

Best of the Beaches: Take a Classic Beach Vacation

# Birmingham

smart living savvy business magazine



## Moving on Up

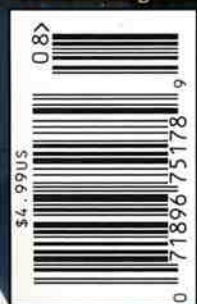
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# bmag features

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four classic beach favorites

Outside Sandy and Mike Whitten's Homewood house





# STAYING PUT

Sandy and Mike Whitten couldn't say goodbye to the breathtaking views and fond family memories of their well-loved Homewood home. So, they transformed the home to embrace its surroundings with a casual yet sophisticated style.

By Mary Ellen Stancill

Photography by Beau Gustafson

For nearly 20 years, Sandy and Mike Whitten's Homewood house was the central location—and often resembled Grand Central Station—for their four children as well as a host of others. The living room saw regular gatherings of church and ministry groups of up to 75 teenagers at a time. Sandy's excellent cooking meant additional spots at the dinner table were a regular occurrence. "It was well used and well loved," says Sandy.

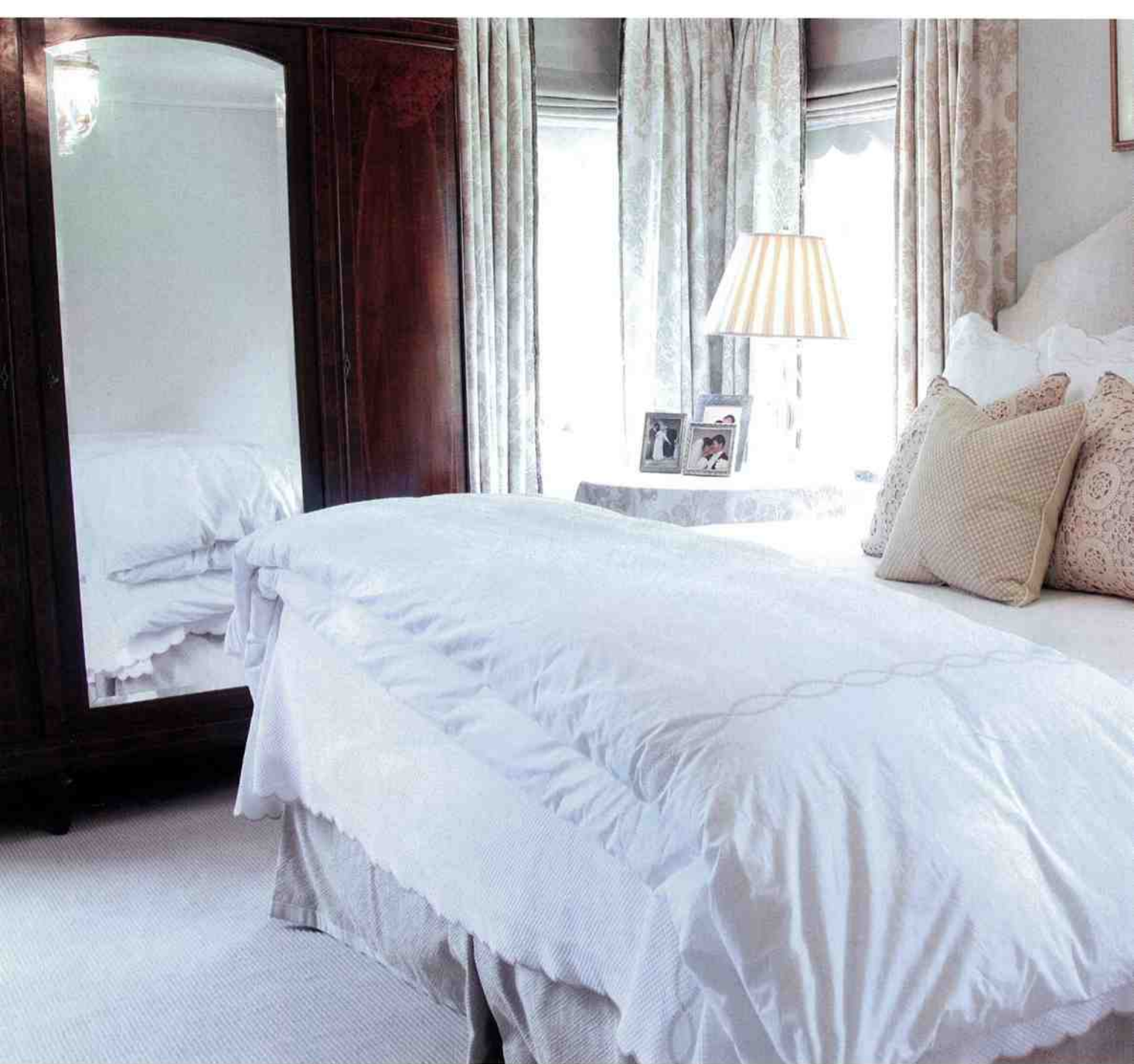
So when the nest became empty, Sandy and Mike briefly considered a move but ultimately chose to renovate the 1937-era house that held so many memories yet was in need of an overhaul. "This particular location we love because you have a view of Shades Mountain and a view of Red Mountain," says Sandy. "You can hear the OLS [Our Lady of Sorrows] chimes and the Samford chimes at different times of day. It's a nice, convenient location, and we have a lot of friends on the street, so we thought it was time to redo and stay put." "A lot of people don't know that Homewood has this kind of mountain top," adds Mike.















Architect Bruce McLeod created a plan that allows the home's covetable location to take center stage. During the renovations, two second-floor bedrooms were removed above the living room to open up the space for a large window, which looks out over Shades Mountain and sets the tone for the architecture throughout the entire house. In the enlarged kitchen and cozy keeping room, windows frame views of Red Mountain. Just off the kitchen, a screened porch constructed with 10-inch cedar beams is Mike's favorite spot for a morning cup of coffee. Furnished with an outdoor rug and furniture upholstered with outdoor fabrics, the entire "room" can be hosed down after a visit from the grandchildren. "Here, you're looking up at trees, down at Samford and you're even with The Club," says Mike. "When the leaves aren't there, you can see downtown Homewood."

Interior Designer Tammy Connor was also involved in every step of the renovation. While Tammy works on many projects throughout the Southeast, there was a special connection for her with this home and these homeowners. Growing up as the "best buddy" of the Whittens' oldest child, Tammy is one of their former teenage regulars. She knew the home needed to function as a cozy spot for two but also accommodate the Whittens' four grown children and their spouses as well as their six grandchildren, ages 4 and younger. "Really, it was a good match because it's kind of what we do, which is sophisticated but casual at the same time," explains Tammy.

A neutral color palette with touches of blue (Sandy's favorite color) and a mixture of antique and new pieces unify the rooms and create the sophisticated, casual feel of the home. No room feels too precious for guests to think twice about kicking off their shoes and curling up in a chair. In the living room, a large ottoman rather than a coffee table allows family and friends to pile up while an antique armoire holds its own against the scale of the massive window and fireplace. But the armoire also serves a functional purpose, housing the flat screen television. In the kitchen Urban Electric lanterns in a custom paint color are hung low to create an intimate feel











while a bench seat at the breakfast table allows ample space for a crowd.

The master bedroom and bath is one area that the Whittens keep just for themselves. The dressing room/bathroom in particular is a favorite, private spot. "We've always had old houses and old houses have old bathrooms," says Mike. "We told the architect to give us a bathroom to die in and for Tammy to decorate," he says with a laugh. Alabama white marble counters, a spa shower, custom mirrors and lighting, an antique bench and an Oushak rug all add to the luxurious space.

With renovations complete, the Whittens' home is sure to continue to be well-used and well-loved for many years to come. And as their grandchildren grow up, the timeless balance of casual yet sophisticated interiors will accommodate their second round of teenagers. 📸

## Resources:

Interior Design: Tammy Connor Interior Design, Tammy Connor and Laney S. Maxey

Architect: Bruce McLeod

Builder: DWP Construction

Landscape Architect: Holcombe Norton

Partners, Tommy Holcombe

Cabinet maker: Kerr Cabinet Company

