

Wilmington

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2025

NORTH CAROLINA

**Southern
Storytelling**
David Joy on
Writing and
Hard Truths

**Locals'
Summer**
Goodbye Crowds,
Hello Cooler
Weather and
Styles to Match

**GHOST
TOURS**

**OYSTER SHELL
RECYCLING**

**SAVARD
BOARD & BEER**

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

This Wilmington family's plans changed,
but it all worked out in the end

By BRITTANY CONLEY » Photos by G. FRANK HART





Kevin and Margot Hommes enjoy their rebuilt Intracoastal Waterway home, designed for endless days of surfing, boating, and family time on the water.

KEVIN HOMMES HAS spent most of his life in the Wilmington area. You might say he has the sea running through his veins, as he grew up loving the beach, the ocean, and all the activities a boy could imagine that come with an oceanfront way of life—and as a man, he has never really outgrown them. Even as a teen, he knew he wanted to live out his life on the sandy shores of Western North Carolina. While visiting friends once, he spied a home with the most amazing water views, covered in shake siding and balanced on pylons and it made an impression, though at the time he likely didn't expect to one day call it home.

But after establishing his career and family—his beloved wife, Margot, and their three children—and seeing the home on the market, he jumped at the opportunity. “We are water people, we spend a tremendous amount of time on the water surfing, fishing, boating. We’ve worked hard to get to where we are. There is nowhere else I’d rather be than on saltwater,” says Hommes. Surrounded by views of the Intracoastal Waterway and the sound, the recreational options are truly endless.

It was almost perfect. The Hommes family loved the original home, built in 1980. One of the many things they loved was that it was southern facing and used large eaves so that in the heat of summer, there was protection from the heat, but in the winter, it took advantage of passive solar to warm the home. “There were so many cool features in the home,” says Hommes. As amazing as the house was, with its age there were certain aspects that needed some serious updating. It had 8-foot ceilings, and a boxed-in kitchen, plus they felt they needed to add some square footage so their children would have plenty of room to grow. With so much to do, they contracted Cress at Bell Custom Homes to take on the renovation—but there was a significant problem.

In order to bring the house to code, it would need to be lifted and shifted. The cost of renovating made no sense versus



Bell Custom Homes preserved the charm of the original 1980s shake-sided house while modernizing it with expansive balconies, oversized black-framed windows, and panoramic water views.

just demolishing and rebuilding, which wasn't at all what Kevin and Margot had in mind. Luckily, they had kept the original plans and, with the visionaries at Bell Custom Homes, could design something unique that still paid homage to the home they had fallen in love with.

"The original home was pretty groovy," says Cress Bell, owner of Bell Custom Homes. "But after a full cost analysis of getting the home to meet current flood zone requirements and to eliminate some of the negative design features of the 1980s, demo was the right option to give The Hommes' everything they wanted."

Cress and his team worked with a new architect to give them a home that far exceeded their expectations, which Cress is well known for with every project that comes his way.

The original clearly inspired the exterior of the home: still thoughtfully adorned with shake siding, using passive solar, and capitalizing on the incredible views. "Everything around the house is focused on the views. All the secondary bedrooms on the top floor have their own balcony, for instance," says Bell. Oversized windows throughout the home not only let in copious amounts of natural light but also

offer multiple vantage points to admire the ocean waves and sunny skies. A keen eye will notice the windows are framed in black both inside and out, a bold element Bell has been using for decades and is now becoming a trend.

It is no surprise that a family with three kids and a waterfront house often host guests. "The whole house was built with entertaining in mind," says Bell. The outdoor living area includes a spacious deck, a hot tub and glistening swimming pool with the ocean a stone's throw away for quick dock access so a boat ride is never out of the question. While the new home is influenced by the old, the complete modernization afforded from the choice to demolish and rebuild was undeniably the way to go.

"The home now really doesn't fit into a single box, because they didn't really want one thing. We've gotten really good at blending different designs to create something bold and unique. This home is a little modern, craftsman, with a mid-century influence," says Bell.

After putting so much consideration into the exterior and new floor plan, there was no way Kevin and Margot couldn't put in just as much consideration for the home's interior design. They needed someone who



Built for entertaining, the outdoor living area features a spacious deck, hot tub, pool, and quick dock access—perfect for spontaneous boat rides.



was equally passionate and knowledgeable about interiors as Bell Custom Homes is about building and craftsmanship. Beautifying the Wilmington area since 2004, Hooper Patterson Interior Design has worked on numerous projects over the last ten years with Cress and his team, and so it just made sense to entrust her with turning their new, incredible house into a beautiful family home.

"This was a really fun project. I had a lot of creative freedom. The Hommes were involved and told me what they like and don't like, but they wanted something that flowed with the outside. They kept the aesthetic of the original house alive through the architecture. The mid-century motif dictated what we did on the inside," says Patterson.

"We knew the family and their guests would, of course, be looking out of windows often and would always see greens and blues during the warm months, and then taupes and neutrals that come with fall and winter. I wanted the outside and inside to gel. I wanted it to feel like it was all one space," says Patterson. Understanding how the scenery will change from season to season helped Patterson and her team nail down the right color scheme for the home.

As you look through the home, it feels very much like a beach house without being overly beachy. Patterson and her team brought in plenty of tones one might expect in a modern beach house, with soft blues, sea foam green, teal, and light wood finishes. Yet with pops of color, such as the burst of coral in the dining room, and

the strategic use of black throughout the home, there is just enough deviation from what one might expect in a beach home you could easily imagine this beautiful interior working flawlessly pretty much anywhere.

"There are a lot of details in this house that are kind of contradictory. We have a honed, raw marble in the kitchen backsplash against high gloss cabinets. We used cork in the bathroom, behind it is a metallic silver. It's kind of like everywhere you look, there is a contradiction. We have the stark contrast of black and white in the primary bathroom. We would pick something organic and raw, and to not make it feel industrial, we softened it up with glamorous elements," says Patterson. "Juxtaposition in design is what makes



The interior features a modern coastal palette of blues, teals, and light woods.



it interesting. I don't like everything to match. I don't want symmetry in every situation."

When designing an interior for a home with three active children, Patterson says it is essential to think through how the family will live in the home so functionality is not lost. "Performance fabrics have come a long way. It no longer has to look like patio furniture," says Patterson, who insisted the family needed to feel comfortable truly living in their space. "They should be able to come in from the pool or the boat and not feel like anything is too precious to sit on. The kids surf and have friends over for swim parties. I think it was important to give them a house that, yes, feels unique and ties in with the aesthetic of the



Oversized windows flood the open-plan living area with natural light while framing sweeping views of the sound and ocean.

exterior, but lets them live the way they want to live.”

And the Hommes family truly loves the way they live now. “The home has good chi, good vibes. We’re always in the pool and hot tub. We spend a lot of time as a family in the kitchen and living room. It’s not a formal place you can’t touch. The furniture is lived in, sat on, and it’s gorgeous but we use it,” says Hommes.

Change can be difficult. Especially when you find yourself in a position to purchase a home you have admired since you were

young, only to discover you ultimately need to tear it down and go back to the drawing board. But, if you’re open to it and consult the right experts—like Bell Custom Homes and Hooper Patterson Interior Design—who can take your vision and run with it...you may end up with the home not just of your dreams, but beyond your wildest imagination.

BellCustomHomes.com

HooperPattersonInteriorDesign.com

The striking primary bath pairs bold black-and-white contrasts with raw, organic materials softened by glamorous finishes.



Performance fabrics and durable finishes make the interiors stylish yet livable for a family with three active kids, frequent guests, and plenty of poolside gatherings.

