

WHEN NECESSITY OPENS THE DOOR TO OPPORTUNITIES

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LITTLE JEWEL ON  
THE OCEAN





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THE DOOR TO OPPORTUNITIES

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The second floor mezzanine features teak furnishings, woven stools, small bowls, jeweled baskets and island-inspired prints. Double doors open to an outdoor balcony overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

The problem was simple. Orchid Island Beach Club's walls were bursting at the seams as over the past several years more and more activities and special events had been added to the monthly calendar. The dining room was the designated go-to place, and on days when as many as three events were scheduled at different times, members and staff found themselves bumping into each other as they rearranged tables and chairs to suit the situation's needs.

The solution seemed equally simple, but costly. Construct a new multi-purpose building designed to accommodate special interest clubs, meetings, speakers, presentations — and don't forget family celebrations. Call it the Sandpiper Room and make sure it's in keeping with the club's West Indies architecture. Add tropical landscaping and it will look as though it's always been there.

**A** bit of backstory: When the Beach Club opened its doors in 1990, the private Orchid Island community was in the early development stage.

Four years later, financial difficulties forced the original developer into bankruptcy, and the new ownership, under the direction of W. Galen Weston, renewed the original vision and hired Susan Schuyler Smith of Spectrum Interior Design to create a West Indies décor compatible with the architecture.

It wasn't long before new homes and condominiums appeared on the scene, adding to the number of residents who gathered at the Beach Club with friends. By 2013 it became clear that an overall assessment of clubhouse facilities and their usage was needed as well as a future master plan put in place.

"In order to analyze what we had and where we wanted to be, we consulted with James Hanna, who had been a partner with Nichols Carter Grant, the architectural firm that originally designed the Beach Club," says Suzanne Albani, Orchid Island Golf and Beach Club president at the time. "We also interviewed members and staff and sent out a survey where we listed various areas that had been identified as needing improvement, asking members for their comments and what they felt were the priorities."

Four topped the list: the pressing need for a multipurpose room, enlarging the second level Seaside Lounge, building a pool bar between the swimming pool and boardwalk leading to the ocean, and updating the dining room. Town meetings were held to review the



A silent warrior guards the new entrance to the expanded Seaside Lounge. His twin stands erect 20 feet away.



For Stephanie Hahn, who chaired the Beach Club improvement committee, seeing how happy members are with the way things turned out was worth all the time and effort. Would she do it again? In a heart beat.



GREG HILLS

The Seaside Lounge, with a panoramic view of the Atlantic Ocean, has become the happy place for club members to gather with friends to chat and sip.



master plan, timetable, and cost, which would require an assessment.

“Members had a lot of opportunities to ask questions, to give us feedback and they did,” Albani notes. After a decisive vote of approval she wasted no time in tapping Stephanie Hahn, who had played a key role in updating other Orchid Island facilities, to chair the Beach Club improvement committee.

“It was obvious that the Seaside Lounge was too small and that the entrance, which opened to the bar, created a bottleneck as everyone stopped there to get a drink and talk,” says Hahn, gesturing towards the new glass doors that lead directly into the lounge, now double the original size. With a panoramic view of the Atlantic Ocean, it’s no wonder the lounge is a member magnet.

“We also felt we needed to redesign and at the same time refresh



Suzanne Albani served as president of Orchid Island Golf & Beach Club throughout the three-year renovation project. Like Stephanie Hahn, she too would do it again.

GREG HILLS



Smiling papier-mâché puppets, treasures Susan Schuyler Smith found during her travels, make cameo appearances throughout the club.

the mezzanine area and dining room so that everything on the second level tied together,” Hahn adds. As far as she and committee members were concerned, the only one who could make that happen was Susan Schuyler Smith. The interior designer’s familiarity and fondness for the Beach Club, with its colonnades, breezy verandas, shady lanais and ponds, was well known.

Smith greeted the opportunity to recreate the colorful West Indies décor she designed 25 years ago with enthusiasm. “The Anglo-Caribbean architecture with Far Eastern accents really sets the Orchid Island Beach Club apart from other clubhouses. It’s like a little jewel,” says Smith, who early on had been inspired by the diverse, colorful batik patterns that caught her eye while visiting the British Virgin Islands.

“Back then the original batiks were very hard to find; they also



The dining room features a four-piece floral island that can be rearranged to accommodate special events. With fresh colors and a sparkling chandelier, the former “multi-purpose room” has returned to its original intent — that of sharing meals with friends and family.

had a tendency to fade over time. China Seas has beautiful patterns that look like batiks, and we had them custom made in indoor-outdoor fabric so they won’t fade and you can clean them,” Smith says with obvious delight. “The same is true with the Kilim rugs we used. A couple of years ago you couldn’t find them anywhere. Now you can.”

During the years since Smith and Spectrum project manager Shelly Craft originally created the West Indies décor, changes

— perhaps reflecting design trends of the time — had been made to the Seaside Lounge. The gleaming teak floors remained; however much of the original British Colonial style furnishings and accessories had been damaged and replaced. The rest had simply gone missing.

The search was on. “A lot of the pieces were still around the Beach Club, being used in one way or another. Trying to find them was like a treasure hunt,” Smith muses. “Once we located them,

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Subtle design changes in the dining room include leather banquettes and a seascape over the fireplace.



The new multi-functional Sandpiper Room serves a myriad of uses. For that reason, Smith selected tables with castors on the legs and tops that flip up, accommodating the need to rearrange or store away.

we had them stripped, re-stained and seats re-caned when needed. We also added some new pieces. It was a logistics nightmare as we had to figure out where everything was going to go.”

While some of the chairs, settees, and tables found a home in the Seaside Lounge, others were arranged in conversational clusters throughout the open mezzanine, guarded on either end by two impressive male statues. Fabrics featuring colorful batik patterns provide a tropical flare, as do small wood pots and other accessories reminiscent of what you would hope to find

in the British West Indies. All come from Smith’s considerable inventory and bear her signature touch.

**I**n the expanded Seaside Lounge, new mahogany columns with vertical striations match existing columns and look as though they’ve always been there. On a shelf behind the wall-to-wall bar, five willowy papier-mâché puppets peer down. Smith purchased them 25 years ago on St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. They were perfect in that very same spot then; they’re perfect now.





The architectural design and placement of the Sandpiper Room makes it look as though it has always been part of the Beach Club.

RENEE BRADY

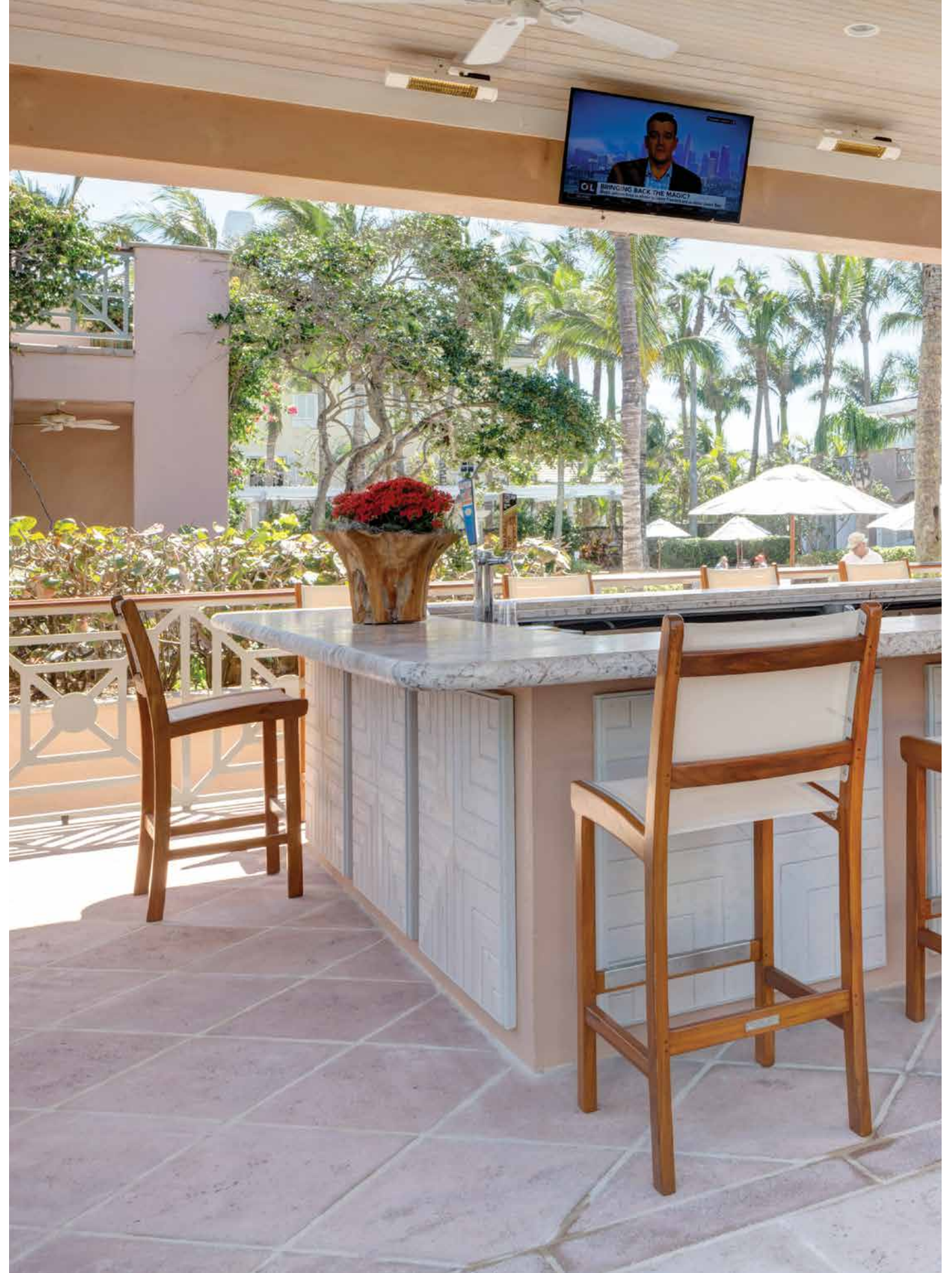
Perfect also describes the new bookcase, home to shells, containers, books, and a diptych (two-piece painting). “We had the bookcase built where there had been a blank wall. All of the things in it are related to Florida and the Caribbean,” Smith points out. “I was going to choose another painting, but when I saw the more contemporary diptych in the Meghan Candler Gallery I knew it was perfect because of the colors.”

Smith faced a different set of challenges when it came to furnishing the Sandpiper Room. In order to accommodate the variety of activities and events that take place in the new multipurpose space, it was the time-old rule of thumb — “form follows function” — as tables and chairs needed to be easy to rearrange

and in some cases tucked away. “We found a company that had tables where the legs have wheels and the tops flip up, so they can be wheeled right into the storage area if need be,” a smiling Smith notes.

Plantation shutters darken the room when a video or slide presentation is on the agenda; when the shutters are open, sunshine casts a warm glow over the coral walls. Since being completed the Sandpiper Room has been booked solid with special interest group gatherings, meetings and family events.

While some members may have forgotten what it was like juggling so many activities in and around meals in the dining room, Hahn and Albani definitely haven’t. For them it became an



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The new pool bar and grill with its metal roof has been a welcome amenity. Not seen is a blackboard featuring tasty specials of the day.



The Beach Club's British West Indies architecture, with its balconies, breezy verandas, colonnades and far Eastern accents set it part from other clubs.

## ORCHID ISLAND BEACH CLUB RENOVATION TEAM

**Orchid Island Golf & Beach Club President:**  
Suzanne Albani

**Orchid Island Beach Club Improvement Committee:**  
Stephanie Hahn, chair, Scott Bayman, Vernon Daniel, Trish Joaquim, Donna Waterston, and club general manager Robert Tench

**Architect:** James Hanna, T.Y. Lin International Group

**Interior Design:** Susan Schuyler Smith ASID, Spectrum Interior Design; Shelly Craft, project manager

**Contractor:** Paul Benson, EBL Construction

**Landscaping:** August Schwartz, August Gerard Schwartz Landscape Architecture

**Upholstery:** Paul Petersen & Company

**Flooring:** Florida Floor Fashions

all-consuming job that lasted for three years, with the last six months being the most intense.

"We had a very ambitious timetable, with demolition scheduled for May 1st and everything finished by the end of October when so many of our members return. All was going according to plan until we had an unexpected visitor called 'Matthew,'" Albani says with a knowing smile as she recalls the two-week delay caused by the hurricane.

For Hahn, all of the planning, time commitment and yes, worrying, was well worth it. "Would I do it again? Definitely. There's a satisfaction in trying to deliver, to overachieve, what the members are looking for, and I think we did that."

Albani agrees. "When the Seaside Lounge opened and people walked in the door and saw it for the first time, their eyes got big and many of them said 'Wow.' It was just the response we were hoping for — it's a great feeling knowing how happy the members are." ☺