



FROM DREAM TO REALITY

By Val Schoger
Photos by Sarah Shipes

When Scott and Pat White found the waterfront lot of their dreams, they decided to design and build a home they could use during vacations and live in permanently after retirement.

They were introduced to Rita Jones, owner of Rita Jones Construction & Development Co., by their Dothan friends, Bill and Carmen Adams – Rita had just completed their home.

“We felt in good hands with Rita from the day we first met to discuss our dream home,” Pat White remembers, “We never considered anyone else for building our home after that initial meeting.”

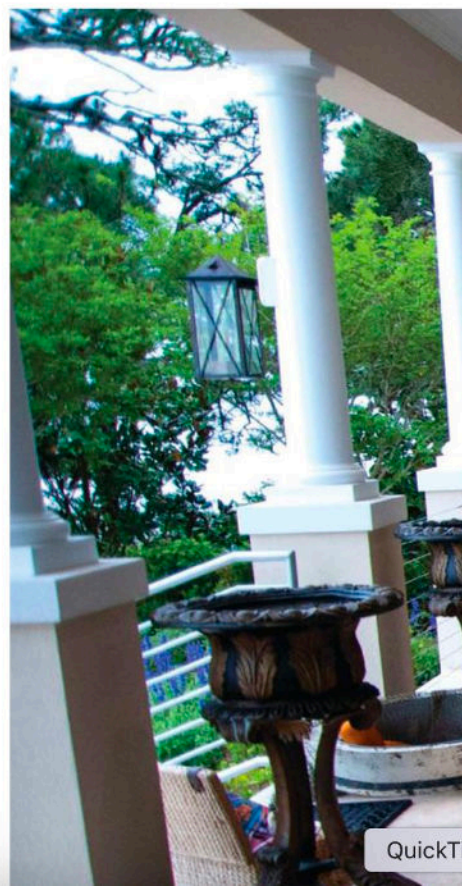
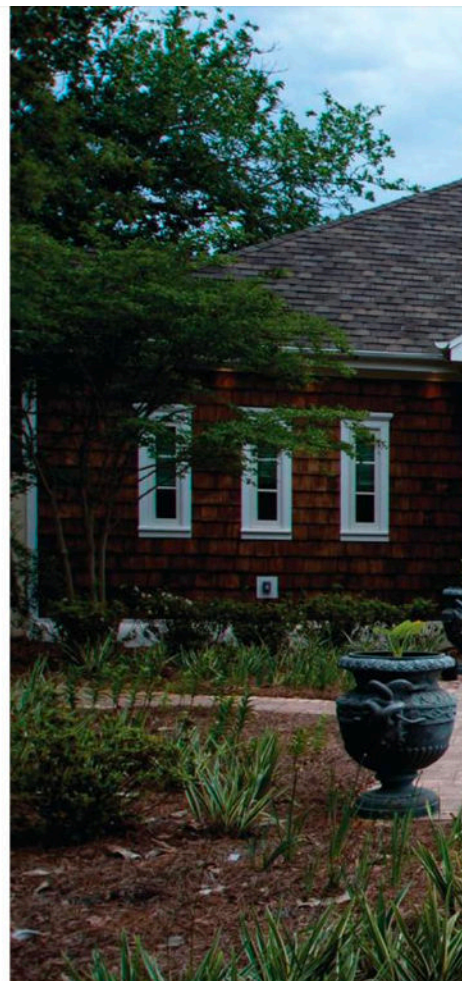
Since moving to the Panama City Area in 1998, Rita has completed dozens of homes along Florida’s Emerald Coast, from Santa Rosa Beach to Mexico Beach and inland to the area’s beautiful farm lands. Rita’s background as a San Francisco-based interior designer is evident in the details of each home. She coordinates ideas between her clients and their architects from design concept to completion of construction, planning family-friendly, energy-efficient homes from the inside out.

“After years of redesigning kitchens, bathrooms, and living spaces for California homeowners” Rita says, “My passion for perfection was born and I began building custom homes in 1982.”

With lifelong experience in interior design and ground-up construction of exclusive homes, Rita Jones’ name has become a brand. She approaches projects from a woman’s perspective, with impeccable taste, know-how, and ingenuity.

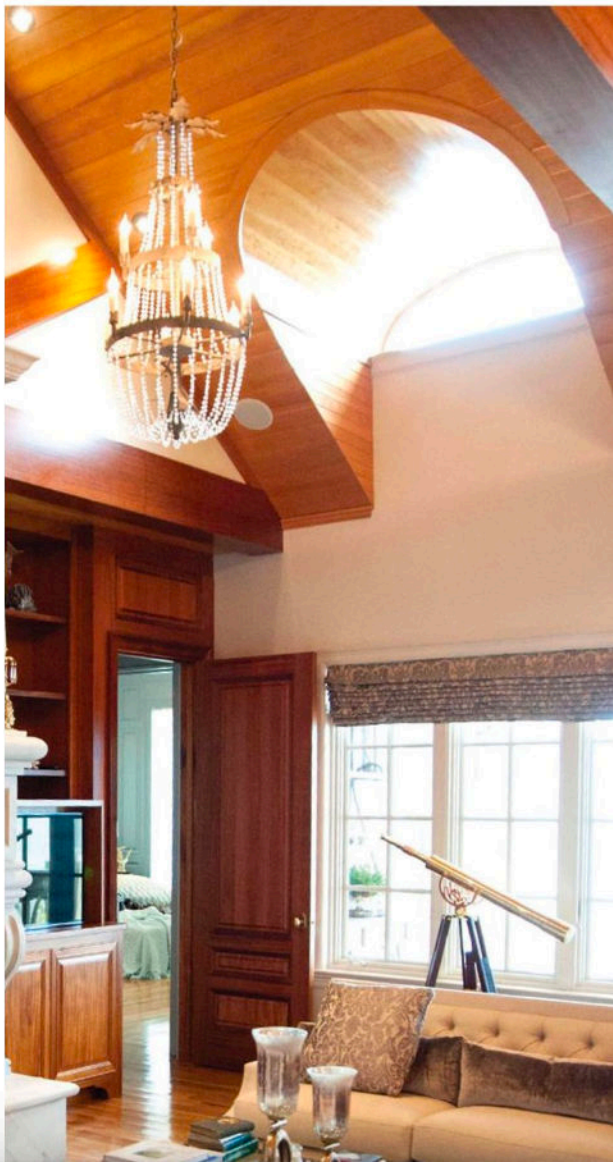
Rita explains “When I first met Pat and Scott, there was an old home on the property. It was situated much further from the water than their new home today. While the old house was elevated, the yard dropped straight down. After digging up a copy of the old survey and discussions with the Department of Environmental Protection, I confirmed that we could install a seawall and backfill the entire property all the way to the mean high water mark. In doing so, we reclaimed 50-percent more property. This allowed us to move the new home much closer to the water, which was very exciting for me. Otherwise, we would not have the full impact of the waterfront or the long driveway from the entrance gates to the home.”

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WATERFRONT



Scott White remembers receiving the great news. "All of a sudden we had a very deep lot and much more property. It opened up so many more possibilities. We could have not been happier."

Today, Scott and Pat White's Cape Cod-inspired home sits on a magnificent lot studded with large live oaks and southern magnolias, overlooking St. Andrews Bay.

Some of the interior focal points are the elegant, raised paneled foyer, the stunning great room with tongue and groove vaulted ceiling and mahogany scissor trusses.

"Everything is 'can-do' for Rita," said Pat White as she walked through the house pointing out a hand-carved limestone mantel and the elegant floor-to-ceiling custom cabinetry flanking it. "Everyone had an exceptional work ethic and all were perfectionists." Rita confirms that specialists are carefully selected for each job and she feels privileged to work with such talented men and women. "The right team of sub-specialists is vital in creating the perfect finished product. It took several years to put a team of specialists together who would meet my high standards and are capable of completing innovative ideas."

As with all custom homes, design ideas grow organically during construction and require careful communication between contractor and homeowner.

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WATERFRONT

RITA JONES, CUSTOM HOME BUILDER



“Especially when working with out-of-state homeowners who want to experience the process and entrust me with their homes. Quick decision making is critical to avoiding time delays,” says Rita.

“We often received pictures documenting progress. Even though we could not be on the job site as often as we wanted, we felt involved at all times,” Pat White recalls. “When decisions had to be made, Rita would call or text, telling us about all options available.”

A major consideration for Scott and Pat’s home was the creation of spacious outdoor living with attention to privacy without compromising the incredible Bay view. This was accomplished with a multilevel approach, complete with summer kitchen, wood-burning fireplace, and television viewing from multiple seating areas. Large slabs of travertine were custom made and imported from Turkey for the porch and wide, curved staircases to the pool.

A seamless process requires detailed planning. “As a home begins taking on a personality of its own, interior furnishings, fabrics, and color schemes should be considered months prior to completion. New home owners should allow a minimum of four months for selecting, ordering, and receiving them,” Rita reflects.

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WATERFRONT

PAT WHITE, CHRISTINE STRINGER, RITA JONES



Once the Whites moved into their dream home, Christine Stringer, owner of Avenue Sea, was consulted to complete the design with appropriate accessories, rugs, and art that blends new contemporary pieces with the "old world mansion look of Pat's eclectic antiques. Several antique furniture pieces contribute to the unique style of the house. They are family pieces, inherited from Pat's parents, and were carefully combined with new furniture.

Rita enjoys focusing on 'One home at a time . . .' "Although we may borrow a concept from one of my previous homes, it is important to create a new twist and 'look' for each new project," she reflects. "Every home has unique challenges and each challenge gives a home its character."