

EYE ON THE BALL





*A home with this many curves
requires the skills of an
expert builder*

By Patra Taylor | Photography by Holger Obenaus

The 18th green flagstick seemed an unusual inspiration for a vacation home, especially in Kiawah Island's prestigious Vanderhorst Plantation. Set in the heart of one of South Carolina's unspoiled barrier islands, Vanderhorst is considered the ultimate in coastal resort living. Spectacular views pinwheel in every direction in this exclusive, behind-the-second-security-gate-conclave of stunning homes, each designed to complement the lush natural landscape's expanses of lagoons and salt marshes; soothing stretches of white sand beach; and dense maritime forest layered with pines, live oaks, magnolias and palmettos, and brimming with birds and other indigenous wildlife.

And yet the gently waving flag designating the "signature" finishing hole of Tom Fazio's world-class Osprey Point Golf Course became the visual cue for an extreme home design, one that showcases the Lowcountry's "best of the best" in the art of luxury home construction.

"The owner chose this lot because he wanted to see that flagstick," states Ryan Buck of R. M. Buck Builders, Inc. "That was his thing."

According to Buck, Marc Camens of Camens Architectural Group took the owner's affinity for that flagstick to heart when he designed the nearly 10,000-square-foot shingle-style home and its adjacent two-story guest house to wrap around that view of the 18th hole green set against sparkling Canvasback Pond...with the operative design concept being "around."

Having completed more than 30 renovations and new home construction projects together on Kiawah Island, it's an easy relationship between the architect and the team at R. M. Buck Builders. "It's the architect's job to create the plan for the home including all the details, and it's our job to execute that plan," explains Buck, who serves as the company's project manager. "This house is on the extreme end in terms of architectural details.



It's more elaborate...more artistic...so I think it really exemplifies what sets us apart from other builders."

Clearly, the passion for perfection of the company's patriarch, Bob Buck, is the foundation for every project the company undertakes. Mr. Buck honed his skills as a carpenter, framer and cabinetmaker throughout the 1960s and 1970s before starting R. M. Builders in Vermont in 1977. Shortly after Hurricane Hugo in 1989, Mr. Buck moved his family to the area and opened Island Cabinet Company to provide custom furniture-quality cabinetry for new homes on Kiawah and Seabrook Islands. Before long, he moved into residential renovations and new home construction.

"I understand the structural part of construction more than most builders because I've driven a lot of nails and cut a lot of wood," notes Mr. Buck. "I think all my experience plays an important role in the beginning with the foundation and the framing of the structure."

Throughout this process, son Ryan Buck is on the construction site daily, overseeing the work of the sub-contractors, all of whom have worked long-term for the builder. At about the time the interior trim is complete and the painting process is well underway, the project receives another major infusion of perfection from Renae Buck.

"I move onto the job and finish the houses," says Mrs. Buck, who has worked in the business alongside her husband since the company's early days in New England. "I handle all the installs... the set-outs of the fixtures, plumbing, countertops, cabinets, floor finishes, final painting, tile punch...I take care of all the details ensuring they are neat and perfect. I don't think there's any other woman in this area doing what I do."

Clearly, the results from this husband/wife/son team are nothing shy of, well...perfection. Upon entering the elegant Flyway Drive house, the eye is drawn into the primary living space by a symphony of architectural details.





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The open floor plan includes the living, dining and kitchen areas, yet each area draws a sense of separation from the custom coffered ceilings that define the various spaces. The far end of this expansive living area is anchored by natural finished walnut cabinetry, designed and handmade in-house at Buck's Johns Island headquarters.

"Using clear natural woods, such as walnut or cherry, is a trend," explains Mrs. Buck. "This is a very durable kitchen. In 10 years, it will be as pretty as the day we put it in. It looks rich and expensive, but it's actually budget-friendly because it's less labor-intensive to finish these cabinets...no staining, glazing or layering of colors."

"I think our cabinetry separates us from other builders," adds Buck. "We have a reputation for designing and building fine high-end cabinetry. Today, it is something we only do for our own clients."

Buck notes that they bring the company's cabinet crew into their homes to install the cabinetry throughout the house and to fine-tune the other wooden architectural features such as trims and moldings. "The subs take is so far," explains Buck. "Then our crew comes in to punch it out. That's a totally different process from any other builders in this area."







For Buck, one of the most challenging aspects of this magnificent vacation home is the massive amount of “radius work” incorporated into the architect’s design. A round bedroom, round screened porches, two round offices with curved built-in desks, and even a curved stage in a play area designed especially for the couple’s “future” grandchildren—all required the hands of skilled artisans to achieve the company’s standard of excellence. Even the home theater, equipped with surround-sound, custom equipment cabinetry, and soundproofing features a curved balcony, complete with antique theater chairs.

Probably the most beautiful feature of this house is the more than 3,000 square feet of outdoor living space. On both stories, the house is wrapped in porches and decks that overlook the pool (round, of course), terrace, grill hut and the meticulously landscaped grounds specifically designed to frame the 18th green flagstick beyond.

“When we’re finished with a home, it’s hard to find anything wrong with it,” Buck notes.

“We do property management for our own homes,” concludes Buck. “We take care of everything for our out-of-town clients. It takes a huge burden off of them. We walk the houses weekly to make sure everything is in order. There are companies that do property management here, but we’ve found we know our houses better than anybody. So I guess you can say that, in many cases, we handle the houses we build forever.” 🏡

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