



A VISIT TO THE CARTERS' HOME IN PLAINS, GEORGIA

An exclusive look
at their newly
redecorated house
By Carleton Varney

Over the years my work with the former president and his wife, Rosalynn, has taken me to Plains, Georgia, many times. And so it is with first-hand knowledge that I can tell you that this out-of-the-way village has charm and style. Most of the homes there boast colorful flower gardens and old-fashioned swings sit on quaint front porches. Because Plains is a
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The dining-room table and chairs (below) have been in the Carter family for years.



Rosalynn chose blue, her husband's favorite color, for the living room. The English style breakfast room holds mementos of their travels.



Photographed by Stephen Green-Armytage

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Since he left the White House, the former president has become interested in furniture-making. He crafted the bed

and night table for the master bedroom. The pattern on the walls, bed canopy, and club chairs is named "Rosalynn."



Each of the Carters has a study. His (above) is in the wing off the kitchen; hers was once a bedroom. Each study has a

word processor, used to write their recently published book, *Everything to Gain: Making the Most of the Rest of Your Life*.



The den/family room was decorated with their four grandchildren in mind—the heavy-duty fabrics can stand wear and tear.

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rural farming area, its residents must drive 10 miles to Americus, the nearest town, to do their shopping. All this has allowed Plains to preserve a down-home flavor that many American towns have lost with the advent of huge shopping malls and towering condominiums.

My trips to Plains have been to work with the Carters on decorating projects. I was their decorating consultant during their White House years. Later we tackled the design of their log cabin in Ellijay, Ga. Next I served as color and decorating consultant for the Carter Presidential Library in Atlanta, a three-and-one-half-hour drive from Plains. My latest project was to help the Carters redecorate the Plains house.

Each visit with Jimmy and Rosalynn helped to reinforce my understanding of their desire to return to their home after they left the White House. They have a great attachment to Georgia, and they love the Plains area where they feel free and comfortable. After all, they both grew up there.

The couple built their home on Woodland Avenue in 1961. The house is a brick structure, designed in the American ranch style. Heavy iron fencing and gates surround the property on which the one-level structure stands. To enter those gates one must definitely be invited—otherwise the Secret Servicemen on duty will not let you pass. The windows of the house, which is nestled among tall trees, offer views of nature at its woodland best.

Entering the home, you step into a foyer which leads to both the dining and living rooms. The kitchen and breakfast nook are located off the dining room, and so is the family room. The family room in turn leads to a patio lush with potted greens and blooming shrubs.

In the early 1970s, when Mr. Carter was governor of Georgia, a wing was added off the kitchen to house an office for him. His books, naval artifacts, and memorabilia are now kept in the bookshelf-lined room. Naturally, his office has touches of blue—his favorite color. A large navy-and-brown Oriental rug with white fringe covers most of the brown-tile flooring. The office is unpretentious, and the former chief executive is comfortable at his desk—answering his mail or turning to use his word processor which is placed before a window affording him a view of the woods outside.

The Plains house originally had four bedrooms, and a guest studio was added over the garage. Today, except for the guest studio, the layout has changed considerably, because the three Carter sons have married and left home. Rosalynn converted the empty bedroom nearest the master bedroom into an office, but when we redid the house that bedroom was turned into a dressing room addition to the master bedroom.

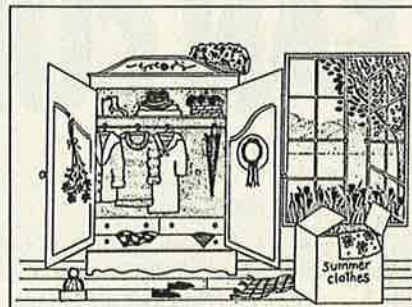
Another empty bedroom became her office. It is painted a sunny yellow. As a result, the one-time four-bedroom house now has only two bedrooms.

The second bedroom, of course, belongs to daughter Amy. Her room is still filled with her childhood treasures despite the fact that she is seldom home these days—her studies at Brown University keep her in Providence, R.I., most of the year.

When we first discussed a color scheme for the house, the Carters told me they definitely didn't want a lot of beige. They like color—and so do I. (One time when I arrived at their log cabin in Ellijay wearing a red-and-white jogging suit, they decided that very day to paint the cabin's front door fire-engine red.)

For the living room (perhaps to please her husband) Rosalynn decided on a sky-blue color scheme, with accents of kumquat or melon, peppered with pink raspberry and soft green. We selected azure blue for the carpeting and the sofa. Because she wanted a mix of stripes, plaids, and florals, we used a silk plaid for the draperies, and florals and stripes for the chairs and sofa throw-cushions. An English butler's tray table stands before the sofa, flanked by two beige-and-raspberry-tweed-covered French Provincial pull-up chairs.

A handsome English-style breakfront (secretary) became the focal point of the long, living-room wall, its shelves filled with Oriental and Far Eastern treasures the couple acquired on their travels. To add height to the breakfront, a French clock and treasured leather-bound books sit on top.



SUMMERIZING

*My wife is in a pickle,
Her clothes are all askew,
Warm weather is upon us,
She knows not what to do,*

*Her closet's full of winter wool,
The attic's heat is rising,
Back and forth with socks and shorts—*

Her yearly summerizing!

—CHARLES GHIGNA

RECIPE FOR A SMILE

*Want to see a smile light up
as bright as summer sun?
Take Grandpa to the ballgame,
LOVE is a HOME RUN!*

—GLADYS MCKEE

Illustrated by Robin Carroll

The small dining room incorporates all the living-room colors. Because Rosalynn feels that a deep, rich melon color "flatters everyone" it was chosen for the dining-room walls. The chair seats are covered in a light-blue line plaid. The straight valance board at the windows is covered in the same fabric and draped with festoons of blue and white toile. The toile is also used for draperies over sheer white undercurtains.

Melon, soft blue, and light green were again used to revitalize the master bedroom and the new adjoining dressing room. When Mrs. Carter lived in the White House, I designed a floral china pattern which I named *Rosalynn*. She liked it so much that I transferred the design to wallpaper and fabric for use in the master bedroom.

Jimmy Carter, who has become interested in furniture-making, handcrafted the bed and night tables himself. He has also made many pieces of furniture (chairs and tables) for their log cabin.

When it came to selecting upholstery for the family room, practicality was the order of the day. The handsome handwoven cotton rugs were made by Phyllis Fetty, a weaver from West Virginia. The room's rafters are stained pale green to contrast with the white ceiling. Bookshelves and a large television screen are built into one of the walnut-paneled walls; the other walls are covered with oil paintings, watercolors, and family photographs. Because the former first lady would never want anyone to think they've been forgotten, pictures of every member of the Carter clan hang on the walls. They include their three sons: Jack (John William), his wife, Judy, and their son and daughter; Chip (James Earl III), his wife, Ginger and their son; and Jeff (Donnel Jeffrey), his wife, Annette and their son. The pictures displayed run the gamut from early years to today. An oil portrait of Amy completes the collection. In the painting, "little" Amy has her famous reddish-blond hair. Last year she dyed her hair black, but now she's letting it grow back to its natural color.

Everything about the Carters and their home reflects their warmth, charm, and lack of pretense. Lunch is usually a hearty soup, a variety of sandwiches, and crudités. Their favorite drink: tea, iced, or soft drinks. However, if a guest asks for wine, it is served. I know because I've enjoyed a glass of wine there myself.

And so it is evident in every way that Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter have strong roots and familial ties to Plains, and that they enjoy living there, enjoy being with people they have known since childhood. While others, after leaving the White House, have sought to cut home ties or find greener pastures, for the Carters "there is no place like home." They enjoyed being in the White House, and now they are enjoying Plains. They are living proof that you *can* go home again! ★



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