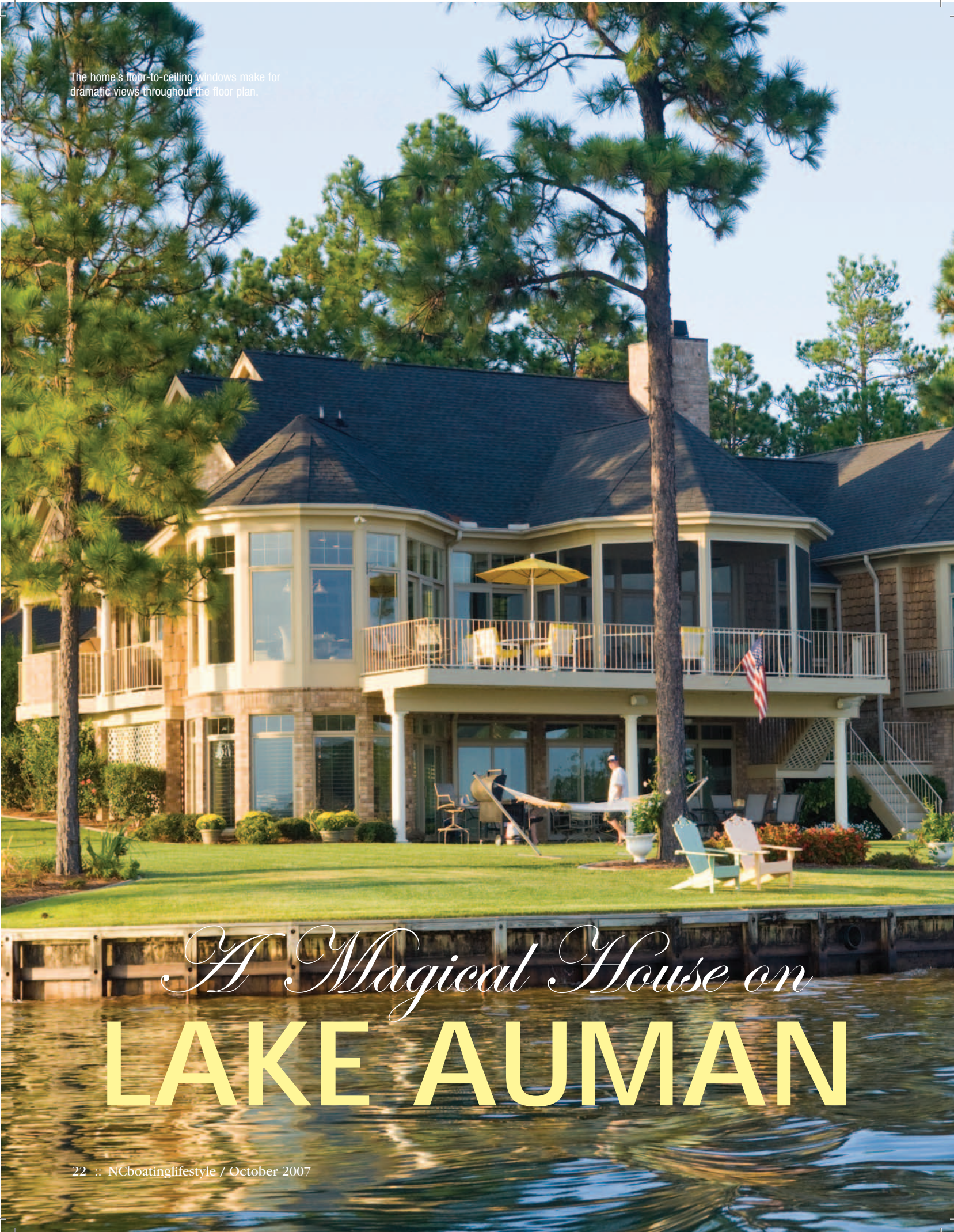


The home's floor-to-ceiling windows make for dramatic views throughout the floor plan.



A Magical House on
LAKE AUMAN



Peyton preps for one of the Gentry clan's epic feasts.

BY LYNNE BRANDON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID WILSON

It's Sunday afternoon. Shrimp is marinating on the counter, ripe yellow and red tomatoes are piled high on a platter and fresh basil and rosemary are filling the air with pungent smells. No, it's not a food network set, but the kitchen of Peyton and Martha Gentry on Lake Auman, an 880-acre lake 10 minutes outside of Pinehurst, NC. The Gentrys are getting ready for their weekly gathering where food and family make for a tradition that is rarely missed.

The role of host comes naturally to Martha and Peyton, who have held many parties for friends and employees over the years. The parties were so popular that on one occasion Peyton recalls using boat shuttles to the marina because there was not enough parking on the street or room to tie up the boats in front of their house.

Driving up to the Gentry abode in the gated community of Seven Lakes West is the first clue that you are in for a treat. Peyton landscaped the property with attention to detail everywhere. Carefully shaped Bradford pear trees line the stamped concrete driveway. Mandeville flowers intertwine their tropical pink and white blooms around the tree trunks for added color. The infusion of color continues with a walkway lined with yellow and white mums. Two giant yellow mums stand guard at the glass beveled front door.

If Peyton is a magician outside of the house, Martha matches his talent inside. Color rules and gives the house a cozy charm, an unusual quality for a house that is more than 5,000-square-feet. "Our architect kept coming up with a design for a really large house, but we scaled back because we wanted an open house that was not so formal," says Martha.

The couple has the Midas touch with whatever they put their hands to, whether it's creating ambiance at home or working hard in



For cruising with the family, Peyton takes his Hurricane 237 deck boat across Lake Auman's waters.

their business. For starters, the real estate gurus own REMAX Prime Properties in Pinehurst and Seven Lakes Real Estate with the main office located in Pinehurst. Martha operates as Martha Gentry's Home Selling Team and has been ranked number four in North Carolina and in the top 200 by the *Wall Street Journal*.

The two clearly love what they do and go about their work as well as their life with gusto.

Discipline might have something to do with it. Martha confesses to being an early bird who rises at 5 a.m. six days a week so she can work out in their home gym. "By 6:30, I have done the hardest thing that I will do all day," Martha says with a laugh. Reason being, when you love what you do, it's not work.

A tour of the house starts with the open kitchen and great room that is the center of fun and entertainment for the family. The open room faces the lake with floor-to-ceiling windows and allows the family and guests to eat overlooking the water. An adjacent screened-in porch is another favorite eating area.

The couple is clearly a team in the kitchen, one of their favorite gathering spots. Peyton mans the grill with mastery and is known for his mouth-watering specialties that include summer pasta made using his own home-grown basil. Cooking comes naturally to the man who grew up on a farm in Laurinburg, NC, where he watched his mother in the kitchen. As to the pasta, "It's so good that the

kids fight over who gets to take home the leftovers," says Martha. She is happy being the sous-chef in the family, making her special tea, salads and desserts.

Entertaining family and friends is the clear purpose of the Gentry home. After a great meal, libations are enjoyed at Peyton's Place bar downstairs that faces the water for a great view. A large martini glass on the bar blinks after dark, signaling to boating friends that the bar is open.

It's no wonder the three Gentry sons and their families convene every weekend that they can at the lake house. No coaxing needed, they say. The clan of 10 consists of eldest son Mark, wife Ginger and their children, Hailey, Hayden and Eli, who live nearby. Scott will marry Beverly Hodges in late October, and the youngest Gentry, Michael, lives close by with wife Jeanne and son, Gavin.

Before moving to Lake Auman in 2000, the Gentrys lived on Lake Sequoia for 14 years. Mark, Scott and Michael are very familiar with life on the water.

"We designed this house to live in and enjoy," says Martha of their home today. "We call it the magic house because everything just came together and worked." The rooms cast a fairy-tale spell from the vibrant apple-green walls of the master bedroom and warm coral and cream library where Martha devours three books a week, to the downstairs guest suite where a Cinderella bed awaits. The plush bed

shows off layers upon layers of down and stands 41 inches off the floor. Martha's 94-year old mother likes it, too, and she manages to get in it just fine, thank you.

The thought of living on Lake Auman was germinating as early as the 1970s when Peyton looked at the property with the original developer who thought it was the best lot on the lake. The couple actually sold their current lot twice before they finally bought it for themselves. "We originally sold this lot, acting as brokers for the previous owners, to a couple from Chicago who decided not to move to the Carolinas and then to good friends of ours who later changed their minds about building on the lake," says Martha. When they asked us to sell the lot for them again, I decided I really wanted it and finally talked Peyton into it.

A year-and-a-half later, the couple moved in. During the building process, the house got a lot of attention from self-guided tour groups. The two laugh over how many people walked in their house with groups while they were building. It wasn't as funny the morning after they moved when Martha was in her bathroom unpacking linens, barely awake and had a group walk in on her. "We were both startled," says Martha.

Lake Auman is a well-kept secret that beckons skiers, pontoon boats, powerboats and even sailboats. There's a sailboat race every other Saturday in the summer that dots the sky with colorful masts. "It takes them awhile, but it is



The dining room practically floats over the charming lake.



Martha gets an armful of joy out of lake living.



Scott Gentry mans the grill at family cookouts.

nice to watch,” says Peyton. The clear spring-fed lake attracts people of all ages and many second-home residents. Of the 1,800 lots, 504 are lakefront lots, with approximately 370 of those lakefront lots having houses on them.

A Key West fishing boat sits at the Gentry dock waiting to take Peyton around the lake looking for blue gills and large mouth bass. For cruising with the family, Peyton takes his Hurricane 237 deck boat across Lake Auman’s waters.

When the couple wants a change of scenery, they have two other choices, their mountain home between Banner Elk and Boone and an oceanfront condo in North Myrtle Beach. “If we can’t get to a destination within three hours, we aren’t going,” says Peyton. It has to be close for the two who travel more often than not for business. The other driving force behind the homes is the four grandkids.

The close-knit clan will celebrate a new chapter in the Gentry’s life in October when

Scott marries his long-time girlfriend, Beverly. The family will also celebrate the marriage that started it all, Peyton and Martha’s 39th anniversary. The older Gentrys will join the younger Gentrys for a double honeymoon to the Turks and Caicos Islands in the Caribbean.

A sign hangs in the Gentry kitchen that says, “Life itself is the proper binge,” a quote from the famous French cook Julia Child. The Gentrys’ life on Lake Auman is living proof. 🍷



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