

Paradise at the End of the World

By Alex Johansen | Photos by Matt Silk





photo by Liz Mitchell



Visit one of the oldest houses built on Oak Island and you will see Dorothy Essey welcoming guests with her bubbly smile and open arms. The 1950 home fulfills her dream of living on the water where the view of nature dissolves the cares of the world.

Oak Island is a small beach community in Brunswick County near the southern part of North Carolina. It sits between the Intracoastal Waterway and the Atlantic Ocean.

Open Dorothy's front door into a spacious foyer which draws the eye into the living room and through the broad archway into the family room where winter reading space is beside the fireplace. Dorothy reads three books a week,

usually inspirational themed. She loves learning and helping others.

Moving along the back of the house the glass expanse displays the marsh, the gazebo, a walkway into the marsh and the bridge over the Intracoastal Waterway in the distance.

Moving along the back hall with floor to ceiling windows, the open exercise room displays with a full view of the water. Continue into the added portion of the house with a master suite stretching the entire width of the house. Also with a back wall of windows leading to a screened porch where Dorothy enjoys breakfast and dinner, the suite accommodates a king sized bed, a desk and office space and a sitting area. It leads to a cedar closet with two entrances and a master bath with the



soaking tub offering a window onto the porch for continuing the view.

Rose and green décor brings the feel of nature into the home. Original hardwood floors, family portraits and collectibles lend warmth to every room as soft as Dorothy's lovely personality.

The eighth of nine children, Dorothy grew up in North Carolina on a farm which became the largest hog farm in the state in the 1970s. After college at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, she taught school for a few years and enjoyed small town life where she and her husband raised their two children. In 1980, moving to Oak Island for her husband's job with Carolina Power & Light in Brunswick County, she said, "I thought we had moved to the end of the world. I could see it!"

The end of the world became the haven she continues to treasure. She has lived in her waterway house for 12 years and added the master suite to expand the view of nature across the marsh and water.

A regional and national leader in her field, Dorothy began her own real estate company in one room in 1986 and now has three Century 21 offices in the Oak Island and Southport area.

"I was born to do real estate," she believes.

In 1993 she was named the top in Oak Island and her Century 21 company in 2005 was 72nd in the world. She was named district woman of the year in Brunswick County in 2006. Over her kitchen fireplace hangs a photograph of President George W. Bush presenting Dorothy with the National Leadership Award in 2006.

She also stays busy with a church she helped begin and works on mission trips in orphanages. Her philosophy of politics, business and life is negotiating so that everyone wins.

Dorothy is very much in the swing of business and social activities almost constantly. But when she's reading and relaxing in her sumptuous sanctuary, she's away from the world.

"Every day when I come over the bridge to Oak Island and travel to paradise, it's like going back in time," she said. ■

