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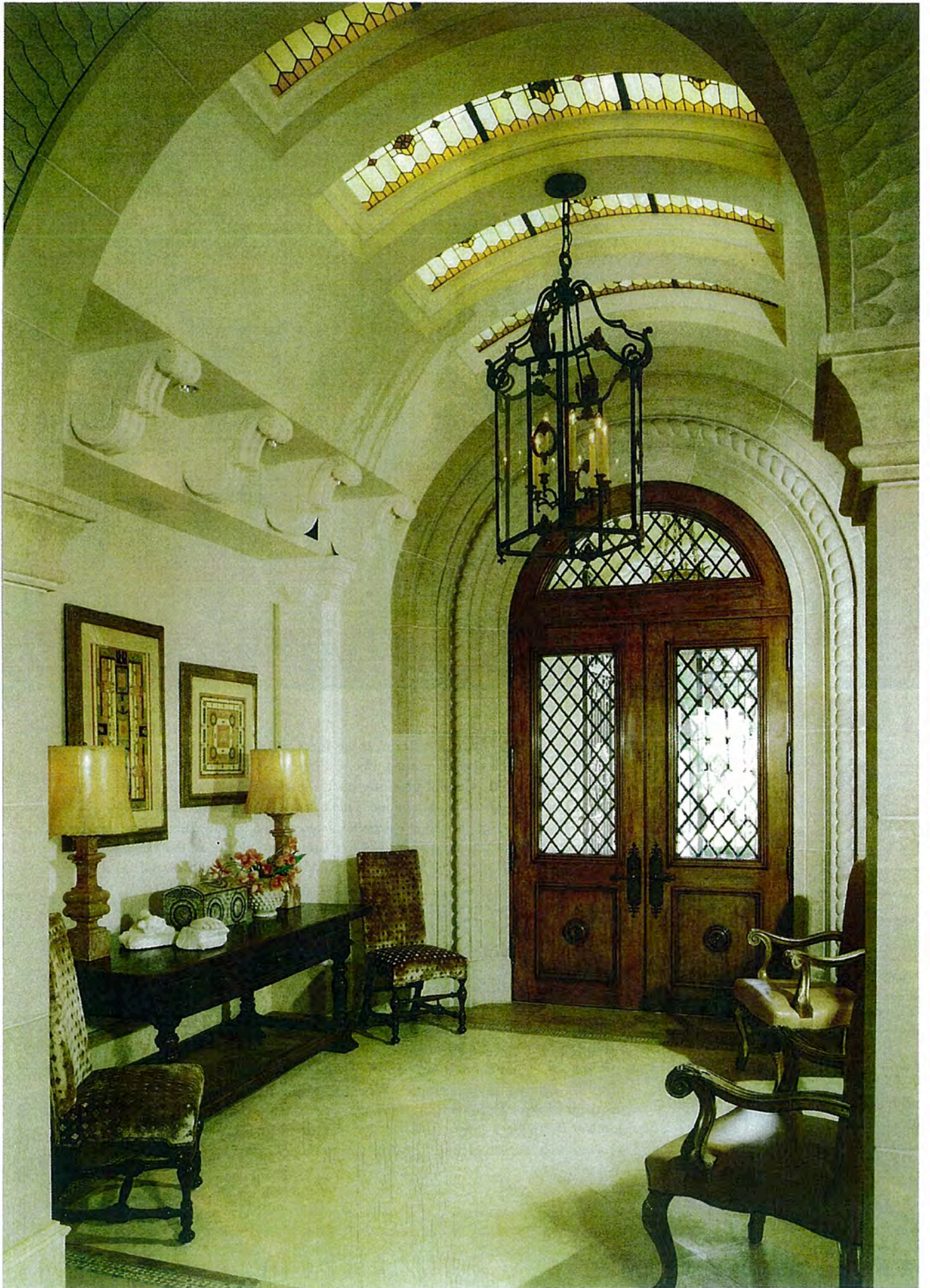
DESERT OASIS

For a Chicago-based couple and their extended family, this 24,000-square-foot estate in an arid stretch of Southern California provides a refreshing refuge. | BY SAMANTHA BROOKS

WITH ITS NEAR-CONSTANT SUNSHINE and numerous golf courses, the Southern California desert can prove irresistible—especially for those who reside in cold climes. Such was the case for a Chicago-based businessman and his wife who 20 years ago purchased a home at the Vintage Club, a private resort and golf community in Indian Wells, Calif. The couple, like many transplants before them, quickly took to desert living. But after enjoying their residence on a part-time basis for more than a decade, they learned of an especially attractive homesite for sale within the Vintage Club: a 1.5-acre lot adjacent to the community's man-made lake. "We had an expanding family with grandchildren," says the husband. "We wanted a different kind of home that would be a good place for our extended family to come visit."

After acquiring the lakefront site, the couple collaborated with Palm Springs, Calif., architect Thomas Jakway, designer Tom Allardyce of the Los Angeles interior design firm Hendrix Allardyce, contractor Gerry Langlois of the Palm Desert company G.O. Langlois Construction, and landscape architect Wayne Connor of the Palm Desert firm Wayne Connor & Associates to realize their vision for a family retreat. Their Mediterranean-inspired estate, which they completed in 2005, encompasses a 19,500-square-foot main house, a 1,100-square-foot guest residence, and 3,400 square feet of terraces and patios. (Shown here are the motor court, above, and foyer, right.) Since the conclusion of the four-year design-and-build process, the homeowners and their family members have been taking full advantage of the property on special occasions and, of course, in winter. ➤

TOP AND OPPOSITE: MARY E. NICHOIS





TOP AND OPPOSITE: MARY E. NICHOLS

Happy Together | A grand space for entertaining family and friends, the living room is a well-choreographed mix of different architectural styles and antiques from various periods. Careful planning on the part of Hendrix Allardyce kept the decor from looking too spontaneous: The company, which Allardyce helms with partner Illya Hendrix, developed detailed, hand-drawn architectural plans for this room and the others on the property. “After Tom [Jakway] gave us the elevations and styles of the architecture,” says Allardyce, “we added the details of the vaulted ceilings, moldings, and materials so the clients could see everything in full scale.”

The virtual layouts helped the designers decide what pieces to purchase and where to put them. “We used a lot of different sources to find the antiques,” says Allardyce, adding that his firm also created furnishings for the home. “We knew we’d have two years to accumulate all of the pieces, so we first decided which ones we’d manufacture, reupholster, or replicate for modern day. Those [pieces] went into production, and we decided that whatever [else] was [needed] would be the jewelry for the home.”

At the living room’s south end (right), a mid-19th-century Anglo-Indian table made of ebony and hardwoods stands before an Italian provincial sofa. Flanking the sofa are two round tables from Hendrix Allardyce’s namesake collection. The carpet is a 19th-century French empire Aubusson, while the Italian chandelier dates to the 18th century. Highlights on the north side of the room (above) include a 19th-century Portuguese coffee table, an 18th-century Italian wood-and-iron table, and a series of etchings depicting Egyptian monuments.





TOP AND BOTTOM: MARY E. NICHOLS



Chat Rooms | Among the conversation pieces in the dining room (above) is the floor—a composition of 8-inch-by-8-inch handmade concrete tiles infused with pewter- and ivory-colored pigments. “You see it a lot in Italy and the South of France,” says Allardyce of the floor’s old-world style. “It gives the look of carpet, but since it’s tile it lasts forever.” The space also includes an antique William IV mahogany dining table, a 19th-century French chandelier, a trio of Han Dynasty figurines, and an elegant coffered ceiling.

Distinctive touches in the family room (left) range from a Han Dynasty figure of a reclining horse to an 18th-century Italian console to an antique wood-and-walnut box inlaid with bronze and bone. The box, which rests on a circular 19th-century French table, is one of several such compartments that Allardyce placed throughout the home. “I love boxes,” he says. “There’s an element of surprise and mystery to them. And they are a great way to hide things, like a Crestron remote.”



Desert Oasis

TOP AND BOTTOM: MARY E. NICHOLS



Suite Escape | To ensure the master suite would feel like a private retreat for the homeowners—even when they were hosting the whole family—Jakway situated it at a far end of the main house. A tranquil ambience extends from the space’s secluded patio, with its sitting area, fireplace, and water feature, to the bedroom (above), bathroom (left), separate dressing room, and his and her closets. The bedroom’s furnishings include a black chinoiserie four-poster, an 18th-century European limestone fireplace, and an 18th-century French desk. In the bathroom, a leaded-glass window lets in natural light while affording privacy. A terra-cotta-colored marble bathtub, a 19th-century alabaster chandelier, and an English chinoiserie table also decorate the space.

The master suite’s blend of international styles is an aesthetic that carries over to the property’s three guest bedrooms. “Each guest suite has its own bedroom and sitting room and is in a separate wing with its own laundry,” says Jakway. “It’s carefully organized so that you never feel like you’re walking through a shopping mall.”



TOP AND BOTTOM: MARY E. NICHOLS



Sun and Games | Fun is the focus of the main house's recreation room (above). Here family and friends can shoot pool on a table made in 1928, play shuffleboard on a contemporary custom shuffleboard table, or engage in a chess match while seated at a Hendrix Allardyce Collection table (a reproduction of an 18th-century Italian design). Refreshments can be enjoyed at the bar, above which hangs an intricate cornice molding that is both inclusive of and inspired by an 18th-century wood carving the homeowners acquired through a Sotheby's auction.

Just off the game room in an area of the backyard (left) is an oversize chess set influenced by one that Allardyce saw while he was traveling in France. "The homeowners are avid chess players," he says. "This space is fun to look at, but they actually use it too." The stone-tile board and cast-resin pieces sit beside a rusticated stone fountain topped with a 19th-century carved stone figure. Elsewhere in the yard lies an infinity pool rimmed with micromosaic Italian glass tiles.

Desert Oasis



TOP AND BOTTOM: STEPHEN ALLARD



Back Stage | Unlike traditional Mediterranean homes, which tend to have dark interiors, this reinterpretation of the style features floor-to-ceiling windows that let in plenty of light. “We didn’t want anything too classic Mediterranean,” says the husband, “because we wanted a lot of glass to be able to enjoy the view.”

The homeowners also requested that the back of the main house (this page) be broad and open. The outdoor dining terrace (above at left) is just steps from the colonnade off the living room (above at right) and the pool. Wayne Connor brought the home’s landscaping of palm trees, bougainvillea, and boulders right to the edge of the Vintage Club’s lake (left). Across the water lies one of the club’s golf courses.

Despite its resort-community setting and views, the couple’s home—owing partly to its grand scale and multiple rooms (among those not shown here are a wine room, media area, exercise studio, and gift-wrapping and dog-grooming spaces)—suggests a primary residence as much as it does a desert retreat. “It’s more the kind of house you’d find in an urban environment,” says Jakway. “It’s opened people’s minds to see what you can build in a desert environment.” ■

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