



GETAWAY HOME — page 54

second-floor living spaces that take advantage of views of the Gulf. It was perfect for a family beach retreat, and the Bringses snapped it up.

Financing the home, though, meant this would have to be successful in financing it. "Buying a new house at the beach was a huge investment for us," says Renne. "So we knew we'd have to think outside the box when it came to finding accessories and furnishings."

At first, Renne and Sean were concerned that pulling the pieces together in such a short time span—and on a budget—would mean sacrificing style. To keep them on track, they hired designer Sherry Hart, whose considerable sea-breeze incorporates a mixture of flea-market pieces, family treasures, and affordable small items.

"I've never liked a staged or overly decorated look," Renne says. "It's certainly not in keeping with the laid-

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That trust was rewarded the first time the two met. Hart also lives in Atlanta, so they initially got together at the Bringses' primary home. "We basically started the design process by 'shopping' in my basement," Renne says. "I've vintage catalog chairs had been looking for a home for 10 years since we moved there from neighbors who were going to throw them away." The chairs now grace the couple's Florida living room. 30 • 58

You never need as many accessories as you might think, especially in a beach house. [www.elledecor.com](#)



GETAWAY HOME — page 56

Hart spent hours combing discount stores, browsing Atlanta's flea markets, and rummaging around roadside markets en route to the beach. When she found objects with potential, she devised budget savvy fix-ups to make them work with the decor.

Case in point: "We didn't have any books for the house," Renne says. "Sherry scoured Goodwill and around blackboard books with white coverings for the inexpensive paperbacks."

The dining room seating arrangement was another creative collaboration. A Tampa-based artisan, whom Hart met at an Atlanta antique market, crafted the table from oldypress wood in just a week to meet the Thanksgiving deadline. The Bringses already owned four dining chairs that would complement it. Luckily, the chair style was still available, so Hart bought two more. She then suggested using two Parsons chairs, again scavenged from the basement, at each end so the table could seat eight for large-family gatherings.

The generous open dining and kitchen area allowed Hart to bring in a large bookcase from the Bringses' Atlanta home. "Once we filled it with shells, old boxes, and beachy accessories it took on a whole new look," says Renne. The shelves were kept uncluttered to preserve the home's clean, breezy sensibility.

On the third floor is a personal retreat for the couple's young boys, Ethan and Max, as well as friends and company who visit. Built-in bookshelves line two walls. Burlap curtains and average-grown made beds. 30 • 60

Distressed glass pane doors from a beach flea market draw the eye to a sunny corner of the master bedroom. Hart invested in a few vintage brass and antique pillow shams, then occupied top-quality new linen on sale—all in white tones for easy mixing and matching. A handwoven rug, which was a splurge, anchors the serene palette.



Purchases on each level of Renne and Sean Bittig's beach house create a well-worn interchange between indoors and out.

BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

BY CHRISTOPHER WICKHAM/PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID L. BROWN

Castoff furnishings and salvaged objects from an Atlanta basement find a second life in this Rosemary Beach, Florida, getaway.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID L. BROWN



GETAWAY HOME *in* *FLORIDA*

After enjoying a succession of summer rentals along the Gulf of Mexico, Atlanta residents Renne and Sean Bittig agreed that it was time for a beach home of their own. When they began looking two years ago, their goal was to find a vacation getaway, and he set up for company, by the Thanksgiving holiday—only a few months off.

Their plan was set in motion by the discovery of a four-bedroom house in mid-construction in Rosemary Beach, Florida. The community is known for its white sands and emerald waters, walkable neighborhoods and shared pools, and Caribbean-inspired architecture. The house, designed by New Orleans-based architect Ron Domin, had an open, flowing layout with 10 or 10-

Updated with new cushions and throw pillows, vintage rattan chairs (see used from the Bittigs' basement at front and center in the living room below). A central stair tower (left) runs through the house to create a gracious sense of entry. The Adirondack chair and flea-market reupholster of chairs signal the casual atmosphere within.



After years of languishing in the Bittigs basement, the blue bench now sets the tone for Ethan and Max's bedrooms left. The over-size pillow came from a retail clearance table.

GET AWAY HOME by Lisa Gill

old floor vacks add playful tones of indoor camping.

The palette throughout evoked naturalists, based on the soothing shades of sand, sea, and native grasses. Living and dining room walls, as well as furnishings, fixtures, and fabrics, wear cool blues and greens and soft tans and browns. Upholstered pieces sport varied textures and patterns chosen for comfort and durability. Slipcovers can go right in the washing machine.

Shells, family pieces, nautical objects, and flea market finds infuse the house with flair and confidence. A grouping of six mushroom prints creates a bold accent along one wall of the living room. In the interest of time and budget, Hart framed them herself. Her husband and father-in-law hung all the artwork in the house so she could save the cost of hiring help for the installation.

The Bittig family has since spent many a vacation at the house, and each trip affirms that their investment has paid off in spades. "With every visit it gets harder and harder to pack and head back to Atlanta," says Bates. "We know we'd love having a house along the Gulf. We just had no idea what an adventure it would be to turn it into a home that suited the way we live at the beach." ☺

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