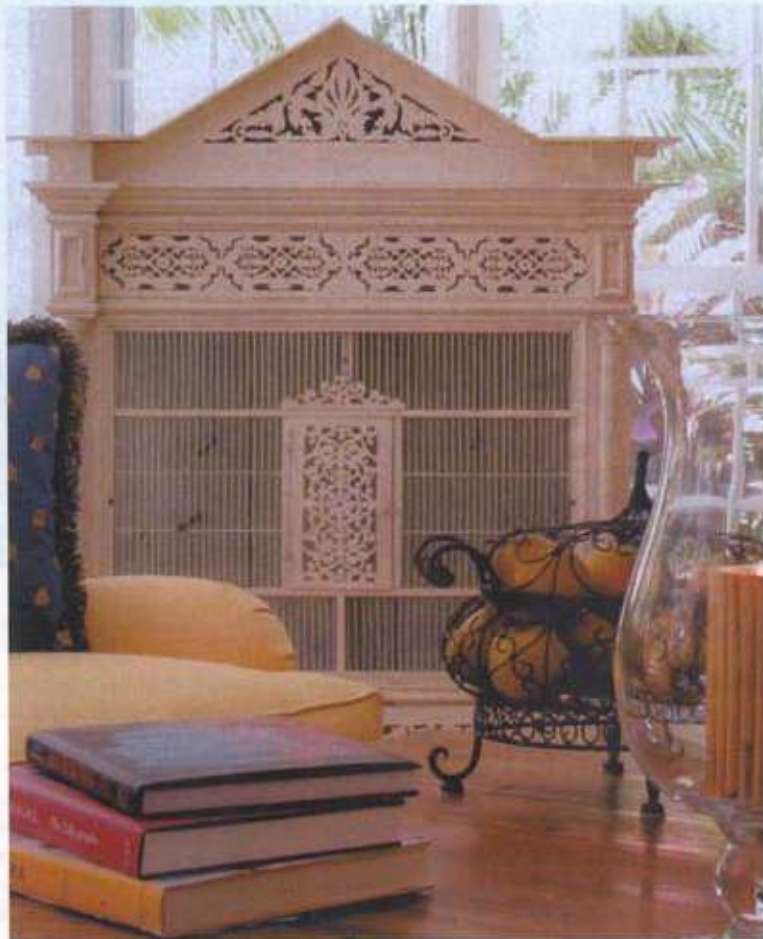
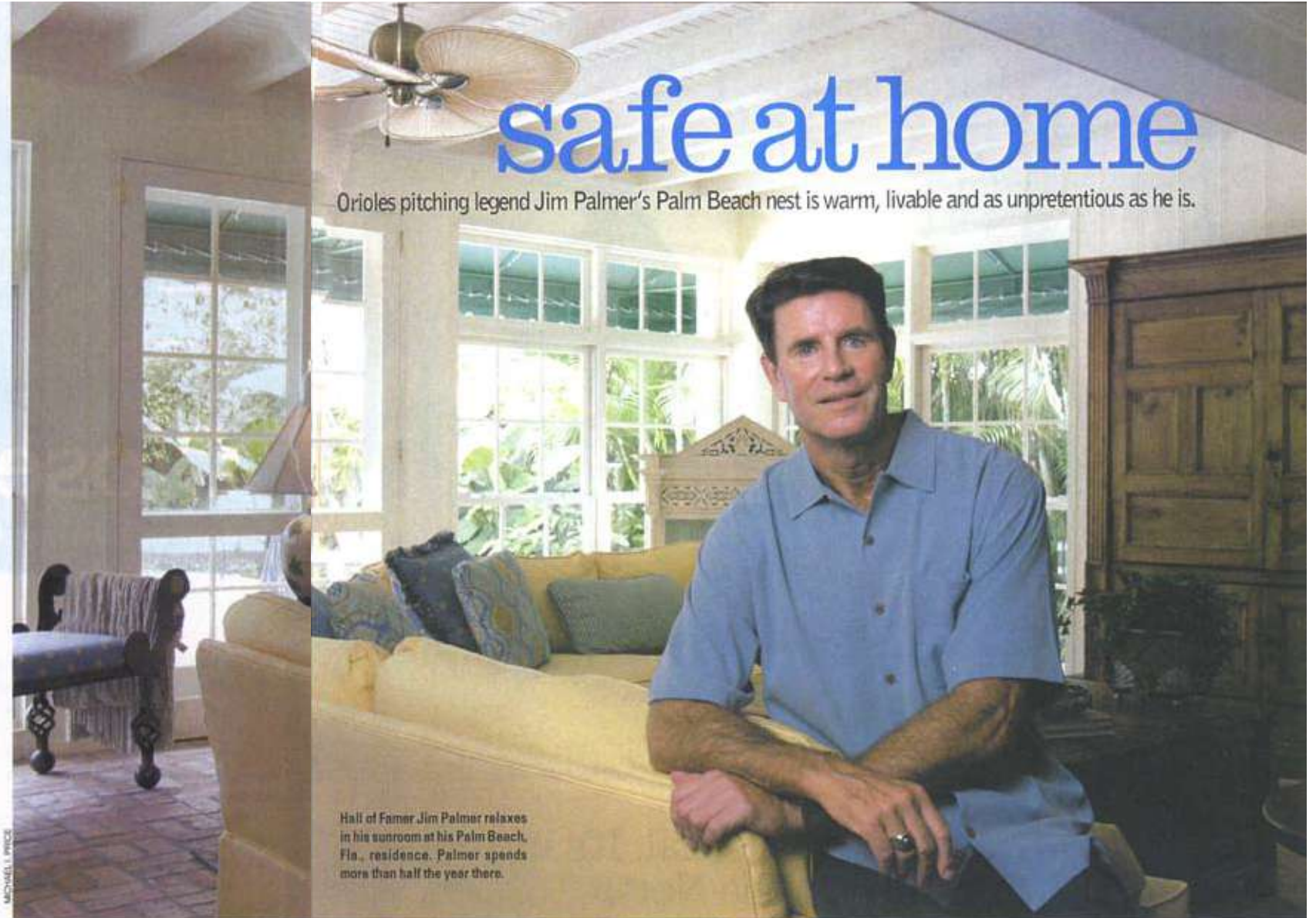


BY SUSAN GREEN
PHOTOGRAPHED BY GREGG McHALE



MICHAEL PRICE



safe at home

Orioles pitching legend Jim Palmer's Palm Beach nest is warm, livable and as unpretentious as he is.

Hall of Famer Jim Palmer relaxes in his sunroom at his Palm Beach, Fla., residence. Palmer spends more than half the year there.



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This trophy, one of Palmer's three Cy Young Awards, is one of many he keeps on display in his home.

WHEN IT'S NOT BASEBALL SEASON IN BALTIMORE, FORMER ORIOLES pitcher and major league Hall of Famer, broadcaster, speaker and philanthropist Jim Palmer is kicking back at his Florida home. On the northern section of the island of Palm Beach, Palmer's light-filled, casually elegant home is the place he can get away from it all, yet still be very involved in the community.

Palmer moved to this island getaway from his former home in Juno Beach, a small seaside community north of Palm Beach, in June of 2000. Working with Baltimore interior designer Jean McHale, Palmer's home reflects both the ambience of the balmy Florida weather and the luxurious tradition that is Palm Beach. Stately antiques blend with island colors of cool blue, warm yellow, green and rose.

"Jim is traditional. It's ingrained in him from being from the North," says McHale. "The result is eclectic. We took good antiques and meld-

Opposite page, top and bottom: In the loggia, the blue and yellow upholstered pieces are supplemented with an oversized antique birdcage.

Palmer's traditional, two-story brick home in Palm Beach features two symmetrical bow-front windows on the first floor; lush tropical plantings surround the home and pool area.



Opposite: The formal living room features a stately grand piano in the window alcove, a Georgian secretary and a 1950s-era sofa reupholstered in a subtle cream print. The twin coffee tables were custom-made from a pair of antique iron folding stools. *Above:* The master bedroom's tone-on-tone blue walls are a backdrop for a large country French armoire, Louis Philippe commode chest and heavy wrought-iron bed. The blue toile bed linens are echoed by the upholstered lounge chair and the toile wallpaper in the adjoining bath. *Below left:* The formal dining room's muted-green walls incorporate a mural of trees and native Florida birds. The sideboard and dining set are traditional; the chair seats have been upholstered in playful stripes. *Below right:* This antique English chaise lounge in the loggia sports a whimsical blue-and-yellow print.

“Jim is traditional. It’s ingrained in him from being from the North,” says designer Jean McHale.

ed them into the Florida atmosphere, and managed to keep it from being heavy looking.” While all of the antique pieces eschew fussiness and feature strong lines, they come from different eras. “There’s antique English mixed with a touch of French,” says McHale.

Palmer buys what he likes, whether it’s furniture or art. “I’ve had enough homes to realize that if you’re going to buy furniture, why not buy antiques?” he says. “Yes, they’re pricey, but so is today’s furniture. These pieces aren’t losing their value.” His art collection is diverse, from Renoir to Picasso to Andy Warhol.

The favorite “hang out” place is the loggia, as Floridians call it, which is part of one long open space that is a combination living room and sunroom. The loggia faces the gardens and pool area, where Palmer spends a fair amount

of time. “I like gardening and landscaping,” he says. “It’s my obsessive-compulsive nature.” The brick floor and sisal rug imbue an outdoor feel, as do the blue and yellow furnishings against a simple backdrop of pristine white walls. An oversized birdcage and English antique chaise lounge add a bit of whimsy to the bright room.

This is also a room where some of Palmer’s prized personal possessions are on display, including the painting that artist LeRoy Neiman did for his induction into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1990, a replica of the Hall of Fame plaque, his three Cy Young Awards and one of his four Gold Glove awards (the rest have been auctioned off to charity). “You don’t get these awards by yourself,” Palmer says. “They may be individual awards, but it took a lot of other people to make
(continued on page 144)



Safe at Home

(continued from page 142)

it happen. These are important, but the pictures of my girls and friends are just as important.”

Palmer has two daughters: Jamie, 38, who currently lives in Boston and works for State Street Bank; and Kelly, who is 35, married and lives in Dallas. The girls visit frequently, as do friends, many from the athletic world. That’s why his second-floor guest room has stately antique three-quarter beds instead of the usual twins. “He has big guys visiting,” says McHale. “We took two three-quarter beds and had mattresses custom made, then made headboards out of French sideboards.”

The rest of the first floor includes the living room and formal dining room. The living room again mixes casual elements with more distinguished pieces. The baby grand piano in the window alcove, gilt mirror over the sofa and Georgian secretary provide the stately accents to the 1950s sofas reupholstered in a subtle cream print, and coffee tables made from antique iron folding stools.

The dining room is another study in bringing in the outside, while keeping the formal atmosphere intact. A muted-green mural conceived by McHale incorporates trees and native Florida birds, contrasting with the deep-toned antique dining set and sideboard. Palmer enjoys entertaining, and this house motivates him to stay in more. “I’m spending more time having small intimate dinners at home,” he says.

The upstairs master bedroom and office have a definite masculine tone. The tone-on-tone blue walls have a thin stripe through-

out, giving the room a restful ambience. A country French armoire dominates one wall, and Louis Philippe commode with a gilt mirror faces the iron bed. The office also carries through the masculine theme, with leather sofa, English leather-topped desk and grasscloth on the walls.

“Jim’s basically a minimalist,” says McHale. “He does not like anything out of place, and doesn’t like clutter. He’s a very spare person in that sense and I love that about him— this house is homey and livable but doesn’t have masses of stuff.”

As for Palmer, it looks like he just might be here for a while. He’s an active supporter of numerous charities such as the United Way and the Children’s Home Society. And even though he keeps busy with broadcasting for the Orioles, motivational speaking and representing products such as Nutri-Max among other things, he’s finding that he’s now in Florida more than half of the year. Along with numerous celebrity golf tournaments he participates in, he also loves the ease in which he can indulge his many sports, such as golf, biking and working out at the local gym. “It’s getting harder and harder to leave here,” he says. □

Susan Green is a free-lance writer based in Palm Beach, Fla.

RESOURCES

Interior design Jean McHale, Baltimore, 410-625-1900

Antiques/upholstery Gaines McHale Antiques & Home, Baltimore, 410-625-1900

Decorative painting Twin Diamonds Studio, Baltimore, 410-727-0965

Wallpapers Pierre Deux (www.pierredeux.com) and Thibault

Fabrics Scalaman-dre (www.scalamandre.com), Stroheim and Romann (www.stroheim.com) and Lee Upholstery (www.leeindustries.com)