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SOUTH CAROLINA HOMES & GARDENS





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THE BOATHOUSE

Most people have guest rooms for friends and family, and some families have cottages for the comfort of their loved ones. But few people have built an entire two-story guest house for their visitors. The charming cottage known as “The Boathouse” is indicative of the genuine Southern hospitality shown by Steve and Julie Koenig on Johns Island. When Steve says, “Come spend the night in the boathouse,” he means it. Text: Marsha Hewitt.

Photography: Rick Rhodes and Jay Vaughan.



WHEN BUILDER STEVE KOENIG BEGAN DEVELOPING an idyllic paradise for nature lovers on Johns Island, he made his own house the first residence in the 900-acre private golf retreat. A long winding road through lovely moss-draped live oaks, through a gate at Briars Creek, eventually brings visitors to the private golf course. Wild Turkey Way (named appropriately after the abundant feathered inhabitants) leads to Steve's long secluded driveway. His newly constructed two-and-a-half-story is surrounded by centuries-old live oaks that Union Soldiers camped under.

The house, overlooking a tranquil lake and designed by nationally famous architect Mark Finlay and Associates, is meant to resemble a vintage Wisconsin fishing camp. Lake Sharon provides abundant fishing and is home to numerous species of native waterfowl including ducks, herons, and egrets and a family of eagles who make their home in a nearby tree. Steve has seen as many as five eagles wheeling through the sky of an evening. Foxes, deer, wild turkey, raccoons, possum and even the occasional bobcat amble through the woods and across the nearby greens. Just down a winding road is the Rees Jones-designed Briars Creek Golf Course, the only certified Audubon course in the state.

While Steve's house has a spectacular spot on the lake, it's his boathouse that offers an even more intimate view of nature. Perched on a spit of land just a stone's throw away, the cottage

Steve Koenig doesn't have to go far to visit his boathouse—it's adjacent to his own house at Briar's Creek on John's Island. The smaller house at left serves as a guest house for family and visitors. A boat slip is just a few feet away.

seems to be an extension of the main house. A full porch encourages visitors to lounge in rocking chairs and enjoy the lake and its inhabitants up close.

Steve built the boathouse before his own house was finished. He often stayed there while his house was under construction, enjoying the blissful solitude offered by the two-bedroom cottage. But in typical Koenig fashion (Steve is the owner of Koenig Construction Co., which builds premium houses on Kiawah Island), the boathouse is first class all the way. The talents of Peggy Norris, interior designer, combined the warmth and richness of antiques to create the understated elegance one might expect in such a waterfront experience.

One of the two verandas facing the main house overlooks a massive brick fireplace accenting a comfortable poolside lounging area. The other is

almost close enough to the water to drop in a fishing line. The cottage's main room features a soaring ceiling and glass doors overlooking the lake. An unobtrusive stairway in the corner leads to a catwalk balcony with a grand view of the room below.

The upstairs bedroom, with a full adjacent bath, gives visitors the feeling of sleeping in the clouds. Windows on three sides, plus glass doors to a small balcony, bring in the early morning light or provide an unobstructed view of the full moon rising on the water below. While the sun



The interior of the boathouse features a soaring ceiling and glass doors overlooking the lake. Rich burgundy wall treatments provide a suitable background for a subtle nautical theme. A wooden table and chairs in the corner balance the comfortable seating area.



rises, mist over the water slowly dissipates as the ducks and waterfowl begin their busy mornings.

A rustic wooden table and chairs are tucked in the corner of the living room. A TV in an armoire, a radio, and plenty of books and magazines are part of the furnishings. The adjacent galley kitchen, which opens onto both porches, is designed for ease of use and provides many gourmet touches.

A few steps from the entrance to the boathouse is a fieldstone-lined boat slip, from which Steve launches his wooden cruising boat. He often takes visitors for a leisurely sunset tour of the lake, offering sights they'd never see from land.

Dedicated to preserving nature, Steve lives in the midst of a carefully developed paradise. He and his new bride, Julie, love to entertain, and various members of their blended family are often on hand. The boathouse is the perfect place for family and guests to spend a night, or several days.

"People always say they hate to leave," he says with his ever-ready smile. Not too large, not too small; not too close, not too far away—the boathouse is just right in every way. ♡



Rocking chairs on the back veranda (top) beckon visitors to sit and enjoy the serenity of the lake. The galley kitchen (bottom) opens onto both front and back porches. Comfort is paramount throughout, with hardwood floors making the fully functional kitchen even more inviting.



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