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A love for Vero Beach began with

THE HOUSE THAT FOUND ITS FAMILY



The House Found Us

AT THIS OCEAN LANE RESIDENCE, MEDITERRANEAN SOPHISTICATION MEETS BEACHSIDE BLISS

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Whenever Beth Grosshans heard her husband, Dennis Stattman, mention the possibility of living in Florida, she didn't pay much attention. After all, there was no way two former Midwesterners who had met years ago while watching their respective 9-year-old sons play soccer on a field in Princeton, New Jersey, would ever own a home in the Sunshine State. It was too crowded, too hot, too humid, and then there were all those hurricanes. Definitely not for her.

"I admit I had a stereotypical perception of Florida. It was a place I never wanted to live," Grosshans says, wrinkling her nose. "But Dennis kept saying Florida is in our future, and he continued researching available properties on the internet."

When Stattman got a call from a representative of Concierge Auctions alerting him to a Mediterranean-inspired two-story, six-bedroom, nine-bath oceanside estate in Vero Beach, he told his wife they should check it out.

"I went along with Dennis, not thinking it would turn out to be anything we would seriously consider," she muses. "Neither one of us had ever been to Vero Beach, so we had no idea what it was like."

They were about to find out.

This view of the lush landscaping, the infinity pool and the ocean helped convince Grosshans to take a closer look at Vero Beach as a potential home.



“We flew to Palm Beach, where we stayed overnight, and early the next morning as we drove north I noticed there was less traffic, and when we got to Vero and crossed over the bridge to the barrier island there were no high-rises blocking the view of the ocean,” says Grosshans, recalling the route that led them to their destination, where they were greeted by Clark French, who represented Concierge Auctions at the time.

“What initially attracted me to the house was all the lush landscaping. Then, when we walked in the front door and looked out to see the infinity pool, the beach and the ocean, I told Dennis, ‘I think we need to spend some time here.’”

They did, staying far longer than anticipated as they took in the coffered and tray ceilings and mosaic-inlaid travertine marble floors. Along the way they discovered a few bonuses, among them a home movie theater with state-of-the-art acoustics and a volleyball court down by the beach — all perfect for their blended family of six.

There went any thought Grosshans had about taking a quick look around, thanking French for his time, waving goodbye and checking Vero Beach off their list.

Sensing the couple’s growing interest, French suggested he take them on a tour of the area. “We drove all around for hours, and the more we saw, the more we were charmed,” says Grosshans. “Frankly, Clark had me at ‘Lady Bug’ when I saw the sand street and all the wonderful oak trees.”

Before they knew it, it was late afternoon, and French shrewdly suggested they meet up with two of his colleagues and have cocktails on the veranda at the Quail Valley River Club. “Looking out over the water, friendships began to form and our love affair with Vero began,” she enthuses. “We thought we’d only be here for about two to three hours, but we were having such a fabulous time we didn’t head back to Palm Beach until 7 p.m.

“When we woke up the next morning, Dennis and I looked at each other and said we have to buy that house. I felt like we had not just found a house, but a home. My first call was to Deb (Leamann, award-winning interior designer and good friend) and said, ‘Buckle your seat belt, we’re going to Vero Beach.’”

Beth had contacted Leamann several years earlier after she and Stattman had purchased their first home together.



Rooms like this cozy nook connected to the kitchen and family room demonstrate Grosshans’ commitment to designing a home that is as livable as it is sophisticated.



Peacocks, long symbols of royalty, grace the chairs and walls in the formal dining room.



This place setting displays Grosshans' and designer Deb Leamann's knack for creating layers of interesting detail.

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– BETH GROSSHANS

Long an admirer of the Princeton-based designer's work, Grosshans had no idea they were going to be “so simpatico,” as she puts it. “Deb and I have a yin-yang connection. We’ve been on the same page since day one.”

Since then, the two have collaborated on a number of Grosshans-Stattman interior design renovation projects. Their goal has always been to create a warm, inviting family home that is stylish, welcoming and meant to be enjoyed.

“One of the things we pay close attention to is the style of architecture; in this case the house has a strong Mediterranean influence. We knew there needed to be sophistication, but at the same time I wanted to create a place where you feel comfortable in your flip-flops.

“It’s the personal touches that tip a house towards the more formal or casual. Deb’s slogan, ‘Rooms you love to live in,’ really is our guiding sense. Today there’s a trend towards a more

minimal look, but I like ‘stuff,’” she says, smiling as her fingers form air quotes.

“While the house was easy to love because each room was so beautiful, we were eager to make it our own. There were a lot of aesthetic changes made that capture our look and lifestyle. We jumped right in, putting our personal touch on it with some renovations, new fabrics and furnishing. For the renovations we wanted, we contacted Croom Construction Company and did a major facelift to the kitchen.

“After having worked together for so long, Deb and I have a whole system we follow that works,” says Grosshans. “It happened organically, and by now we’re pretty darn good at it. I usually tell her what I’m looking for, the feel I want, and we get a vision of what that looks like.”

Typically, custom furniture is ordered from a diverse group of furniture makers, while fabrics and wall coverings like Ralph Lauren

and Schumacher are selected in Leamann’s office, where she has a design studio. Everything is placed in individual room piles and, when ready, boxed and shipped to the project site, in this case, Vero Beach.

“Deb and I met here for four days, where we worked from 9 in the morning to 11 at night, putting everything together. We had a ball.” Her eyes sparkle as she recalls a hectic but happy curating memory. “Dennis doesn’t know anything that we’ve been doing until the ‘great reveal.’ He says he thinks this is his favorite place of all.”

Grosshans considers herself to have been lucky the day she was driving along Old Dixie Highway and caught sight of Loggia Home and Garden on the east side of the street and Decorative Arts on the west. Her foot hit the brakes. “This was before Sandy (How) closed her mainland store. I found so many wonderful things at both stores. Deb and I would drive over there and just load



This view, looking from the living room through the front entry, is one of many vistas where the eye is drawn outside into nature.

up our cars with things I had found. There were other places here I also shopped. Vero has so many rich sources.”

Stattman’s two-story office is a perfect example of what those sources are. What had been a formal and darker room is now lighter and more inviting, thanks to a fresh decor that includes artwork Grosshans purchased at the Meghan Candler Gallery. Gone is the traditional bar that was situated in a nook. In its place is a settee with decorative pillows. Framed cartoons from The New Yorker form a conversation-prompting arrangement overhead.

The office also tells tales of their backgrounds. Stattman, recently retired as head of the Global Allocation Team at BlackRock, and Grosshans, a retired child psychologist and author of the parenting book “Beyond Time Out,” were meant to meet on that soccer field and be together. “We knew the specialness in what we had found in each other. Dennis and I have four kids between the two of us, and all are independent and happy,” she says, pointing to photographs of four smiling faces on a shelf of the large mahogany bookcase behind her husband’s desk.

While the majority of books relate to the couple’s past and current interests, those lining shelves on the open second story are from Grosshans’ childhood. “After my father passed away and my mother had to move into an assisted living place, I was the one who packed up all the books that had been in their library. So when we moved here I said, ‘Let me bring some of my childhood books from 50 years ago,’” she says. While her perspective may have changed in the years since, the stories she read in her youth continue to hold a timeless appeal.

As does the house and the



Asian touches are mixed with other styles throughout the home, in keeping with Grosshans’ love for eclectic design.

OWEN MCGOLDRICK



The two-story office showcases details from the couple's lives and offers a warm retreat.

adopted city she and her husband found themselves falling in love with two years ago.

"This past Christmas, we flew the whole family down, and Deb and I really worked furiously to get everything ready. We wanted everything to be perfect, and it was. For a whole week we were all together doing all kinds of 'Vero stuff,' like having breakfast at the Lemon Tree, and we celebrated with a big New Year's Eve party right here out on the veranda. It was such fun!

"Every time Dennis and I are here we discover more and more about Vero Beach — everyone is so friendly and there's such a diversity of people, their backgrounds and where they come from," she enthuses. "I'm happy every day we spend here." ❁



Dennis Stattman and Beth Grosshans are delighted to be at home in the house that found them.

OWEN MCGOLDRICK



The guest house rises from rich foliage and reflects the home's Mediterranean architecture.