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Hammocks on THE BLUFF

When they found the remodeled 1980s-era house perched above Mobile Bay, the Hammock family knew they were home. TEXT BY Michelle Matthews PHOTOS BY Courtland Richards



Architect Lea Verneulle knows the Hammocks' home on Bayview Avenue in Fairhope like the back of his hand. He has remodeled it not once, but twice, for two different homeowners—the first time for an empty-nester couple, and the second time for the Hammocks' growing family.

Verneulle had always wanted to get his hands on the nondescript, circa-1989 house that occupied an enviable spot on the bluff overlooking Mobile Bay. He remembers telling one of the neighbors that it had potential. "It was so out of character for a waterfront bluff home," he says. "It was very unattractive, with no indoor/outdoor relationship. It was an ugly duckling that needed some attention."

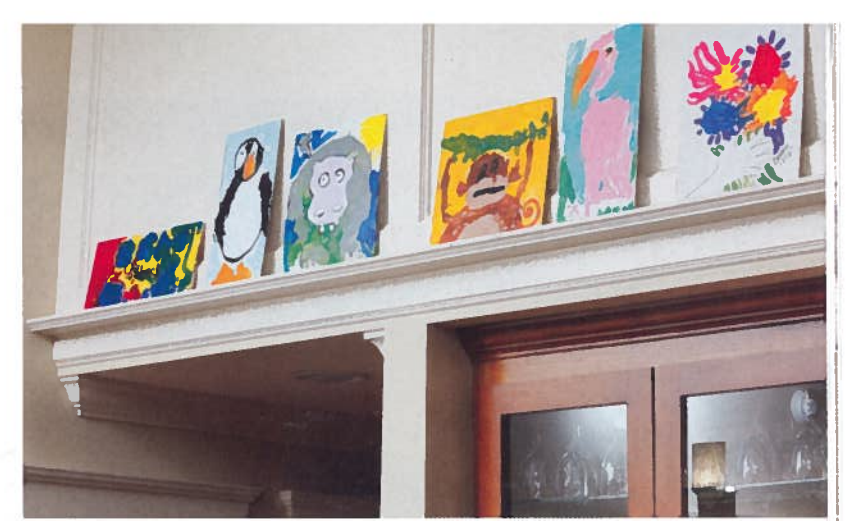
The Hammocks have a photo album that shows the outdated two-story home undergoing the first renovation in 2003, when it was transformed into a more stylish, cottage-style house with double screened porches across the front to take advantage of the incredible view of the bay, directly across the street.

"This is one of only five homes on Bayview where you can see the sunset all year long," boasts Wells Hammock—a secret the previous owners let him in on. Those owners compiled the photo album, which shows the Walcott Adams Verneulle renovation.

{HAVE A SEAT}

"We're not big, fancy, formal entertainers, but we like having friends over," says Elizabeth Hammock. The bright, airy living room offers two separate seating areas for guests.





They hired Verneuille to update its look. "The original house was bland and could have been Anywhere, USA," he says. "I tried to give it Fairhope cottage character with some Arts and Crafts touches."

The Hammocks loved the home as soon as they stepped in the door. They weren't even seriously looking for a house, Elizabeth Hammock insists – in fact, they were out for a Sunday afternoon drive and saw the "For Sale" sign out front. But its charm and views won them over immediately, and they asked each other, "How can we make this work?"

Part of the answer to that question was to add on to the existing house. In order to accommodate their family of four, which includes their three- and five-year-old sons, they sought Verneuille's expertise, and he designed a few additions for the family that were executed in 2010 by builder Larry White. The Hammocks moved out of the house for about 10 months while a new den/playroom was added, as well as a new office, a bedroom and bathroom upstairs and an extra room over the garage.

"It's very fun as a designer to infuse a home with personality that fits the client and the community as well," says Verneuille. "That's what I tried to do on the second go-around."

Wells, a dentist with Bay Pediatric and Adolescent Dentistry in Fairhope, grew up in Mobile. After he met New Hampshire

{AROUND THE HOUSE}

Another view of the living room, opposite, shows the built-in bookcases, fireplace and staircase at the entrance to the home. The Hammocks updated the kitchen island with a marble countertop and added a den/playroom off the kitchen. The boys' colorful artwork brightens the space.

native Elizabeth, who worked in venture capital, they decided to move back near his hometown, only across the bay, where Wells sometimes drives his street-legal golf cart to work. After Wells' dad retired from his practice as an orthodontist, his parents moved from Mobile to Point Clear. These days, the elder Dr. Hammock works part-time for his son's practice, and Elizabeth manages the business side of the office.

Though the Hammocks have access to their garage via an alley behind the house, visitors park on a shady parking pad and walk up the steps to the wonderful screened porch, which is furnished with a comfortable wicker sofa and chairs – the perfect spot for watching sunsets, visiting with friends, reading or doing just about anything (or nothing). "When it's not 100 percent humidity, we're out on the porch a lot," Elizabeth says. "It's definitely a favorite spot."

A central staircase divides the formal yet comfortable living room on one side of the



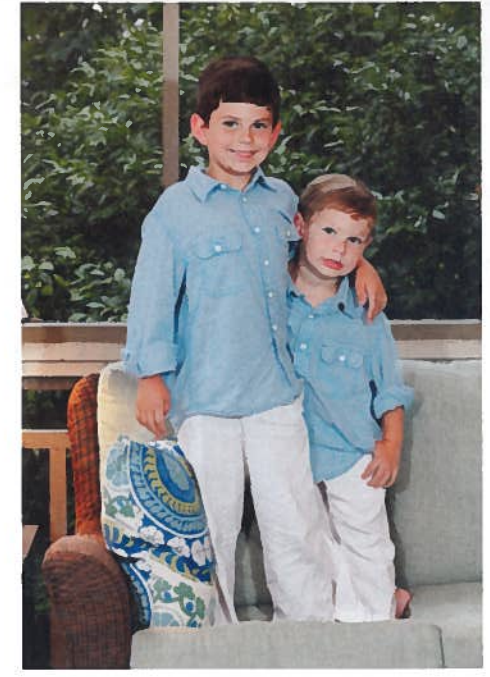
home's entrance, and the dining room on the other. "We're not big, fancy, formal entertainers, but we like having friends over," Elizabeth says, adding that the living room is where the adults usually gather.

The newly added office, just off the living room, is her husband's vision, she says – he always wanted a room lined with wood, which in this case is pre-finished flooring used on the walls. Bay Flooring was able to match the wide-plank pine floor in the living room for the newer office, and Ferguson Lighting in Daphne supplied the light fixtures.

A hallway next to the stairs leads past closets and the laundry room to the kitchen at the heart of the house, a room large enough to accommodate a large breakfast table and chairs as well as an Alabama white marble-topped island with barstools. "We spend the majority of our time here," Elizabeth says. As the addition construction project was going on, the Hammocks added a window over the sink to brighten up the kitchen, and they also changed the backsplash.

Beyond the kitchen is the new den/playroom area with a vaulted wooden ceiling. The den overlooks a brick patio and outdoor fireplace. "The previous owners were master gardeners," Elizabeth says, laughing. "We killed it all, so we decided to do a hardscape back there."

The master bedroom is tucked into the back of the house and also features a vaulted wooden ceiling, painted white. The large master bathroom has a standalone tub, perfect for bathing the little boys.



{ROOM TO RELAX}
Interior designer Summer Ennis helped Elizabeth Hammock decorate the soothing, symmetrical master bedroom, opposite. Visitors enter the house through the large screened porch, above, overlooking the bluff. Brothers Bowdoin and Riggins, left, love to play on the porch.

“I tried to give the house Fairhope cottage character with some Arts and Crafts touches.”

—architect Lea Verneuille



{TREEHOUSE STYLE} The Hammocks' friend, Jaime Cooper, and her mother, Chee Chee Jackson, collaborated to create the art above the "swinging bed" in the guest room. Each boy has his own bedroom upstairs with views into the oak trees on Bayview, creating a treehouse effect.



Upstairs, the guest room opens onto the upstairs screened porch and has a bed that appears to hang from ropes, modeled after a similar treatment Elizabeth saw in Coastal Living magazine. Their builder added a platform underneath to stabilize the bed, but it's still a novelty that fits nicely into the home's coastal environment.

The Hammocks' sons, Bowdoin and Riggins, have bedrooms on the second floor with barn doors to the bedrooms, bathrooms and closets. With windows overlooking Bayview Avenue, the boys' rooms make them feel like they're in a treehouse. "That's my favorite thing for the boys," Wells says.

Elizabeth's friend, Summer Ennis, helps her with interior design. Throughout the home, the Hammocks display local artwork. "This is such a great community to buy things in," says Elizabeth.

Art is just one of the many charms of Fairhope. Elizabeth says she and the boys like to ride their bikes downtown, often frequenting Mr. Gene's Beans, the ice cream shop. ("Too often," she jokes.) And her family back in New Hampshire enjoys visiting. "Fairhope far exceeds any expectations of what lower Alabama might look like or be," Elizabeth says.

"I love being in this town and raising our family here," she adds. 🌊