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# Cape Comfort

The Joyce family bayside home offers a serene retreat on the beach, far away from the distractions of daily life.

BY CAROLINE CUNNINGHAM PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC LEVIN



Almost 40 years ago, when Boston advertising magnate and philanthropist Jack Connors was traveling through Cape Cod on his rounds as a representative for Campbell's Soup, he found himself in the bayside town of East Dennis. He was enchanted by the quiet beach community, its houses clustered along an expansive shore with sweeping views of the water. "Someday," Connors said to himself, "I am going to own a house here."

Not surprisingly to those who know Connors, he and his wife, Eileen, soon did—a charming cottage on the water where his daughter, Susanne Joyce, her husband, John, and family now make their summer home.

When the Joyces decided to expand the house to accommodate their growing family, they asked their friends, architect John MacDonald and builder Ron Ferioli, to help them with the project. MacDonald and Ferioli added a master bedroom suite with a bunkroom above, which gave the family some needed space without altering the cottage's intimate scale. MacDonald also introduced Joyce to Mollie Johnson, an accomplished designer whose work is defined by classical but comfortable elegance; her distinctive style is derived in part from her eclectic upbringing in Europe and South Carolina.

Johnson creates beautiful spaces that feel both calm and luxurious, without any fuss. This aesthetic was exactly what Joyce envisioned for the house, which isn't surprising, given that the two women are very much alike—warm and intelligent, with a strong sense of family. "Mollie understood, right away, what living with children is all about," says Joyce. Johnson observes, "Susanne is like a breath of fresh air. For her, life is all about living and not



ABOVE: Susanne and John Joyce's home at East Dennis is all about the ocean views. The airy living room, with its family pictures and shell displays, opens onto a deck. OPPOSITE PAGE: Off the deck, a winding walkway leads down to the beach.

obsessing about the small things." Their collaboration was not only productive, but great fun.

Joyce and Johnson knew that the most important feature of the house was its beach location, and agreed that everything inside should be a reflection of the extraordinary views of the sand and water beyond. Johnson selected a palette of natural tones—mossy greens, light tans, soft whites—for the main rooms, with some bright accents for variety. The effect is serene and embracing, well suited for spaces that are generally filled to bursting with family and friends. Joyce explains that she "thrives on entertaining and being busy," and that the house is organized so that she can do just that.

The front hall opens into the airy living room, which flows out onto a deck



ABOVE: The Joyce's beach house dining area is anchored by a strong stone fireplace that complements the neutral colors in the interiors; the dining space flows into the kitchen, reflecting the openness of the beach setting itself. OPPOSITE PAGE: The home's furnishings add a dynamic touch by playing stronger colors against more serene tones.

and a long walkway that leads to the beach below. As Joyce says, "It's all about the beach," and you can see jumbled patterns of sandy footprints coming in and out of the house all summer long. The dining area, anchored by a large stone fireplace, is contiguous with the living room and extends off the cheerful blue-and-white kitchen. A central island with tall, comfortable chairs separates the two spaces and becomes a gathering spot for lazy breakfasts, long lunches, picnic preparation, or just sitting and talking while dinners (for multitudes) are made. Family photographs and glass bowls of sea glass and shells sit on side tables; simple prints adorn the walls. It's minimal, but it's just right.

A small library off the living room, where the family plays card games or watches television, leads to the master bedroom suite, a cozy oasis for John and Susanne. Their bed faces a picture window that frames the view like the most perfect painting ever realized. The muted tones that Johnson selected for this space are appropriately tranquil; a bright coral-colored chair adds a chic and sophisticated note.

The narrow stairs, gaily carpeted with a starfish pattern, lead up to the other three bedrooms—a lovely guest room done in blues; a room in shades of green and pink for the Joyces' daughter, which she shares each summer with an older cousin who doubles as a babysitter; and a spacious room for the boys, designed to accommodate regular sleepovers. Here the colors are bold and bright—navy and red, in solids and stripes, provide a jaunty nautical feel that works well with the dark wooden beds. It's like being on a boat, or in a fabulous little clubhouse, which was just what Joyce intended.

"My father and mother made memories for me that I am now creating for my children, memories of being with family and friends in the world's best playground," Joyce explains. "I was a baby in the bassinet on the deck, and now I'm here with my children, along the same street with my parents, brothers, in-laws, and cousins. It's magic."

It's not hard to understand why Joyce would feel this way about her house on the Cape. It provides a peaceful sanctuary from the busy Boston area, where she's involved in her children's active lives and in several charitable endeavors, including the Storybook Ball, which last fall raised more than \$3 million for Massachusetts General Hospital.

"When we're here, we have no schedule; it's all about being together," says Joyce. "It's such an easy way of life, living in flip-flops, walking everywhere... the days are so relaxed." The extended Connors-Joyce clan includes more than two dozen cousins, with the children constantly tumbling in and out—sun-kissed, sand-dusted, or dripping with ocean water—and they are always welcome. "I wanted everything in this house to be kid-friendly. It's a beach house, and it should reflect that spirit of freedom and ease in every room."

Grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews are integral parts of every day's activities, and the easy affection that the family shares—"the crazy and close chaos," as Joyce terms it—fills the house with love and laughter. Although they lend their passionate support to a wide range of cultural and civic institutions across the city of Boston, this lovely cottage, and what it represents, is surely among Jack and Eileen Connors' most valuable and enduring legacies. ♦



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