



*Originally a fishing retreat with a low, flat ceiling, this home was redesigned for volume and to capture views.*

## TROPICAL TEX-MEX

ROBERT BARNES, A.I.A., RENOVATION ARCHITECT  
 CAROLE KENNEY, A.S.I.D., INTERIOR DESIGNER  
 OSCAR THOMPSON, PHOTOGRAPHER

"Dungeon-like" is how some people referred to this residence before architect Robert Barnes, A.I.A., renovated it, giving it a sense of volume and opening it up to relate to the environment. Originally intended as a fishing retreat, the house in no way related to the beauty of the natural setting in which it was located - the concern seemed to be having the boat out back, stocked with plenty of bait, food and drink, ready to take to the high seas. The design of the house disregarded its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, its magnificent views and the comfortable prevailing breezes. Several additions had been made to the original house through the years and, in

fact, a gorgeous back porch with beautiful ocean views existed; two attractive bedrooms existed, one at each end of the house, and each with its own views of the ocean; but the central corridor where the living, kitchen and dining rooms were located had an extremely low, flat ceiling, a prevailing darkness, an overall feeling of confinement, and no relationship to the back porch and views. For Robert, renovating a house is simply a matter of determining the positive elements, emphasizing them to offset the negative elements, and then making the negative elements positive. In this case, there were strong positives but they appeared negative because of the one



*Now open to the ocean, the living room carries desert colors with persimmons, teals and purples. Simple side panels allow unobstructed views.*

most negative element: the living room. Working basically with the same floor plan, Robert created a remarkable transformation by doing little more than having the existing roof removed and adding high, volume ceilings. Here and there, spaces were modified to open them to each other and to the outdoors. Also, a golf cart room was enlarged and converted into a bedroom. Some elements - such as certain closets - were removed to allow a smoother flow and to enable more light to pass through the home. The back porch was given a sense of belonging and intimacy by defining the space more clearly, adding soffits and re-tiling the bar. Coordinating with the reno-

vation efforts was interior designer Carole Kenney, A.S.I.D., who worked with the owners to establish something of a Southwestern-Mexican look. Interestingly, most of the interior concepts and decisions were implemented long distance. Carole talked with the owners by telephone, learned their color and style preferences and, working with a "sixth sense," established the scheme. The owners are fond of bright colors - particularly persimmons, deep oranges and teals - so Carole worked with these colors to give a very bright, Florida Keys look with a suggestion of Southwestern. An off-white ceramic tile floor was installed throughout the house

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The volume ceiling creates a new sense of spaciousness in the living, dining and kitchen areas. The kitchen was pickled to match the ceiling.



Alabaster scones flank stone mirror. Candelabra is Mexican iron.

for a flowing indoor-outdoor feel. Unusual accent pieces and Mexican pottery were incorporated with the owners' collection of Southwestern artifacts. A custom-designed area rug in the living room reflects the persimmons, teals and deep purples of the desert. Its geometric design echoes the geometric roof line and windows of the house. Simple side panels incorporate the same colors as the rug and dress the sliding glass doors but do not block the outdoor views. The Mexican faux stone table and the sofa are neutral while accents of color are brought in with the club chairs, pillows, artwork and various accessories. The dining area also carries a soft, casual Southwestern motif. The dining table features geometrically-shaped stone pedestals with a pickled wood pole going through them, topped with glass. The pickled pine chairs are upholstered in a fabric which coordinates with the living room pillow and drapery fabric. To the side is a faux stone shelf with an octagonal-

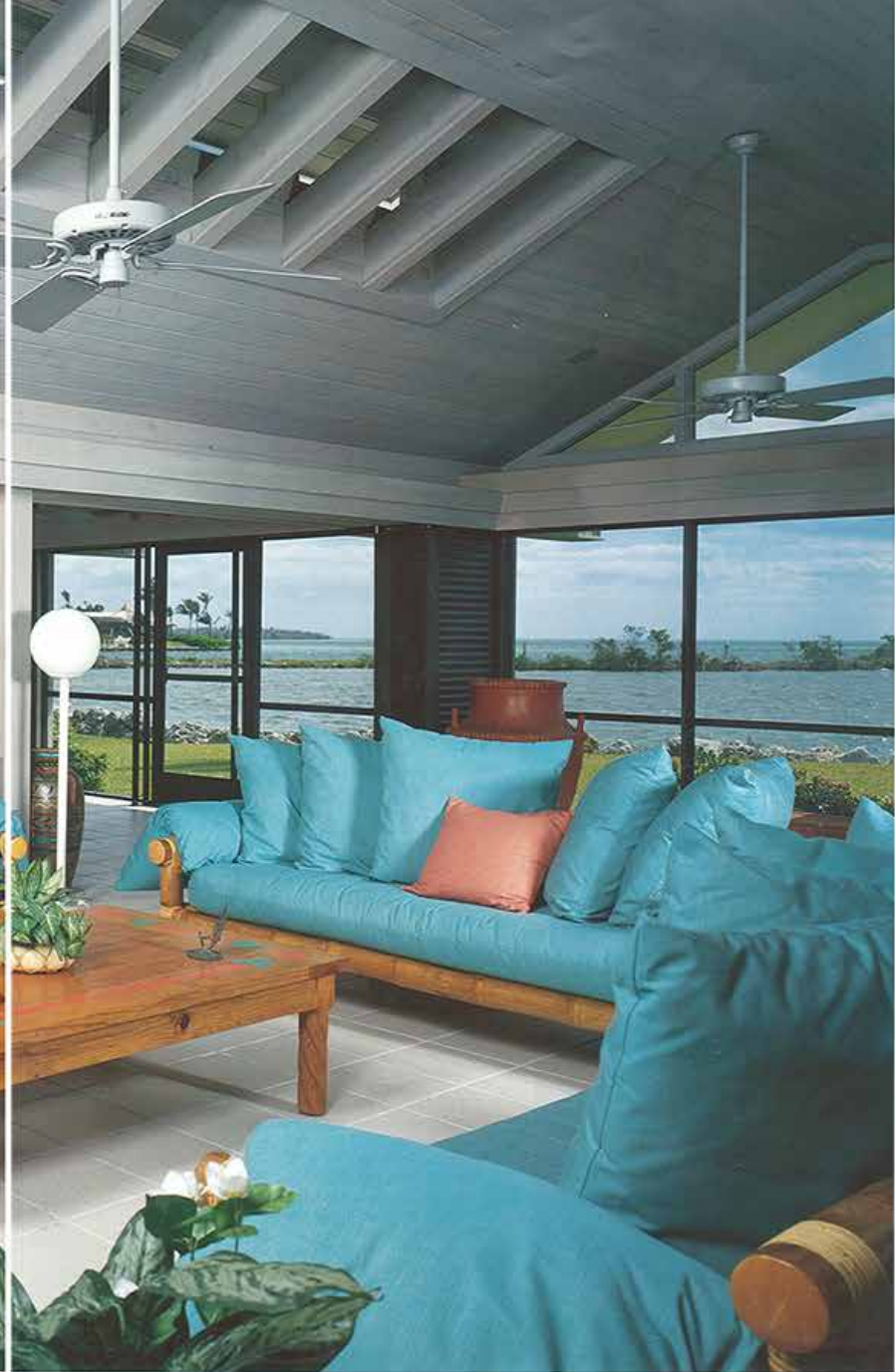
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The foyer piece is hand-painted from Mexico. To the side, the Mexican pot features a salamander jumping through it.



Much time is spent in the comfortable covered patio with its fresh ocean breezes and panorama of water. The sofas



are heavy bamboo pole wrapped with twine. The lacquered pine table is from Mexico as are pots and accessories.



*The guest bedroom, which overlooks the ocean, carries a soft Southwestern motif with a sprinkling of grays, peaches and sea foam.*



*The master bedroom with accents of deep desert colors opens directly to the sauna and spectacular views.*



*The ambiance of the tropical setting is enjoyed from this outdoor area.*

ly-shaped, beveled stone mirror above. Alabaster sconces flank the mirror. The original kitchen was gutted completely and entirely redesigned. The cabinetry was pickled to match the ceiling and blend with the architecture. The backsplash is a white Mexican tile. Suspended lighting fixtures with a faux stone finish coordinate with the chandelier above the dining room table. The living-dining-kitchen area, so open and airy, flows directly into the breezy and spacious enclosed patio with its sweeping views of the ocean. Realizing that this area would be a favorite living space, the interior designer wanted to make it extremely comfortable while capitalizing on the water views and breezes. Sofas and chairs are bamboo pole wrapped with twine and accented with large, oversized cushions. The indoor-outdoor fabric is weather resistant and will not be affected by the moisture in the air. The pine table is from

Mexico. Design details, painted on the corners by the interior designer, reflect the colors of the house. The wet bar countertop, originally in copper, was refinished with a combination of teal and persimmon tile. This change of color alone brought a vibrance to the entire space. The addition of large terra-cotta pots from Mexico and greenery beautifully complements the Southwestern ambiance. The master bedroom at one wing of the house and the two guest bedrooms at the other wing also reflect the easy Southwestern theme. All of the rooms in this home now are charming individually and also as they relate together. What is so remarkable about the striking transformation of this residence is that it occurred without changing much of the existing floor plan of the original structure. With creative architectural modifications and a change of decor, an ordinary house can become an impressive statement.



*The impact of sunset is an exquisite reminder of the beauty which naturally prevails.*