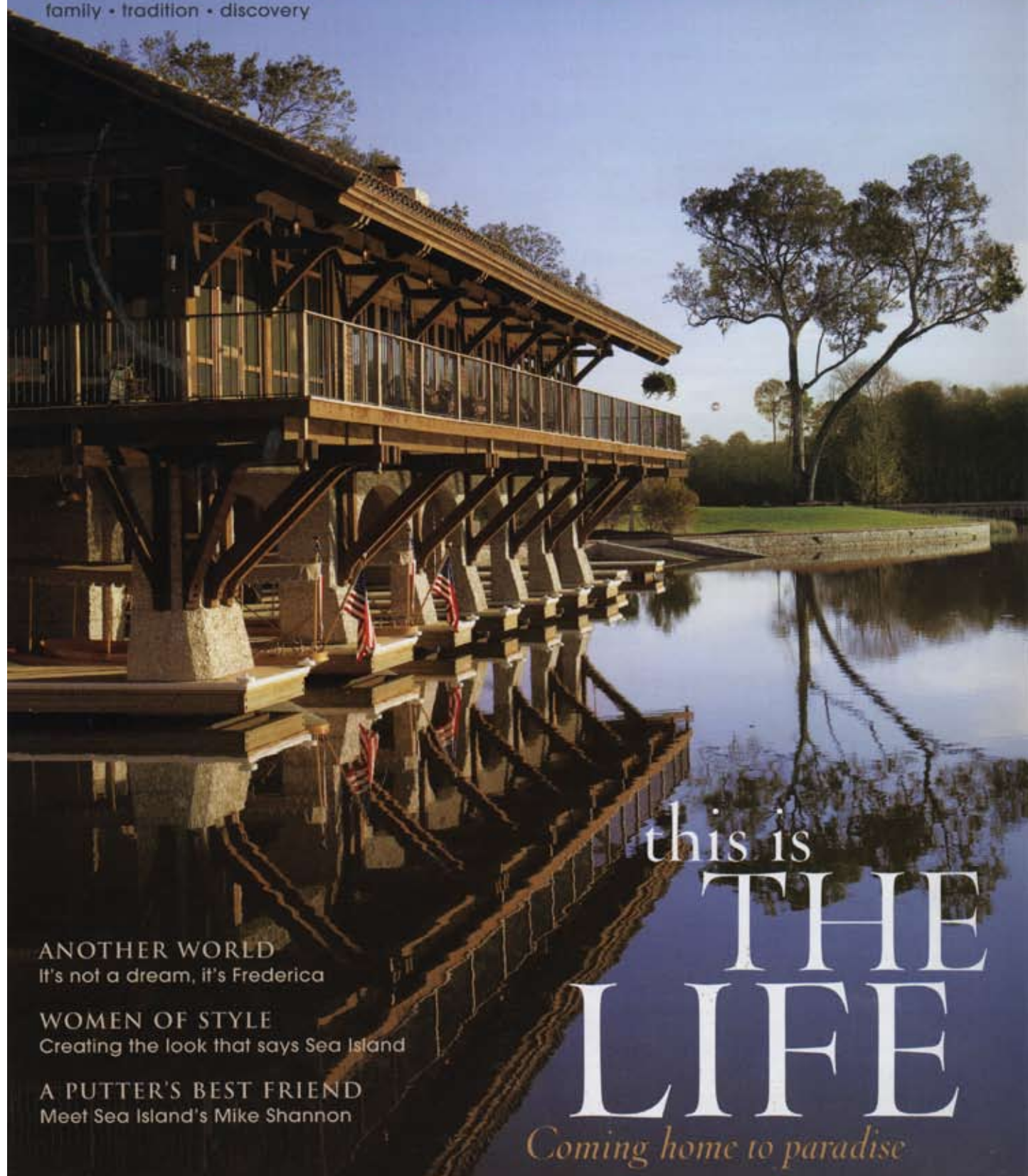


summer • two thousand and six

SEA ISLAND

family • tradition • discovery



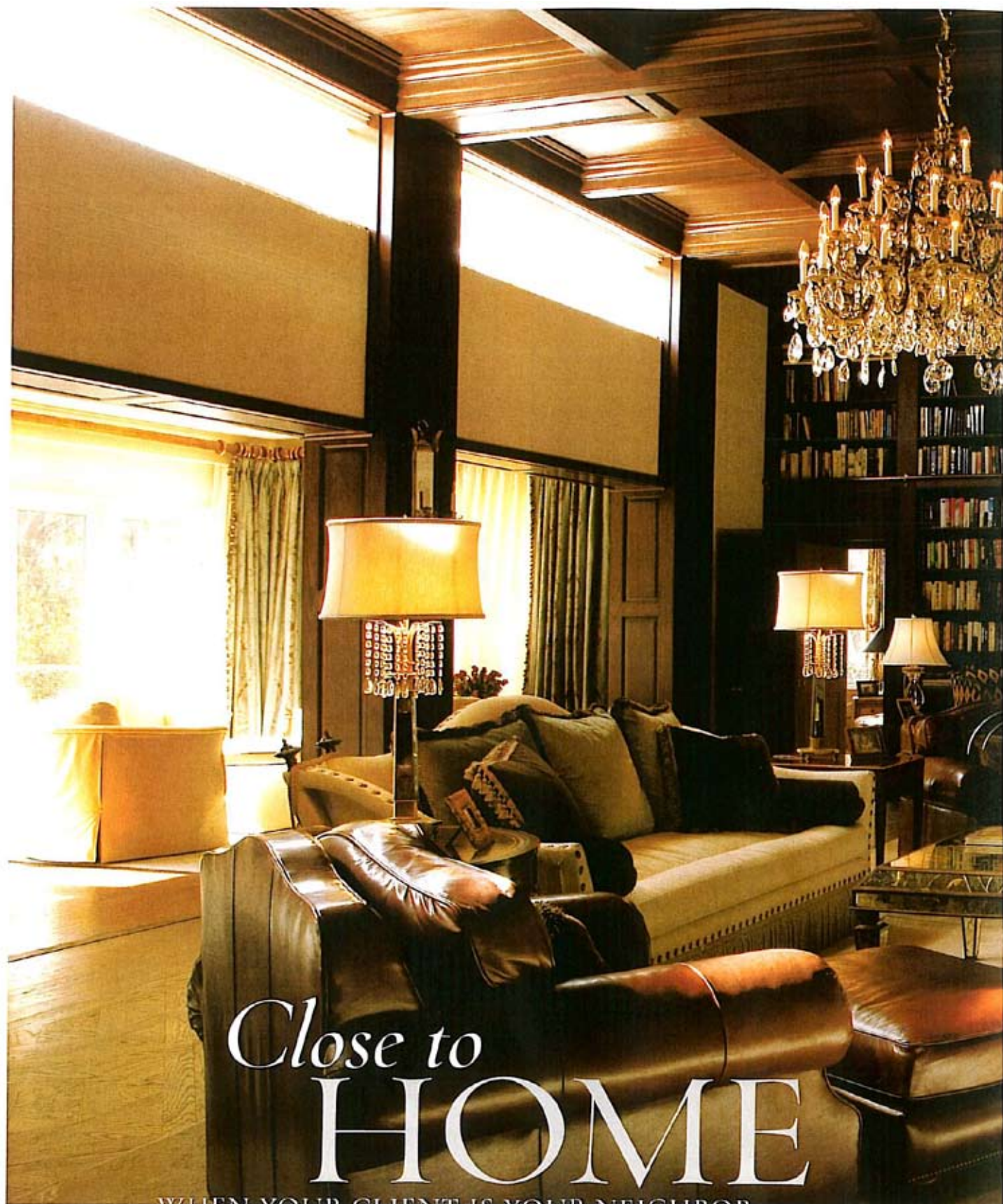
ANOTHER WORLD
It's not a dream, it's Frederica

WOMEN OF STYLE
Creating the look that says Sea Island

A PUTTER'S BEST FRIEND
Meet Sea Island's Mike Shannon

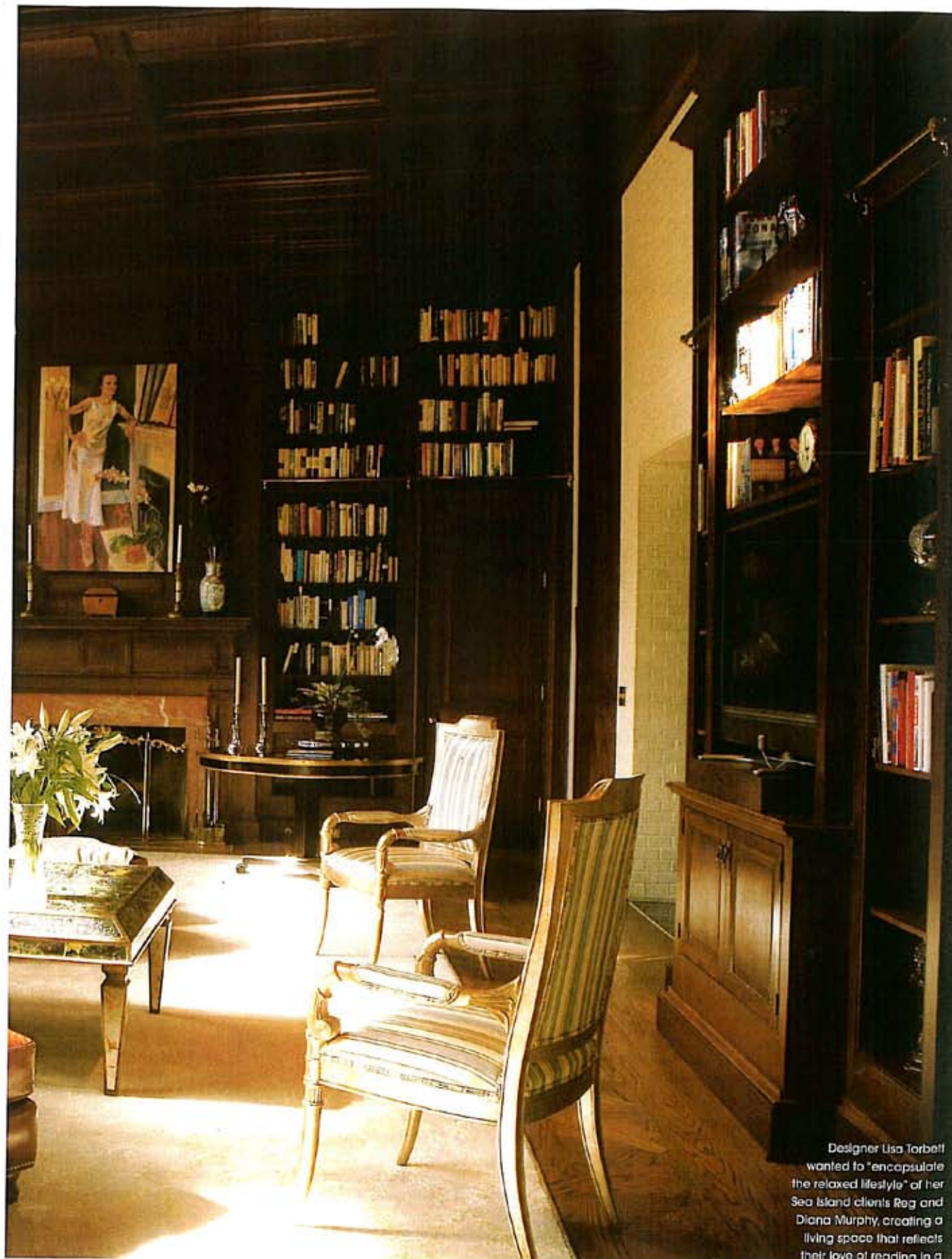
this is
**THE
LIFE**

Coming home to paradise



Close to
HOME

WHEN YOUR CLIENT IS YOUR NEIGHBOR



Designer Usa Torbett wanted to "encapsulate the relaxed lifestyle" of her Sea Island clients Reg and Diana Murphy, creating a living space that reflects their love of reading in a

LIKE MANY OF her neighbors, Lisa Torbett, a favorite decorator among Sea Island families, grew up playing golf. She also enjoys taking the occasional unhurried stroll along the beach. But these days, Torbett finds herself with little time for hobbies, apart from occasional trips to Palm Beach or New York City. And even those are generally for antiquing and other work-related pursuits. "With my full schedule, I'm just too busy," she says in a regional accent infused with the warmth that helps define it.

After 25 years in business, Torbett has a residential-client list, starting with Bill Jones III, that would be the envy of anyone on the *Architectural Digest* 100. It also includes John Cay III, chairman of Wachovia Insurance Services, and Reginald (Reg) Murphy, a former editor of *The Atlanta Constitution*, and now vice chairman of the National Geographic Society. "Sea Island is a very private place," says Torbett. "It's full of many high-profile people who come here because they want to get away from it all." Well, not entirely. "They like to entertain," she adds, "but they just aren't flashy or showy about it."

Sea Island socializing has a long association with its club facilities, and Torbett has worked on virtually all of them. Besides her design touches at such venues as the Ocean Forest clubhouse and suites and Cabin Bluff, the University of Georgia graduate (who has a fine art degree in interior design) has most recently left her mark on the boathouse and clubhouse at Frederica. "For some reason, we have fallen into a niche of doing clubs," she says of her firm, Lisa Torbett Interiors Inc. on St. Simons Island. In the past, Torbett has handled design work for such clubs as the Augusta National. Her commercial work includes banks, law offices and restaurants.

As a licensed interior designer who has long been active in the American Society of Interior Designers, Torbett has had vast experience working with national, state and local building codes. So in

codes and other technical requirements. (She was the recipient of a Georgia Mainstreet Award for ecological restructuring and design.)

Having lived in the area since she was 2, Torbett has a bedrock understanding of her Sea Island clients. As she puts it: "They are a low-key crowd that doesn't have anything to prove." Ironically, it was the not-so-subtle Addison Mizner who set the tone for Sea Island design in the 1920s with the original Cloister hotel. The influence of his Mediterranean-revival style can still be seen in numerous private homes and cottages at Sea Island and its immediate environs. Residences are rife with his signatures: intricate wrought-iron lighting fixtures and gates; high pecky-cypress-beamed ceilings; heart-pine floors; plaster walls; and other historical Spanish accents. A number of these houses have interior courtyards. The style seems to complement the ancient trees that drip Spanish moss.

For Torbett, who describes her own style of decorating as "eclectic," these residences often call for continental decor, with antique Oriental rugs, overscale European antiques, sun-blocking curtains, intimate groupings of comfortable upholstered furniture and wood floors. Other, more recently built houses—many of them acquired as vacation homes by key players in American business—require less formal, more child-friendly interiors.

"The island has evolved from vacation to permanent homes for more and more people," says Reg Murphy, who bought his first place in the area 25 years ago. He and his wife, Diana, managing director of a Florida private-equity company, recently purchased their second Sea Island house after they decided to live here full-time following his retirement as president and CEO of the National Geographic Society. "It's a legendary place to play golf—the winter temperatures are moderate and the sea breezes are soft," Murphy continues. "When you can live anywhere you want, it means something to live here."

The Murphys were specific about their needs when they turned to





THE BRIGHT, COMFORTABLE
GROUPING OF SEATS ALLOWS
FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO
SOCIALIZE WHILE MEALS
OF ALL SIZES COME TOGETHER

Opposite: The Murphys' kitchen features a separate Mediterranean-inspired seating area. Fruit and botanical references in the draperies foster a seamless blending of the room with the outdoors.

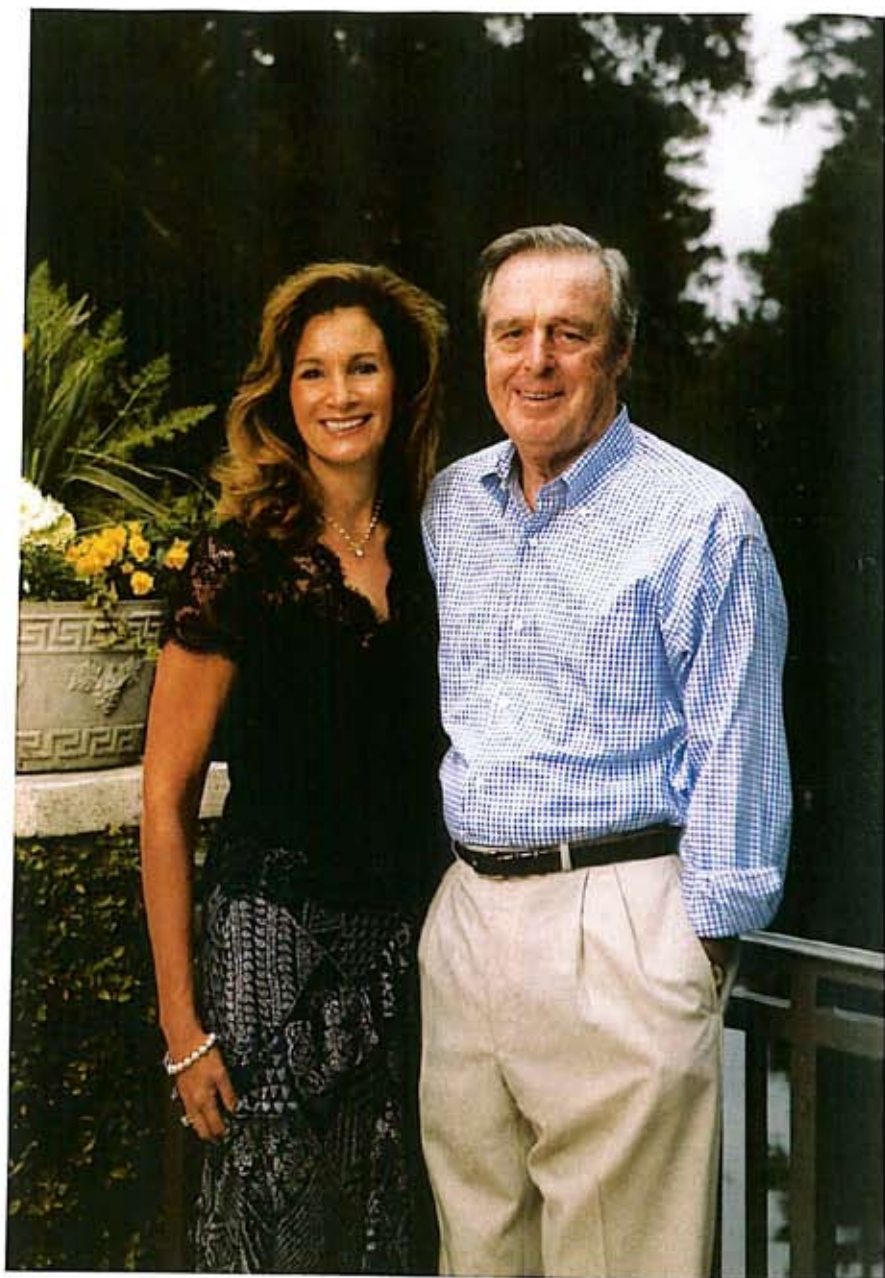
don't collect antiques; we collect books and comfortable furniture that allow us to sit, read, talk and listen to music." To reflect the prominence of literature in the couple's life, the house's great room, which has 20-foot ceilings and overlooks the terrace and a lagoon, is lined with 7,000 books.

Torbett kept the tone of her designs for the Murphys decidedly casual. The house's distinct seating groups make the home an inviting place for family gatherings, garden-club and book-group get-togethers and one of Reg's favorites, the Sea Island Round Table, which discusses current affairs. Diana, too, is active in a number of community organizations. "Lisa put in a lot of pull-up chairs, so people can join each other around the upholstered furniture," says Reg. "Most families here are involved in one kind of volunteer organization or another. People from The Boys and Girls Clubs, the community foundation and the historical society tend to get together frequently."

Torbett also designed an office for Reg, who continues to write and serves on several corporate boards. Not to be overlooked was the kitchen. Reg felt it was unfair for Diana, who does most of the family cooking, to be alone while preparing dinner. So he requested a sitting area there. The bright, comfortable grouping Torbett fashioned allows family and friends to socialize while meals of all sizes come together.

The Murphys have nothing but praise for Torbett's work. But, then, as the designer notes, "it's all about relationships; once you know your client, you become friends." Listening plays a key role in that process. "Perhaps you begin to truly understand the clients and their lifestyle," she says. "I've learned that if you can capture their personalities and desires, you will end up with happy clients." After all, Torbett contends, the collaboration should be a pleasant experience for everyone involved.

While the Murphys may be more interested in fireplaces than fabrics, other clients have their own dreams. Throughout her career, Torbett has nimbly interpreted a wide range of those dreams. A few years ago, she completed the interiors for Bill Jones III's hunting estate, Broadfield, taking her cues from 19th-century regional style. She used fabrics from F. Schumacher and Brunschwig & Fils, as well as antique English Windsor chairs, 18th-century furniture, sporting pictures and primitive wooden pieces. Says Torbett, "It's a mix of sophisticated style and backcountry functionality."



Diana and Reg Murphy on the deck of their Sea Island house, which overlooks a lagoon. The home has been decorated by Torbett to reflect the couple's many interests, including reading, travel and cooking.

of their owners. "People think of what we do as traditional, more Mediterranean, with dark woods," Torbett says of her firm. "Personally, I love all-white interiors accented with antiques, artwork and sculpture. I like a contemporary edge, with upholstered pieces in a playful mixture of colors and textures." She particularly enjoys mixing it up in beachfront houses. What are some of the elements that work well for these prized coastal homes? "I think wicker and teak furnishings, the textures of jute rugs, travertine tile and colorful cottons and silks present an air of casual comfort," says Torbett. And sometimes she needn't look far to amplify the requisite sense of place: "I try to choose local artwork that reflects Sea Island."

If there is a common thread that runs through her work, Torbett believes it's derived from the very region she serves. "After all," she reflects, "my clients come here because they love the area." ■