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plus
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Martha Stewart's
beach bag?

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THIS BLUE GLASS
LANTERN
IS ORIGINAL TO
THE HOUSE

A spiral staircase leads from the home's stunning tile floor to the top of the turret (opposite, top).

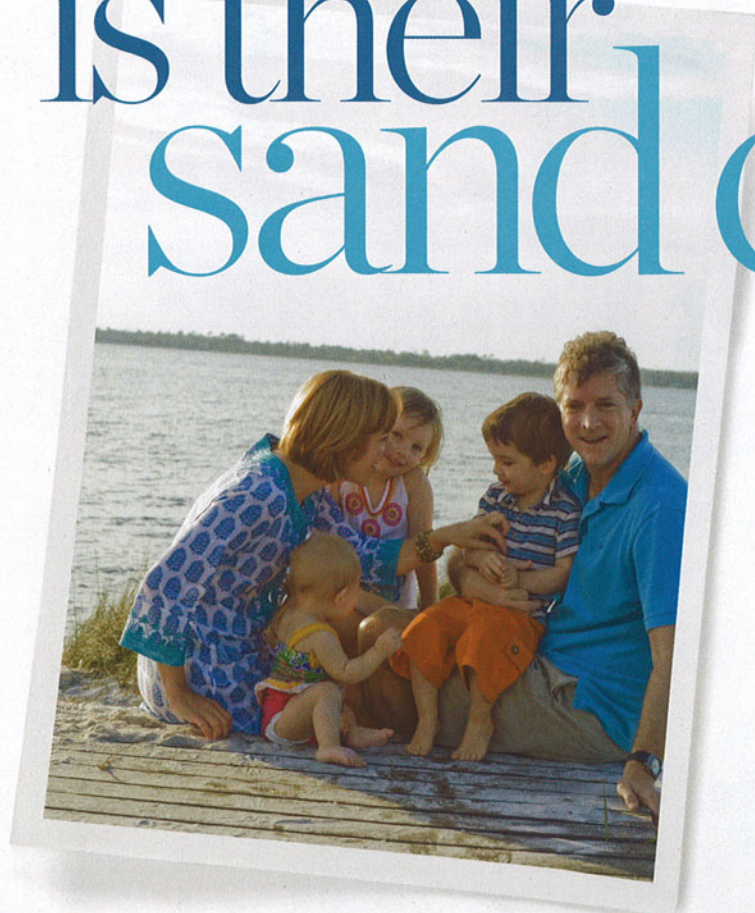


The "fortress" proudly guards Florida's Santa Rosa Sound.



The Spotswood children love to build sand castles that look just like their house!

home is their sand castle



The Spotswood family gives their 1960s house in Pensacola, Florida, the royal treatment with a look that's casbah meets beach



ON THE HOUSE

STYLE 1968 Spanish Colonial

SPACE 3,000 square feet with four bedrooms, four and a half baths, and large, open entertaining areas

SETTING a midcentury waterfront neighborhood 10 miles from historic downtown Pensacola

VIEW blended blues, grays, and greens of Santa Rosa Sound and wide, pink sunsets at night



DESIGNER TRICK
 Dining chairs covered in vinyl protect against soggy-from-the-beach bathing suits.

Matt Spotswood's childhood dream wasn't a new bike—it was a Spanish Colonial house near his parents' beach home in Pensacola, Florida. "It looked like a fortress," Matt says. "I always wanted to go inside, but there weren't any kids my age who lived there." Matt spied on his fantasy castle from a distance, admiring how its rounded turret glowed a faint blue at night.

In 1998, 24 years after first seeing the house, Matt and his then-fiancée, Shannon, returned to Pensacola and were shocked to see a for-sale sign in the yard of the house he had loved. Two hours later they were meeting with a real estate agent. "It was the first time I'd ever been inside, and when we walked in we saw this unbelievable blue tile," says Matt. "The tile, the airiness, the turret—it sold us. We bought it on the spot."

There was just one minor glitch in this fairy-tale ending: Matt and Shannon were living across the country in California. The compromise? The house would become the holiday, reunion, and milestone-birthday meeting spot for their families on both coasts. "Of course, we're wistful about the concept of being able to just throw all our gear in the car and drive to a beach house," says Shannon. But the couple hoped one day to give their children the wonderfully lazy Southern summers that Matt had growing up.

For six years the couple, now with kids in tow, spent holidays and summers in their

"To me, light fixtures are the most telling aspects of a room," says designer Mary Evelyn McKee. She used an oversize high-wattage lamp next to the sofa (opposite) for reading, then combined a variety of fixtures, including sconces and an electric chandelier, to illuminate the rest of the living/dining area.

SHOP THE LOOK:
 Upholstered furniture, Hickory Chair



The windows look out onto the house's loggia.



Notice the nailhead trim all around this bed, upholstered in durable Ultrastuede.

Florida castle. Then hurricanes struck in 2004 and 2005, ripping off the roof and flooding the house. The inside virtually had to be gutted, and Birmingham, Alabama-based designer Mary Evelyn McKee was called in for the rescue mission. "She became our decorating and designing angel," says Shannon. The three devised a plan to make the interior as exquisite as the exterior, with saturated colors, large entertaining areas, and a design scheme that played up the magnificent blue tile.

While researching the house, Matt and Shannon discovered that it was built in 1968 by a family who owned an Italian import/export business in town, which explained the house's Moorish look and exotic blue tile. "Because the tile was so impressive, I wanted to weave its color and shape throughout the entire house," says Mary Evelyn. The arabesque pattern shows up in the silhouette of the dining chairs, the curves of the custom headboards, even the print on the dinner plates.



The powder room's 1940s mirror mimics the wallpaper.

In the main part of the house, neutral walls showcase Shannon's collection of contemporary art. "I wanted to create a sort of gallery space within the house's rich interior," Mary Evelyn says. Bold printed pillows and glass Moroccan lanterns provide pops of color, and modern and traditional styles merge in places like the powder room, where a 1940s French Art Deco mirror hangs above a modular Ann Sacks sink. "It's fun to mix the looks," says Mary Evelyn. "It just takes an eye and some confidence."

Throughout the house, wood details unite the rooms. A general contractor replaced small whitewashed ceiling beams above the dining table with darker, wood-stained beams that he also installed in the front two bedrooms. Mary Evelyn mounted carved antique doors on modern hardware next to the dining table to frame a contemporary painting. The driftwood-rough timber table adds a beachy feel.

Now that the renovation is complete, Matt can finally live in the house he dreamed of as a little boy. "It really is what we envisioned," says Shannon. "We've entertained a household full of people, six kids at a time. It has always been a place with an energy, and now you can feel it even more."

WE LOVE... ARABESQUE MOTIFS

Description: An elaborate repetition of geometric forms that mimic plant and animal shapes • **Origin:** Islamic art, beginning in the 7th century, usually found on mosque walls • **Today's style translation:** Wide curves that meet in a point at the top (as in the bunk cutouts on page 99) and intricate, swirled patterns (like the wallpaper at left and headboard above)

ROCK THE CASBAH LOOK!

Rich colors and lavish textures are the playing pieces for designer Mary Evelyn McKee's Morocco-inspired design



My style typically is warm neutrals punctuated with vivid color.

My secret design weapon is creating a sense of place (as in a Morocco-inspired villa).

I can't live without light fixtures in all different sizes and shapes, scaled just right.

What I love about the coast is bringing the outdoors in.

Sweet Orange (2017-40) and Serenity (2055-60), right, Benjamin Moore; benjaminmoore.com

Moroccan Painted Tables, \$60 each, Cost Plus World Market; 877/567-5362 or worldmarket.com

Cayman Treasure II, \$25, Judy Shelby; 800/952-5592 or art.com

Lawna Kassar Lantern, \$160, 727/251-4803 or justmorocco.com

"THEY WANTED THE HOUSE'S INTERIORS TO LOOK YOUNG, FRESH, AND HAPPY"
—MARY EVELYN MCKEE

Vibe Mosaic Ashbury tile in Powder Blue, \$19 per square foot, Walker Zanger; walkerzanger.com

Palace Glass, \$22, Jayson Home & Garden; 800/472-1885 or jaysonhomeandgarden.com

Cole and Son Alpina wallpaper, \$179 per 12-yard roll, available to the trade, Lee Jofa; 800/455-9563 or leejofa.com

Lattice Overlay Pillow in Rust and Burlap, Mary Evelyn Interiors; 205/879-7544

Cordoba Dinnerware, \$10-\$16, Anthropologie; 800/309-2500 or anthropologie.com



The bunk room, which was originally a large walk-in closet, was inspired by a trip to Morocco—and Princess Jasmine, Shannon says with a laugh. Sources: page 126 🍷