

FUN HOUSE



AN ORLANDO-AREA HOME IS THE HAPPIEST PLACE ON EARTH—AND THERE'S NO ADMISSION FEE

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In the world of design, many folks subscribe to the idea that Mother Nature delivers the greatest form of decoration. But Marsha Hill will argue that it's the ear-to-ear smiles on her grandchildren's faces that give her home the greatest boost of aesthetic charm. And why wouldn't they be smiling? The home that Marsha shares with her husband, Gregg, is situated in Winter Park, Florida, just outside Orlando, and a short car ride from the world's most famous and beloved amusement park.

But roller coasters, spinning teacups, and Mickey Mouse ears aside, there's plenty of fun to experience at Grandma and Grandpa's house. After all, with diner-style booths for eating, playful bunk rooms that delight after dark, and a pool that splashes laughter into the family's history, this house was created with the grandchildren (now 15 of them) at the forefront.

Portrait Marsha and Gregg Hill built their home to be grandchildren-friendly. On the risers of the back terrace, words such as *giggle* and *jump* clearly proclaim the jovial intentions of the home. **Pool** Striped floats continue the sage green that threads through the house. **Album room** "My grandchildren are my art," Marsha says of the album room, where she organizes and stores decades of family photographs. The space, outfitted with a fringed dusty blue mohair sofa, side chairs in green bouclé, and chartreuse-color drapery panels, features a black-and-white mural of the grandkids. **Previous pages** The Hills' shingled Winter Park, Florida, home, was reconfigured by architect Yani Varnava. A sage green Dutch front door welcomes guests.





"I always wanted our house to be a bit like Disney World," Marsha says. "It was about the grandkids from the moment that we started the house's design. Family memories are important to me, and I wanted those to be about the fun that we share here, not about decorative fads."

But even design that veers to the playful side needs to be wrangled into some level of sophistication. For that, the Hills called on Palm Beach interior designer Ellen Kavanaugh, who built a serious foundation to tout the taste of the Hills and then sprinkled in moments of whimsy.

"I designed the Hills' former home south of Palm Beach," Kavanaugh says. "So I knew they were all about family life. Marsha is a casual person, so when we were planning the renovation of this house, there was no question that we would eliminate the formality of spaces such as a living room or dining room."

Understanding the emphasis on family, Kavanaugh squeezed her own relation into the foyer. Her father's company, Florida Cyprus Wood Products, reclaimed old-growth cypress

Family room A painting by artist Sally King Benedict nods to famed cartoon characters. **Pool area** Woven chairs suspended by rope offer swings to sit on while gazing to the pool that's outlined in rubber ducks. **Back staircase** The stairs to the bunk rooms feature the grandkids' names painted on risers. **Powder room** Palm-leaf wallpaper contrasts a tortoise-pattern vanity in the powder room. **Sunroom** Booth seating anchored by a scalloped table nestles into a niche in the sunroom.

Oversize basket-weave fixtures mingle with brass pendants in the kitchen. On the serving side of the island, tile clads the base above a brass toe-kick. Inspired by a North Carolina diner near where Marsha grew up, the kitchen island was designed to mimic an old-school soda fountain where kids could enjoy grilled cheese sandwiches and milkshakes.





trees from the river bottom of a swamp that were milled and then applied to foyer walls. To emphasize the indigenous pecky cypress, Kavanaugh had old etchings of citrus fruit scanned to make wallpaper that emblazons the ceiling with tart brights.

Blush plays a starring role in both the kitchen and adjoining family room, where a hint of color was needed to match the bustling noise of the grandkids, from baby to age 17. A modern chair in pink bouclé and a pink cocktail table punctuate the family room. An ivory-and-gray windowpane plaid wraps the space and repeats on a ruffled sofa. Matching ceramic lamps move the needle on blush to lavender in a similar value.

In the kitchen, blush-color leather covers the seats of tulip chairs and backless stools. The island itself supports Marsha's love of cooking for and serving her grandkids. Instead of one solid piece, the island has a middle opening where Marsha can walk through with pies made from recipes passed down through her Southern roots or Mickey Mouse-shape waffles.

Dining room The Hills opted for a casual dining space in the kitchen nook, where a long table sits within walls of windows. Wicker host chairs extend the lakeside vibe, while a round orange-slice rug over heart of pine floors promotes Florida's citrus crop. The windows look onto the pool and backyard where the grandkids engage in outdoor play. **Bunk room door** "It's not coastal beach house or a modern Miami structure," designer Ellen Kavanaugh says of the home's old-Florida, wooden clapboard architecture. "The house has camplike sensibilities."





THERE'S ALWAYS
CHAOS, GOOD
CHAOS, BUT IN MY
BEDROOM, I ENJOY A
SENSE OF CALM.”

—homeowner Marsha Hill



Marsha and Gregg’s bedroom is steeped in refinement: A classic vaulted ceiling, ivory-color fittings, and Southern embellishments, such as embroidered monograms on pillows, show the room’s restful purpose.

But the bunk rooms—one for the granddaughters and one for the grandsons—are decorated to encourage plenty of camaraderie between cousins. The Lily Pad room jolts pink accents into an otherwise green space, while the Otter Den is covered in navy-and-white plaid.

The Hills’ renovated home serves as the cornerstone of this phase in the circle of life. During the pandemic, Marsha was caring for her elderly mother, to whom she recently gave tribute in a book she wrote titled *Grief and Grit(s)*. Now, she is basking in the new generations of her family.

“We’ve always wanted to be a big part of their lives,” Marsha says. “We let them have their alone time, but we are available when they need us and that’s a lot. We love every minute.”

Interior design: Ellen Kavanaugh and Madison Way Beltz **Architect:** Yani Varnava

Primary bedroom “We thought that we would miss the ocean, but we’ve become lake people,” Marsha says of their bedroom that overlooks Lake Osceola. Tiered drapery panels block the bright Florida sunlight through the French doors. A slatted screen behind the bed disguises a coffee setup. **Boys bunk room** A leather channel sofa provides a spot to game in the grandsons’ room. Pine bunk beds anchor the blue plaid space.



THIS HOUSE ISN'T ONLY ABOUT DECORATION. IT FEELS LIKE HOME AND LIKE FAMILY."

—designer Ellen Kavanaugh



Girls bunk room The girls bunk room is bold in its color scheme. A lily pad motif covers the walls and ceiling. The beds and trim are highlighted in teal, and pink gingham linens accent the room. Marsha aims to coordinate everything, whether it's toys used on the porch and in the pool or family swim attire. "Ellen understood me from the start," Marsha says. "I grew up swingin' and rockin' because I'm Southern. She allowed me to bring in my quiriness and sentimental side." 🏡

