing transition to the outside. The ground-level patio has a cookout area with built-in benches and tables. They are recessed so that anyone inside the house can look out with an unobstructed view toward the pool and ocean.

Teak chairs on the front balconies are a gift from Bill. They are based on chairs he designed for the old Atlantic Beach [Florida] Hotel, which needed a heavy, durable chair that wouldn't blow away during storms. The first ones were built of pine and fir and have been perfected through the years to the teak model now built by cabinetmakers in Bali, Indonesia.

As Francis and Diane relax for a weekend at the beach, they agree that Sealoft is everything they wanted it to be and more — functional, comfortable and highly livable.

"We are still awed by the boldness and beauty of the house," Francis says. □