

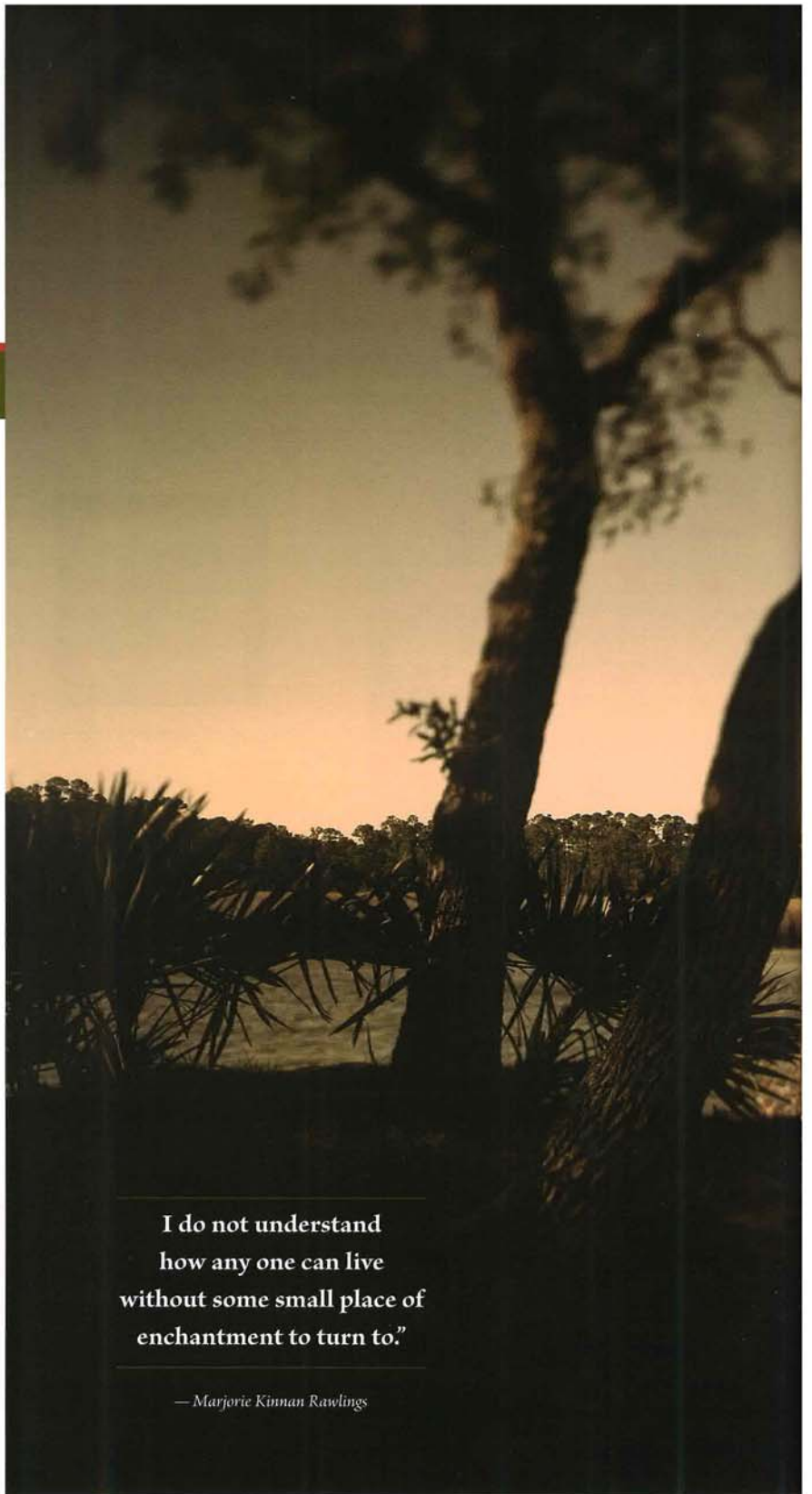
COASTAL HOMES

By Lynn Nesmith
Photography by Wade Collins

NAVIGATE EXPANSIVE WEST BAY AND WINDING BACK WATERS EIGHT MILES AS THE GREAT BLUE HERON FLIES FROM THE GULF OF MEXICO TO FIND ANOTHER WORLD, RIVERCAMPS ON CROOKED CREEK. It might be the height of the season on the beach. But you wouldn't have a clue in RiverCamps. The only crowd is a flock of 50 or so snowy egrets roosting in a protected wetlands.

Right: A network of more than five miles of interconnected trails meander throughout RiverCamps. Pristine bluffs provide a great launching spot for an afternoon of kayaking.

Below: Porches vary in size, configuration and orientation. An artist's easel set up on this small side porch suggests a spot to take up painting. The lush forest offers inspiration.

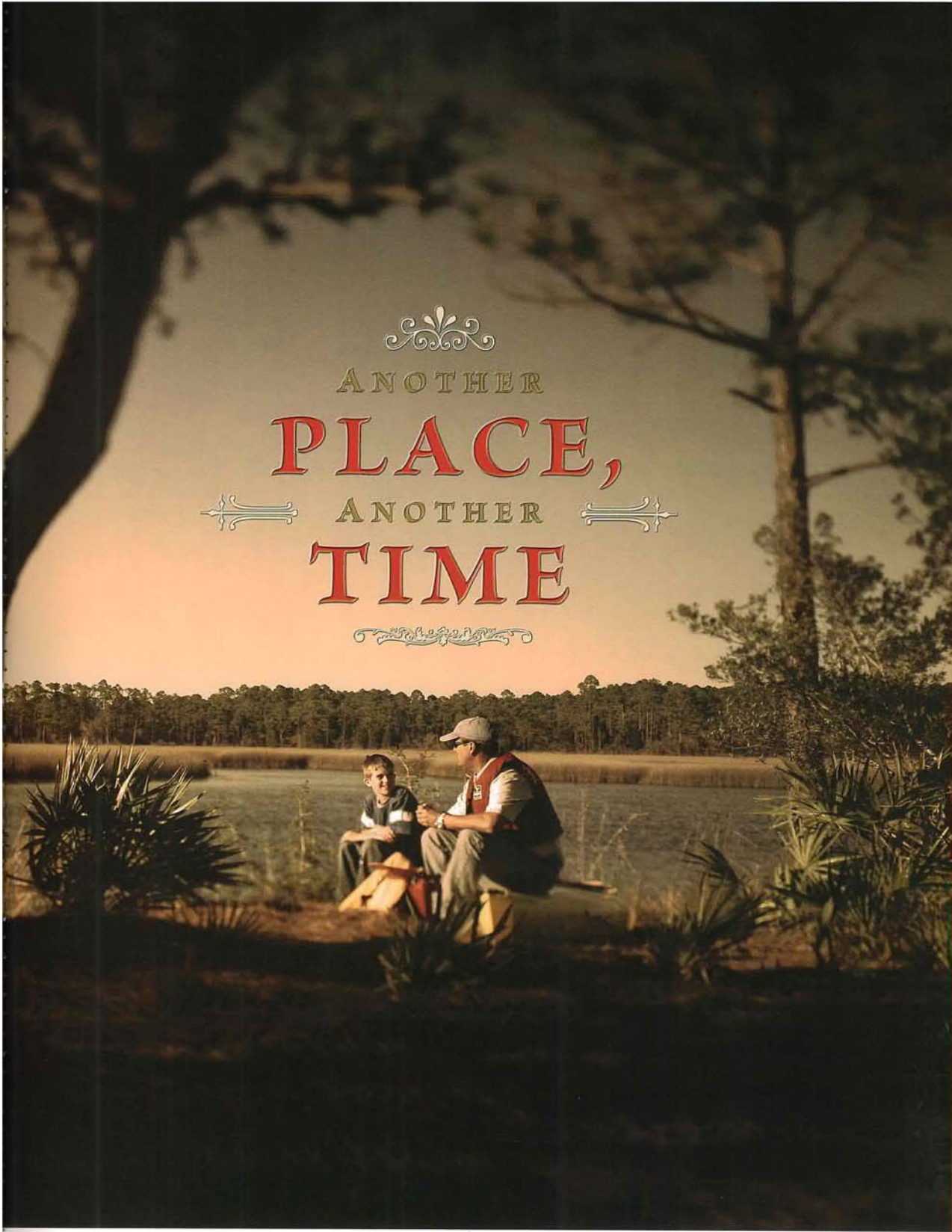


I do not understand
how any one can live
without some small place of
enchantment to turn to.”

— Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

An undiscovered treasure nestled in the forest, RiverCamps on Crooked Creek is a unique waterfront community comprising 1,500 acres of sand hills and piney woods defined by the

winding tidal waterway that inspires its name. Developed by the St. Joe Land Company, RiverCamps will include less than 450 family compounds with nearly 1,000 acres devoted to conservation of wildlife habitats and wetlands.



ANOTHER
PLACE,
ANOTHER
TIME

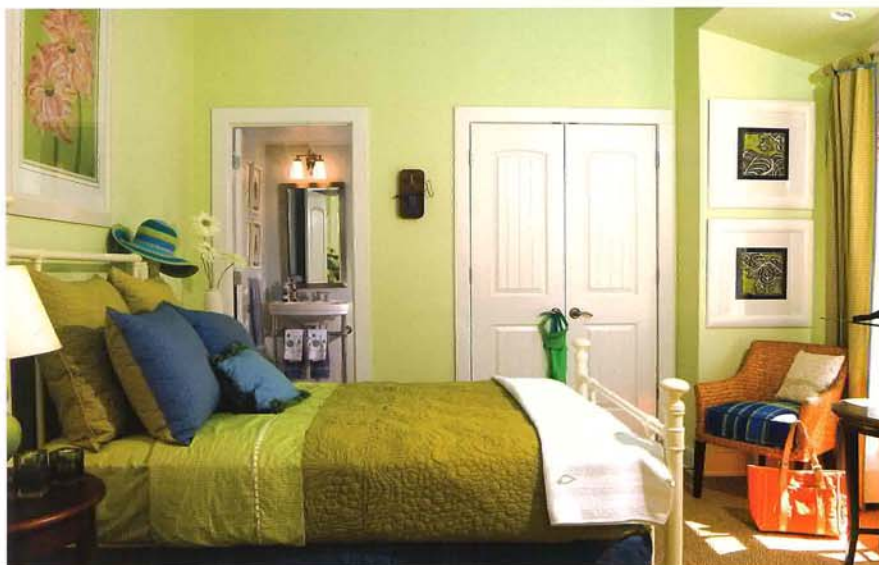
Although located close to the excitement of Panama City Beach and the sophisticated shops and restaurants of Scenic Highway 30-A, RiverCamps is far from a conventional coastal resort.

RiverCamps recalls the old Florida that first drew Southerners to the Gulf coast in search of recreation and relaxation. And in RiverCamps, you'll still find forests of pine, magnolia and live oak, a night sky filled with a million stars, birds of every feather and marshlands as far as the eye can see.

"We are working with architects, interpretive planners, and environmentalists to set the stage for a different way of living along the water," said Bill Wier, vice president of RiverCamps. "Folks from all around the country are discovering our

Right: The hallmark of the interiors of "The Tree House" is undeniably the confident use of color — starting with the friendly shades of yellow and red in the living room. Bold paintings complement the furnishings and fabrics.

Below: The color scheme evolves just as unforgettably in the bedrooms. This inviting guest suite is connected to the main living spaces with a hallway lined with floor-to-ceiling windows.



unique community, embracing the concept, and rediscovering the pleasures of living in harmony with nature."

Both the individual homes and community buildings of RiverCamps are designed to nurture a sense of connection to the land and foster a sense of this unique place. Most of the homesites will be an acre or more. The first completed houses respect the Florida climate and echo the old fashioned way of building that was common in the Panhandle for generations.

Architect Ted Flato helped set the tone of the community with the 2004 Southern Living Idea House. When asked about his inspiration for the house, Ted says, "You respond to the environment — you think of the breeze, you think of the sun, you think of the views, you think of materials that make sense."

Following these same tried-and-true principals, the Denver firm of 42/40 Architects designed the second house in the community, a welcoming family retreat appropriately named "The Tree House," where regional design traditions of wooden frame construction and metal roofs have been reinvented with a friendly contemporary twist.

Familiar Florida forms translate into gracious outdoor rooms with tall ceilings, deep overhangs and ceiling fans. And like a beloved family compound that might have expanded and adapted over the years, the Tree House allows for the flexibility of adding bedrooms and living spaces.

Inside, the house is a perfect combination of comfort and friendliness mingling old and new and refined and relaxed with a straightforward and utterly livable floor plan. Lisa Roth of Montgomery Roth Architecture and Interior Design enlivened the house with memorable

details and finishes, bright colors and lively art and accessories. Bay windows, architectural detailing, changes in ceiling heights and furniture placement help define the main living spaces.

Interiors and outdoor living spaces merge effortlessly with a gracious screened porch for dining, friendly open decks for conversation and private balconies off the bedrooms. Rooms unfold to establish long views through the house as natural light pours into every space. A standby of old-fashioned beach homes, the beloved outdoor shower is revived with flair on a curtained upstairs porch right off a luxurious master bathroom.

Just as the architecture of RiverCamps reaches back to another era, so does the lifestyle and attitude. It starts with two key figures of the community — Campmaster Marc Glissman and Captain Jim Whitaker. Even their job titles suggest a place that promises to be different.



A network of boardwalks and bike trails crisscross sand hills and pine forests, as well as salt marsh coves and freshwater bogs. "Way-finding stations along the paths will also foster education and stewardship," Glissman said. "Deer blinds and feeding stations are designed for photography and observation."

A series of platforms for overnight camping are located along stretches of conservation lands along the water. Rustic seating areas and shaded canopies encourage impromptu gatherings.

Whitaker oversees fishing excursions and a host of outdoor activities. Kayak and canoes trips are ever-changing adventures depending on the season and the flow of the tides. West Bay and the upper reaches of Crooked Creek offer excellent fresh-water fishing. For deep-sea excursions, the pass to the Gulf of Mexico is eight miles down the

Top Right: Porches possess a magical interchange with the outdoors. A screened porch off the back of the house offers the perfect spot to savor the sunset and a casual dinner.

Middle Right: Any summer house worth its salt has a memorable outdoor shower and the Tree House delivers. Heavy fabric draperies offer privacy and animate the corner porch off the master suite.

Right: Like most of the houses in RiverCamps, The Tree House is elevated to capture breezes and take advantage of views. A sunny foyer at the top of the stairway with a desk tucked into a bay window offers a fitting introduction.





Community camping platforms and campfire stations are positioned in various waterfront and wooded settings. They offer secluded spots for overnight adventures or simply a gathering spot to spend an afternoon on the water.

creek. Crabbing and bait casting along any shore are a memorable diversion for the youngest fishermen.

RiverCamps also offers "RiverLife," a program of "eats, experiences and exploration." Throughout the year, homeowners take part in an array of activities from stargazing parties to birding expeditions to story-telling. An old-fashioned fish fry starts with a day on the water and continues with lessons on cleaning the catch of the day.

Owning a home in a place like RiverCamps is all about savoring the array of recreation amenities and four distinct seasons. It's also a place that fosters the vanishing art of doing nothing much at all and encourages families and friends to reconnect in old-fashioned ways.

RiverCamps is a place where traditions will continue for generations and memories will be made that promise to last for a lifetime. ■

The RiverCamps Preview Center is located on Highway 98 just east of State Road 79 in Panama City Beach right across from Pier Park. For real estate information, call 1-866-357-4837 or visit www.rivercamps.com



"The Tree House" is comfortably nestled amid a forest of magnolias and pine forests for privacy. Broken down into a series of intimate wings, the home has the feel of a riverfront retreat that has been expanded over the years.