







## $Many Southerners \, take \, pride \, in \, two \, things: being \, hospitable$

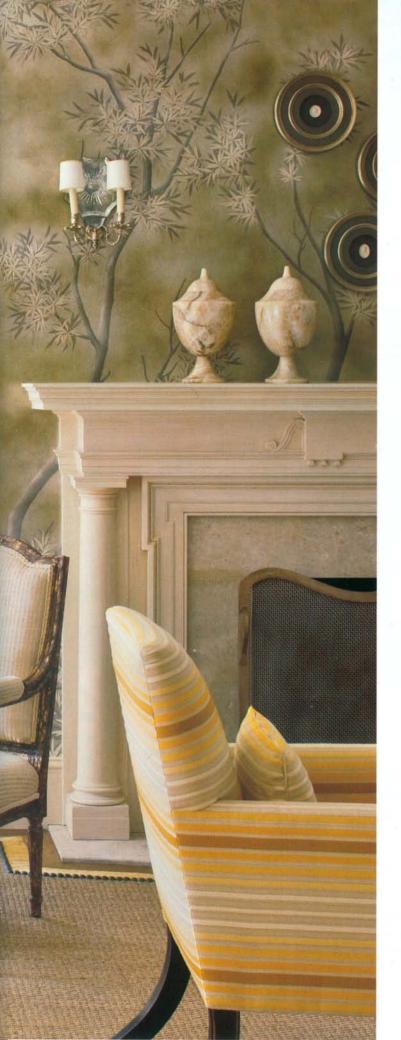
and embracing their family heritage. These ideas were foremost in the minds of Virginia-based designer Barry Dixon and his clients, former Tennessee Senator Bill Frist and his wife, Karyn, when they renovated their 1920s Nashville estate, which was also Frist's childhood home.

"Yes, it's a classical house, but what we hoped we did was deconstruct that formality to make it feel fresh, modern, and livable," says Dixon.

The Greek Revival manor house, typical of whitecolumned antebellum architecture, resonates with Southern elegance. The scale is grand, but the newly enlarged interior remains warm and welcoming. Here, everyone—from the Frists' three 20-something sons to visiting political dignitaries—is meant to feel at ease. "The home is flexible









enough to host a hundred 23-year-olds for breakfast before the steeplechase, or the president of the United States, or the rock star Bono," says Mrs. Frist, who speaks from firsthand experience.

In updating the house for the twenty-first century, Dixon and renovation architect Daniel Lee expanded the spaces for entertaining. They designed a two-and-a-half-story living room addition—the mansion's focal point—replete with Greek-inspired pilasters and twin fireplaces. Dixon softened the formality of ornate millwork with gentle, creamy tones and richly textured, patterned fabrics.

"When I'm working with scale like this, I want to make the spaces approachable and human," Dixon says. "I couldn't let the living room become a hotel lobby. I had to maintain a sense of intimacy and graciousness. There is almost a laid-back feeling, which comes from the plush, comfortable upholstered furniture and the light, understated colors." He balances the neoclassical with a decidedly modern restraint. "No swag curtains here."

Similarly, in the middle of the room—halfway between a pair of stately grisaille wall panels depicting classical Italian landscapes—a contemporary, metal mesh pedestal adds an edgy energy.

The family room—also an addition, with twentytwo-foot-high ceilings—is another place where the designer played with generous proportions. Geo-



metric floor lamps framing the fireplace are more than six feet tall, and the fireplace itself is so large you could practically walk into it. Still, the room doesn't overwhelm. "I broke up the verticality of the walls into horizontal layers with a grid of limed oak paneling on the bottom and African thatching at the top," explains Dixon. "That tamed the room."

The house's original spaces, all smaller, are just as dramatic. In the living room-turned-parlor, Dixon employs the shimmer of metallic wallpaper and mixes antiques with new chairs in bright stripes.

Another recurrent theme is the melding of East-

ern and Western influences. The dining room walls, covered in a Donghia fabric with a subtle Raj cartouche design, play against English-inspired chairs by Dixon. The "hers" master bath mixes a Romanesque sarcophagus tub from the 1700s, a Ming dynasty screen, an inlaid Indian chair, and a chinoiserie chandelier. Such an array could create a chaotic aura, but the effect is quite the opposite.

"If a room defies definition by period and place, it approaches a timeless realm," says Dixon. "These interiors feel serene because the pieces are elemental yet classical." □

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