

VOGUE

JULY

FALL'S
PERFECT

10

THE
LOOKS THAT
DEFINE
THE SEASON

Kate
Winslet

JUST SAYS NO
to Plastic Surgery,
Hollywood's Weight
Hysteria & Putting
Work Before Family

CATCH
THE WAVE

Summer's Best
Ab Workout

HATE IT, LOVE IT

The Radical Collections
that Change
How Women Dress

ANOTHER
40 POUNDS

André Leon Talley
Shares His Diet
Diary with Oprah

**DANGEROUS
LIAISON**

A Politician's Illegitimate
Daughter Tells All



U.S.A. \$10
CANADA \$12
FOREIGN \$15



LAI D BACK

Brittingham takes a swing on the back porch with her daughter and their wheaten terriers.

Muriel Brandolini tunic, Paper Denim & Cloth jeans. RIGHT: A boat trip to Coatee for water-skiing and tubing begins at the Brant Point Lighthouse. Details, stores, see In This Issue.

Sittings Editor: Hamish Bowles.



here comes summer

*At her Nantucket beach house, Ashley
Brittingham sets the stage for the
quintessential American vacation, complete
with surfboards, wet suits, bunkroom,
flashlight tag, and buttermilk pancakes.
Photographed by François Halard.*



a

t 24 I fell in love with the grassy dunes and cobblestoned streets of Nantucket on a vacation from California with the man who became my husband. Relocated east a few years later, Jeff and I were drawn back to its understated charm and began to spend our summers there.

An island crisscrossed with bike paths made me want to take up running. Not a natural runner, I desperately needed the distraction of looking at real estate to make the endless miles pass. House after house, gasp after gasp, I struggled until I stopped dead in my tracks: I had found my house. (I didn't even know I was looking.) Thankful for any excuse to catch my breath, I couldn't move from the driveway. The house called out to me, and I never wanted to leave.

I continued to visit the house—my house—every summer. Often. After a perfect beach day I would pass by. Too much rain? Better check on my garden. I felt motherly pride as my New Dawn roses climbed their trellised ladders to the sky.

Six years and four children later, we'd outgrown our tiny rental cottage and wanted to buy property on the island. Those summers of longing eventually paid off—miraculously, the house I so admired came on the market, and we bought it.

Life inside the house was just as I imagined. Lounging over breakfast outside watching the sailboats in the harbor can take up a whole morning. Playing hide-and-seek among the blue hydrangeas and taking beach walks down the dirt road make perfect afternoons for children who aren't allowed to walk around the block unescorted in Manhattan. I begin most mornings surfing with my two sons, chatting on our boards while waiting for waves as seals bob around us. Cold, tired and sandy, afterward we pile into Black Eyed Susan's for hot buttermilk pancakes at the counter. Swimming, kayaking, Rollerblading, tennis, and biking to Siasconset—my family is happiest outside. On Nantucket, I feel healthy, free, and alive, and thankful there is nowhere else I have to be.

Jeff and I have ten siblings between us, and we knew we were eventually going to need to expand. The concept of altering a house I adored was daunting. Since it was only one room deep, many prospective architects began their pitch by suggesting we tear it down. They were quickly shown the door.



OUT BACK

Nantucket's wide horizons and grassy dunes are an invitation for morning bike rides and long walks at dusk.

"Do what you need to do so this works for my family, but please make it feel like the same house I fell in love with," I explained.

We hired Lisa Botticelli, a local architect of outstanding island houses, to add bedrooms and a family hangout room with space for books and games. Finding the right designer was more difficult. I loved the authenticity of Nantucket but wanted an updated version of a beach house. A friend suggested we meet Jeffrey Bilhuber, who has a special affection for the island. We toured his cottage, which he had transformed into a series of moments that invite you to relax, grab a book, and never move. One side of an old weathered birdhouse sat proudly on a shelf, reminding visitors that the past is to be respected, not thrown away. The three of us squeezed into his shower, with a teak latticed floor like the fantail on a boat. I nudged Jeff. "This guy is a genius," I whispered.

Jeffrey dropped by the next day for lemonade and bluefish pâté. The relationship between a designer and a family is an intimate one, since they become responsible for interpreting the dreams and ideas of each member. Watching him lose like a gentleman in games of Go Fish with my five-year-old daughter convinced me that he appreciates children. She is tough, she gloats, but he did not

whimper. He was definitely up to the formidable task of designing her bedroom.

Raised at the beach, I know how summer should feel: surfboards everywhere, painted floors to easily sweep the sand out, a bunkroom for numerous small bodies, and guacamole at all times. When I was a child, the Grateful Dead would blare as my older brother blended margaritas at the end of a perfect beach day. My surfer father would haul his original Hobbie long boards out of the garage and head to San Onofre with the other devoted big-wave riders. My glamorous mother would lounge under an umbrella, iced tea in hand, and watch her children surf the waves on our rubber rafts, trying not to drown so as not to disturb her.

How do you re-create the innocence of childhood on a different coast? Would this house be a touchstone for our children? Wanting to build a bridge to the future became our mission. Teenagers typically want to hang out in town; we tried to design a

The study is hung with family photographs by Beverly Hall and furnished with crisp black lacquer tables and upholstered chairs.





Ocean touches, like white coral and a cobalt-blue glass ball, "make us feel like we are living 60 feet below sea level," says Brittingham.

READY, SET...

Jeffrey Bilhuber's top 10 tips to get your summer house in shape



Tropical paints from Ralph Lauren Home.

- 1. Clear colors**—like pink, chartreuse, and daffodil-yellow—say summer.
- Give floors a **fresh coat of paint** at the start of the season. Try a color other than white, like indigo, to suggest the ocean.
- 3. Simplify.** Edit your belongings, put things away, clear tabletops.
- Create as much **openness and air** as possible. Push furniture against walls, keep floors bare.
- 5. Bring in flowers,** especially daffodils, roses, hydrangeas, leaves, or a big branch from the garden.



Mmmm . . . citrus. Fresh fruits provide a natural scent.

- 6. Add smells:** a big bowl of lemons or summer fruits; tuberose or sea-scented candles.
- If you have children, **relax** about their stuff: Swimsuits, balls, flippers, surfboards are fantastic to have around.
- Use **workhorse furniture and fabrics.** Add white slipcovers for summer freshness.
- Look for **trimmings and accessories** that relate to the location, like shells and coral for houses by the sea.
- Put up a **bulletin board** where you can build a collage of memories: drawings, paintings, photographs, seashells.



Assorted children jump to it on the garden trampoline.



A canopied bed and sky-blue walls in the guest bedroom.



The backyard doubles as a pitch for soccer and games of Frisbee.



A sturdy woven Nakuru sofa from the Conran Shop.



*Recalling the great Nantucket sea
captains who lugged home
Madagascar cloth, we lined the walls
of our bedroom in grasscloth and
draped the windows with crisp cottons*

FRESH DIRECT

Designer Jeffrey Bilhuber created a light-as-air aesthetic in the master bedroom using sea motifs, natural fabrics, and a clear color palette.





SLEEP TIGHT

The bunkroom, decorated with drawings and overstuffed beanbags, accommodates multiple children.

place ours might want to bring their friends to instead. A billiard table, a fire pit, a trampoline—our home would be vibrant, friendly, and open.

Jeffrey promised to wash this house in color, and soon sand, chocolate, celadon, and indigo took over. Louvered bedroom doors invited the sea breeze to flow throughout the house, and a painted floor the color of the ocean brought the outside into the living room. An enormous corkboard hanging by the billiard table started empty and by August was filled with a photo-collage of friends, family, and fun in the making. The white coral on our bedroom walls and the cobalt-blue glass ball made us feel like we were living 60 feet below sea level. Jeffrey had been listening and gave me everything I loved.

With his keen understanding of the history of the seafaring community of Nantucket, Jeffrey honored the past both architecturally and decoratively in his design. Recalling the great sea captains who lugged home Madagascar cloth, he lined the walls of our bedroom in grasscloth and draped the windows with crisp cotton. From the Bahamian-inspired ceiling in the master bedroom to the black Chinese-lacquer side tables in the office, he brought the world into the house.

Our vision was to create a self-sufficient environment. Summer evenings of family cocktails on the upstairs deck watching the sunset, dinners outside followed by flashlight tag and a late-night swim are perfection for our busy urban family. Morning bike rides to town for coffee and papers with messy hair and flip-flops reminds me of skipping with sandy feet into the local beachside doughnut shop as a little girl. I remember that girl when I'm on Nantucket. She's healthy, laughs quickly, and never worries. We may not be able to go home again, but, we hope, by picking and choosing from our childhood memories, we can bring the past into the present for our children. □

open house

How Brittingham starts the season.

What do you collect?
Coral, shells, my children's art.



Table decorations?
Candles, hurricane lamps outside and in, hydrangeas (ABOVE), New Dawn roses, and gerbera daisies from the garden.



Douglas teak chaise lounge by Michael Taylor.



Your greatest luxury?
Time to think, read, and spend with my family.

What equipment do you bring?
Wet suits for children and friends in every size and color, extra tennis rackets, a croquet set, and endless balls for tennis, rugby, basketball, and football.



Octavian birdhouse.

How do you prepare the house?
Add bird seed in the feeders, replant the vegetable garden, check candle supply, download new music.

Favorite time of day?
Early-morning surfing at Cisco beach.



Birdhouse: Courtesy of Heartwood. Chaise: Courtesy of Michael Taylor Designs. Vintage croquet set: ALEX CAO. Available from Anthony Garden Boutique, NYC. All other still lifes: JEFF HARRIS.





How do you entertain?

Cocktails on the deck at sunset, buffet suppers, flashlight tag, late-night swimming in the pool.

Waterman



Timmy Patterson surfboard.

What clothes do you live in?

Tory by TRB tunics, white jeans, bare feet, and bikinis.

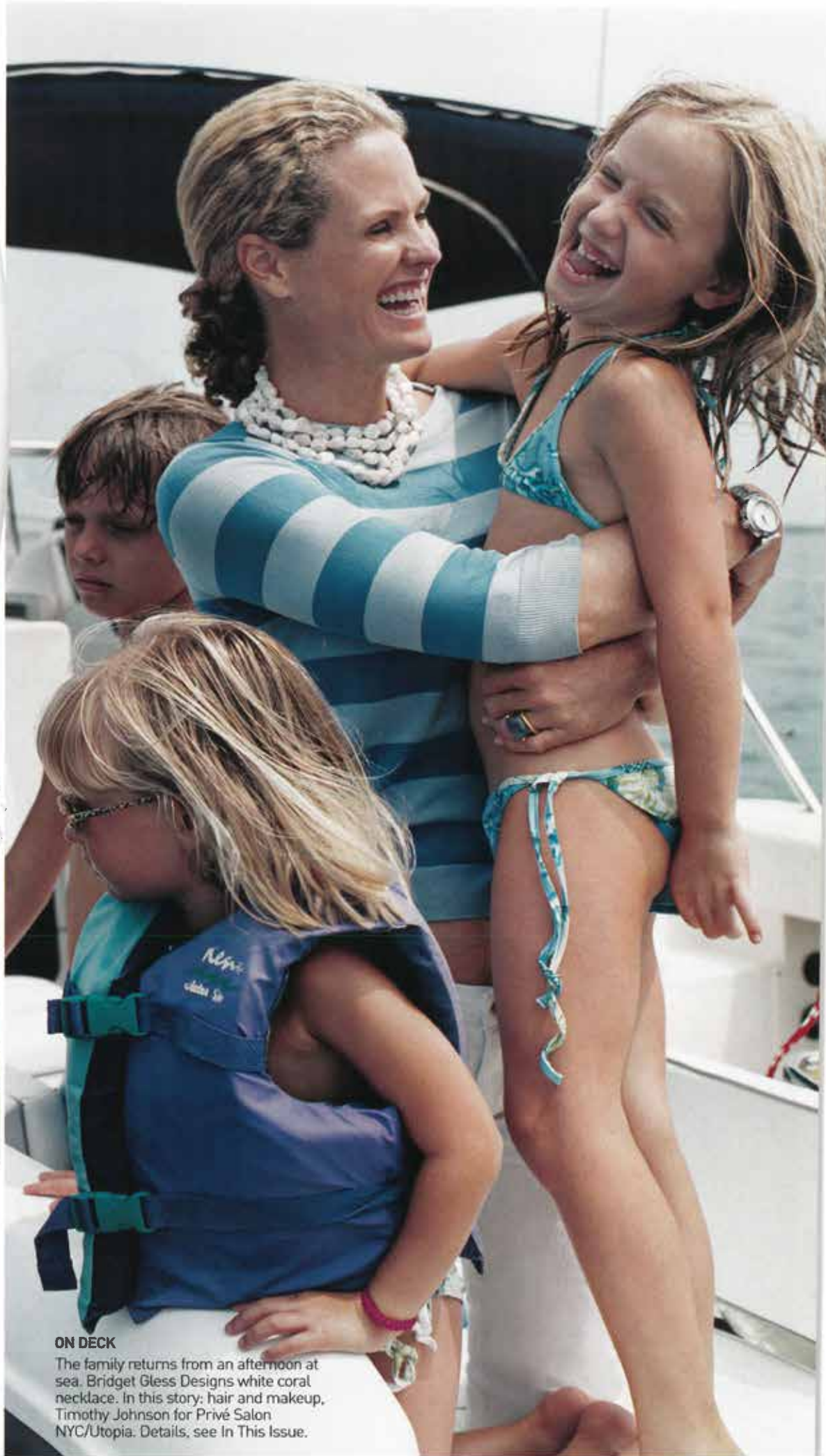
Summer books

Surprising finds from the Atheneum library sale. The "Barnaby" series, by Wendy Rouillard. *The Big House*, by George Howe Colt, RIGHT.



On your walls

Oil landscapes by local artist Iliya Kagan.



ON DECK

The family returns from an afternoon at sea. Bridget Gless Designs white coral necklace. In this story: hair and makeup, Timothy Johnson for Privé Salon NYC/Utopia. Details, see In This Issue.

Pitcher: Courtesy of Crate & Barrel. Painting: Courtesy of Iliya Kagan. All other still lifes: JEFF HARRIS. Jacadi bikini.