


he house has a grandeur that risks being reduced by superlatives. The 13 -foot 4 -inch ceiling in the foyer soars to an elliptical dome in the Great Room that is 23 feet 6 inch high.The curved, double story exterior window wall faces east, framing a panoramic seascape and looking beyond the sound to Hilton Head in the distance. Watching the morning light sparkling on the water the mistress of the house-aptly

## referred to as Queen by her family-says, look at the diamonds out

 there." Prisms of light create patterns on the stone floors and plastered walls. The open twin staircases rise to an open central hall and balcony that overlook the first floor. The dome's massive chandelier is mechanized so it can be reached for cleaning. The volume of space and light creates a feeling that borders on reverence.The owners' yoga instructor has said, "It feels like I'm in church here.


The house is brought down to earth by the owners' humor and ground-
ed geniality. (Although the encyed geniality. (Although the ency-
dopedic-size design book where onna catalogued their thousands of design decisions and selections is called the "bibe.") The grand spaces are complemented by intimate, human-scale rooms. It is all made livale fully executed by Mike, Ken and Donna-who I now think of as the "triumphant triumvirate." Mike and Ken are calm, competent and seemingly unflappable. Donna brings the effervescence; that race and women. Though slender as a palmetto blade she can go toe to toe with the men, including the hus-band-decidedly the alpha male
band-decide the alpha male.
Mike Vaccaro has designed several custom homes on Daufuskie, including his parents', but this house was his first Italianate style home. He likes the chal-
lenge of researching the history and learning the lenge of researching the history and learning the
design elements of different periods. In the United design elements of different periods. In the United
States, Italianate architecture was popularized as an States, Italianate architecture was popularized as an alternative to Gothic or Greek revival architecture as early as the 1840 s. Blandwood, built in North Carolina in 1844 and the former residence of North Carolina governor, John Morehead, is the oldest traliang example. Various reintes to American Vic orian archie beca from the mid to the late 19th century, up and down the East Coast.
The Daufuskie home's owners believe there is magic in arches so an Italianate style heve was magic in arches so an Italianate style home was a perfect choice. The architectural design is rich in arched windows, doors and thresholds. Mike employed other characteristic elements: Tuscan columns; balustrades on porches and entry steps; balco-
nies with wrought iron railings; deep over-hanging nies with wrought iron railings; deep over-hanging
eaves supported by brackets; an arched stone entry eaves supported by brackets; an arched stone en
with a richly detailed archivolt; both hipped roofs with a richly detailed archivolt; both hipped rofted and flat roofs. The red roof tiles were custom crafted
in Mexico.The use of symmetrical architectural fea-tures-matching stairways, paired columns flanking tresholds, twin upstairs/downstairs master suitesare mixed with asymmetrical details and spaces that add to the house's visual interest.

The architectural drawings are beautiful; like artwork. Building the house a different task. Ken Crast looks up the elliptical dome and the 14-inch deep crown molding that surround and shakes his head with the slightest smile "Antim bend wood you bo of curves in this house. Even the wals have radus edges Structural engineers hat go dop to eting sold enough to ador gi 8200 sun fort house to the site The building crew used square foot house to the ste. he birhy crew wed 30,00 pounds of structural steel to support it. The stone used on the floors and stairways flanking the foyer were from Turkey and had to be fabricated on site. The cast stone fireplace surrounds had to be drawn on AutoCAD and sent to Architectural Cast Stone in Charlotte, N.C for fabrication. For the fireplace in the Great Room, the owners couldn't visualize the proper height of the surround compared to the domed ceiling height. On a seemingly endless roll of paper either Mike or Ken sketched it out to scale, then climbed a very tall ladder and pinned it up so they could see if it was right. Each cabinet, vanity and display case (with inset French wire) was custom made, as were the wrought iron stair banisters and railings for the balconies. The millwork and stonecutting was done on sight. Every piece of machinery, building material, finish material and furnishing had to be scheduled, shipped, freighted and ferried to an island whose only access is by water. Ken developed special software to handle the massive logistics.
With the amount of glass, iron and stone, the intefior could have felt cold The "triumphant triumvirate" prevented that. Wood is used extensively in the architectural details, finishes and furnishings to counterbalance the coolness. The stone floors in the central public
 crpets in te privite zone induding the mater suite
 , equipped gym, the kitchen, keeping room, family room,
 ar and and granite surfaces. Hand-cut bricks are used in the barreled kitchen ceiling, the surround of the keeping room fireplace, and accent the arched thresholds to the Great room and dining room adding rusticated texture.



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onna Coudes, who has worked with the owners for more than 20 years, has translated their tastes and preferences into an elegant, in-和 personal and private sanctuary for the couple. "Together, ouple has traveled the world.They have lived in New Zealand. The be built decorated moved in and moved out of numerous homes final house. Donna carefully selected furnishings, treasures and per onal keepsakes to showcase in this house. She masterminded the furniture layouts and placement of every decorative accessory on paper, and then crated and coded each ite by room to expedite the move-in proces
In the wife's water-view office-a personal and romantic room with a curved V ed in apricot velvet-her mother's gardening hat and an intricately beaded Indonesian baby carrier are displayed among the many books that befit a former librarian. The matching husband's office on the first floor is paneled mahogany and fully soundproofed-a marital compromise sall he wouldn't be bothered (or bothersome.) The top of a closed grand piano in the hall beneath the south stairs displays framed pictures of friends and family. The owners' art eollection includes: an explosive painting of seagulls in flight by renowned New Zeima artist Peter Mclntyre; blazing expressionist works by
There is a strong Asian influence in many of the personal objets d'art and furnishings displayed throughout the house. Perhaps this contributes to the pervading sense of orderliness and serenity. Except for the mahogany paneled study (which is the wife favorite place to read), her husband's paneled office, and the wallpapered powder room and baths, the walls are a creamy Venetian plaster with light taupe trim. Throughout the house Donna, hand-in-hand with her client and now long-time friend, selected a palette of taupes and creams with accents in "pinky, apricot colors" for the soft furnishings and fabrics. The neutral background gives a quiet cohesion to the multiple spaces and gives ight, nature and the outdoor seascape center stage.
The "ladies" were given one inviolate rule by the "master of the house." Under NO circumstances were they allowed to cover any of the glass in the doors or windows. Not anywhere. Donna managed to soften the expansive great room window wall with ingeniously designed stationery drapery panels. Bedroom drapes are decorative and steer clear of the windows. Guests will be happy to wake up with the sun.
The owners invite us to lunch on their patio overlooking their waterfront beach. Af er touring the house we get to experience it. The conversation among these old friends is as warm as the sun; the peacefulness as palpable as the cool breeze off the water. In so rare as a perfect day?"

