

# THE WELL-LIVED LIFE

COLLEEN AND CURTIS BASHAW  
A DECORATOR UPDATES A CLASSIC VICTORIAN FOR  
HER BROTHER IN CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY, THE SEASIDE  
TOWN WHERE THEY HAVE SUMMERED ALL THEIR LIVES





Near the beach and the hot dog stands, Curtis Bashaw's brown Italianate house, opposite page, has one of the best locations in Cape May, NJ. ■ For the Bashaws, the historic seaside town is a family affair. Colleen's nephew Forrest Hull, this page, right, arrives for a visit at her house, blocks from Curtis's. He and Colleen's son Mac Bohuny invade Mac's sister's bedroom, where the walls are in Sherwin Williams's Alyssum. An heirloom chair and valance coordinate in vintage Dek Tillet fabric. Braided chenille rug, Einstein Moomjy.





When Curtis and Colleen Bashaw first spotted the homes known as the Seven Sisters, they were children playing on the beach in Cape May, New Jersey. In a seaside village filled with wonderful Victorians, these houses were belles of the ball: seven Italianate residences all built in the early 1890s with identical flat roofs, overhanging eaves, and bow windows in front. Four decades later, Curtis, then one of the top hoteliers in Cape May, bought the one closest to the ocean to serve as a home for himself and his partner, Will Riccio, and as a hub for his business and friends. He enlisted Colleen, an alumna of the legendary Parrish-Hadley decorating firm, to oversee the interior design. The siblings had already collaborated on the stylish renovation of two historic Cape May hotels, Congress Hall and the Virginia. "Colleen pushes the envelope and makes sure I'm not sticking to the same old formula," Curtis says.

The Bashaw kids got to know Cape May in the 1960s, when the village, once among the top resorts on the eastern seaboard, was in decline. Back then, much of the action in town revolved around their grandfather, the Reverend Carl McIntire, a Presbyterian preacher who held a summer Bible conference in Cape May's creaky resorts. A fire-and-brimstone fundamentalist, McIntire was a controversial public figure. But to his family he was a warm and visionary man whose enthusiasm for Cape May turned him into an accidental preservationist. "We grew up in those old buildings, and he engendered in us a love for that place," Curtis says.

Since Curtis planned to use his beach house year-round, "it needed to be a four seasons suit," he says. He wanted an atmosphere that







Colleen's children, Mac and Blair Bohuny, opposite page, top, stop by Uncle Curtis's after a morning at the beach. A guest room's custom daybed and blinds are in Coconut Grove by Clarence House. The paint is Sherwin Williams's Tatami Tan. ■ In the dining room, above, Colleen mixed traditional elements like a Scottish antique table and chairs by John Wanamaker, ca. 1960, with beachy touches like Oly Studios' Serena electric Capiz shell chandelier. The wallpaper is Ralph Lauren's Burled Wood in Honey. The chairs are in Lulu DK's Ava in Coral. ■ Also in the dining room, opposite page, bottom, a vintage lamp illuminates Trowbridge Gallery silk starfish prints in mirrored frames. ■ The kitchen, left, has a Côte d'Or range from Lacanche. Hanging lights are from Lighting Center Ltd., NYC.



# DESIGN FOR THE WELL-LIVED LIFE

Siblings Curtis and Colleen Bashaw are happiest when they are surrounded by family and friends.

**Colleen, how would you describe your brother?**

Colleen: He is an open and kind person, but he works around the clock. I wanted his home to be comforting.

**What did you learn from working with the legendary decorator Sister Parrish?**

Colleen: To be serious about your work in an unserious way.

**Do you have a pastime?**

Colleen: My family is crazy about old houses. Growing up, every Sunday after church, we'd look at houses that came onto the market and check out the moldings and trim. We still do.

**Curtis, you welcome a constant stream of visitors. Why do you love to entertain?**

Curtis: I think having guests makes for a richer experience of the world; to enjoy life along the way.

**What's the recipe for being a great host?**

Curtis: Enjoying the party yourself. If you are relaxed, your guests relax.

**Who makes a good houseguest?**

Curtis: Someone who isn't afraid to put their feet up and feel at home.

**What is the perfect party meal?**

Curtis: Surf and turf. New York strip steaks from the Cape May butcher Westside

Market, and lobsters from the Lobster House.

**Do you have a signature drink?**

Curtis: My business partner Craig Wood's wife, Tracy Thatcher, is Bermudan. She introduced me to the dark and stormy—ginger beer and rum—which I make during nor'easters.

**How do you entertain in winter?**

Curtis: I invite six to ten friends over, and after dinner we read through a Shakespeare play. We draw straws and rotate who gets to be Macbeth or Lear.

**How do you tell time?**

Colleen: I wear an antique platinum Hamilton watch.

**Did it surprise you that Curtis put Sony flat-screen televisions in almost every room in his house?**

Colleen: We laughed about it because he is not a TV person. He would rather read a book about Woodrow Wilson. But he is very into accommodating guests, and he wanted them to have the freedom to watch television in their rooms.

**What are your favorite things about your house?**

Curtis: The view of sunsets over the water from the master bedroom, and the enclosed bar off the kitchen. I've had amazing luck with indoor winter plants there. The orchids keep reblogging.

**How do you get around?**

Colleen: I drive a Suburban. It fits a lot of furniture. What I really love is walking. It lets me see everything.

**What are your hobbies?**

Curtis: Gardening, yoga, and travel. Once a year, I go on a big trip: sailing in the Caribbean, an African safari.

**You defied the naysayers when your real estate company, Cape Advisors, brought Congress Hall, your grandfather's old Cape May hotel, back from bankruptcy and transformed it with a \$22 million renovation. What inspired you?**

Curtis: My grandfather had the courage of his convictions. As he used to say, the Red Sea didn't part until they put their feet in the water, son.



Mac, above, center, and his cousins husk corn on his uncle's porch. Colleen used Scalamandré's whimsical Galapagos fabric for the cushions on the Portico Furniture Company rockers. ■ Curtis, in the purple shirt, top row, right, and Colleen, beside him, entertain family and friends. ■ Blair catches a glimpse of herself in her uncle's chic stairwell, opposite page. The wall's chocolate brown shade is Sherwin Williams's Turkish Coffee; it contrasts dramatically with the red wool carpet from Floorcom.















Curtis's master suite, with its blue and white color scheme, is a serene retreat. On weekend afternoons, he takes long baths in his Kohler tub, left, reading biographies and calling friends. ■ To add personality to a room, Colleen goes antiquing. The vintage Murano glass and boat lamps in the bedroom, below, are from Debbie's Stamford Antiques Center, Stamford, CT. See Shopping, last pages.

## GET IT FAST!

Colleen Bashaw is used to tight deadlines for her commercial projects, such as her redesign of Cape May's historic Virginia hotel, which is being unveiled this month. Her own house in Cape May, just blocks from her brother's, was "thrown together in three months," she says. The master suite at Curtis's house, which occupies an entire floor, is filled with some of her favorite shortcuts.

### COLOR CUE

● "PAINT IS A QUICK WAY TO MAKE SOMETHING LOOK FINISHED," SAYS COLLEEN, WHO CHOSE SHERWIN WILLIAMS'S REGALE BLUE FOR HER BROTHER'S MASTER BEDROOM. "WITH WINDOWS ALL AROUND, THE COLOR NEEDED TO BE INTENSE TO MAKE A STATEMENT."

### WHITE'S RIGHT

● COLLEEN GAVE MOST OF THE ORIGINAL HEART PINE FLOORS IN THE HOUSE, INCLUDING THOSE IN THE BEDROOM, RIGHT, A QUICK MAKEOVER WITH HIGH-GLOSS WHITE DOVE BENJAMIN MOORE PAINT. "PAINTED FLOORS ARE SO BEACHY," SHE SAYS.  
● IN THE BATHROOM, ABOVE, THE FLOOR WAS PAINTED IN BLUE, WHITE, AND CHOCOLATE BROWN STRIPES FOR A SHOT OF PATTERN.

### INSTANT GRATIFICATION

● "I DO A LOT OF ANTIQUING, SO I DON'T HAVE TO SPECIAL-ORDER THINGS," COLLEEN SAYS.  
● SINCE CUSTOM ORDERS CAN TAKE

WEEKS OR EVEN MONTHS, SHE SELECTS FURNITURE OFF THE SHOWROOM FLOOR, LIKE THE GEORGE SMITH SOFA, RIGHT, AT FAR LEFT, WHICH ARRIVED IN TWO WEEKS. GEORGE SMITH INC., NYC. 212-226-4747.  
● SHE ALSO RELIES ON RETAILERS WHO KEEP INVENTORY IN STOCK. THE ACRYLIC DESK CHAIR IN THE BEDROOM IS FROM PLEXI-CRAFT, NYC. PLEXI-CRAFT.COM.

### SOFT TOUCH

● COLLEEN PLACED SHEEPSKINS FROM A FAVORITE SOURCE, BOWRON, AROUND THE BEDROOM AND BATHROOM. SHE SEWED TWO SKINS TOGETHER TO CREATE A LARGER BEDSIDE RUG. "THEY'RE SO COZY," SHE SAYS. BOWRON.COM.  
● WILLIAM-WAYNE & CO, NYC, IS A FAVORITE SOURCE FOR FUN ACCESSORIES LIKE THE ZEBRA DESK PAIL, RIGHT. WILLIAM-WAYNE.COM.  
● ORIENTAL LAMPSHADE, NYC, KEEPS A LARGE INVENTORY OF STYLES IN STOCK, LIKE THESE RAFFIA SHADES, RIGHT. ORIENTALLAMPSHADE.COM.

### UPS AND DOWNS

● THE REMOTE-CONTROL-OPERATED ELECTRIC BLINDS WERE LINED WITH BLACKOUT MATERIAL TO BLOCK THE STRONG SEASIDE SUN. THEY WERE INSTALLED BY ATLANTIC CITY SHADE SHOP, NEW JERSEY. 609-645-7117.

### SHELL GAME

● COLLEEN HAS A PENCHANT FOR FANCIFUL WALLPAPERS FROM FIRMS SUCH AS CLARENCE HOUSE AND SCALAMANDRÉ, WHICH CREATED THE SEASHELL BAROQUE IN BLUE PAPER IN THE BATHROOM, ABOVE. SMALLER ROOMS, SUCH AS BATHROOMS, DON'T REQUIRE LARGE AMOUNTS OF WALLPAPER. OFTEN, STORES HAVE SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES ALREADY IN STOCK. IN THIS CASE, THE PAPER ARRIVED IN TEN DAYS.





would feel airy in summer yet cozy enough in colder months.

Colleen picked out an intense palette that would hold up to the strong seaside light. The master bedroom suite got a bracing coat of azure. The public spaces were given an unbeachlike scheme of brick red paint for the living room and caramel wallpaper for the dining room. A red checkerboard carpet spirals up the center staircase, contrasting glamorously with the chocolate brown entry and center halls. "I like the mystery that the dark brown brings," Colleen says. "What's up the stairs? What's next?"

She injected lightness and levity with touches like white painted floors and sea-creature-motif wallpapers. A Capiz shell chandelier hangs in the dining room, coral and driftwood grace the house's original mantels, and red turtle cushions brighten white rockers on the porch. Whimsy is balanced by the classical, as in a guest room where tropical fabrics are paired with a nineteenth-century

oil painting in a gilded frame. Ironically, one of the least likely touches for a beach house—the colorful Brunschwig cut velvet that Colleen selected for a pair of living room chairs—was one of the most practical choices. "It won't show soil or sand," she says.

The Seven Sisters, with their cookie-cutter house plans, had balconies that faced only the street. Curtis hired a woodworker to replicate the detailing of the original porch for an expansive new one facing the ocean and large side lawn. In summer, it sets the stage for weekend lobster boils and a Fourth of July bash.

In the middle of the action, Curtis will retreat to his bedroom, where the bright blue walls blend with the view of sea and sky, and recall his childhood, when he and his siblings and cousins would transform their bed into an imaginary vessel sailing across the waves. "It was a game called Ship," he says, "and that's what this house feels like: being in a boat perched over the ocean." □

