

NATURALLY THATCHED
Dried-grass rooftops woven
with an artistic flair
M12



MANSION

*'I like work: it fascinates me.
I can sit and look at it for hours.'*
—Jerome K. Jerome

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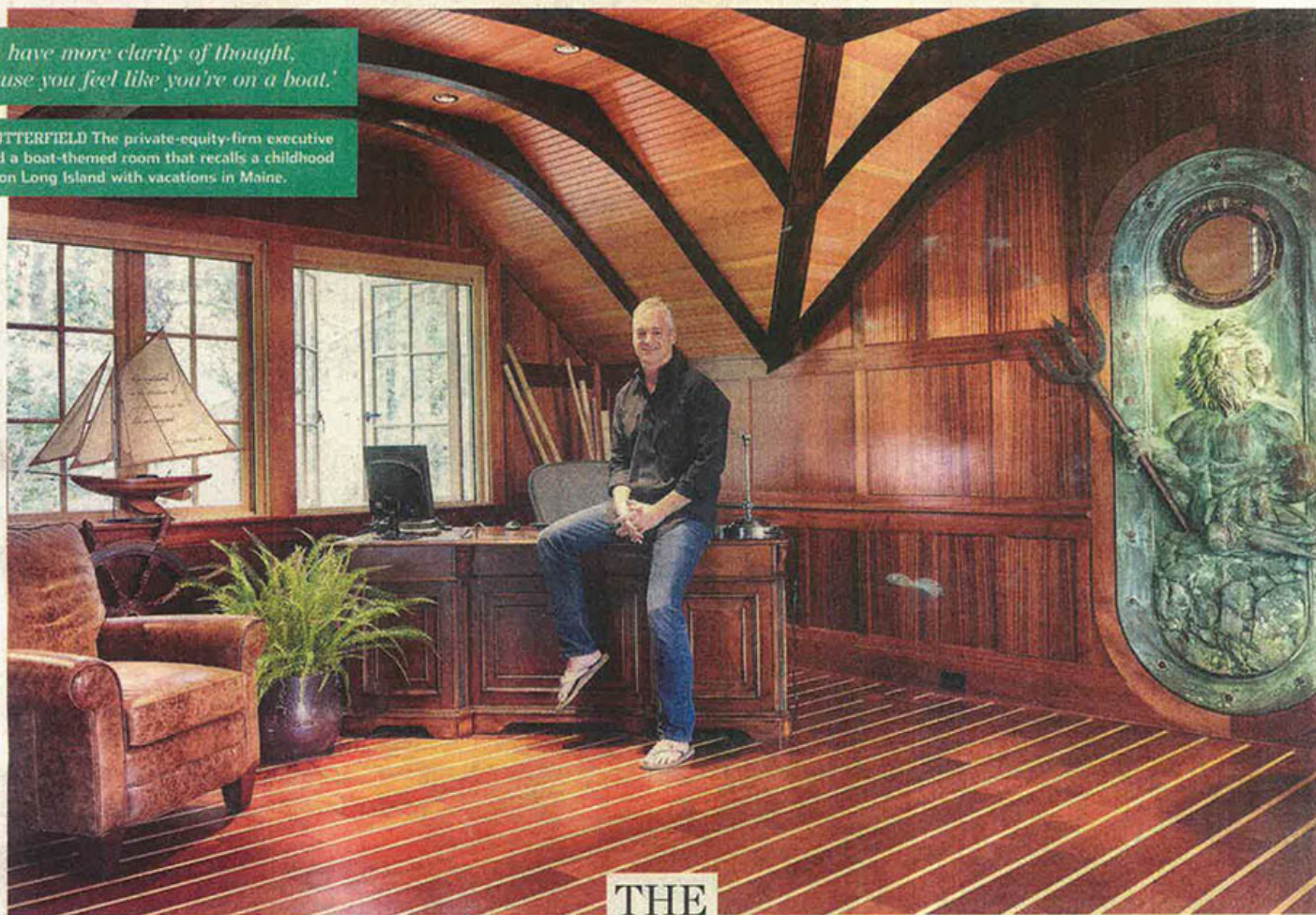
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*'You have more clarity of thought,
because you feel like you're on a boat.'*

JIM BUTTERFIELD The private-equity-firm executive created a boat-themed room that recalls a childhood spent on Long Island with vacations in Maine.



Left: John Reston, Smith (theleft); Bob Williams for The Wall Street Journal; Bryan Debbals for The Wall Street Journal

THE EXECUTIVE HOME OFFICE

Corporate leaders who run their empires from home offices that are fully wired and loaded with inspirational things: guns, colors and boats; 'I could run the world from here.'

BY JOANN S. LUBLIN

RON KAPLAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE of Trex Co., tackles his toughest work challenges in a gun-filled sanctuary of his Stephens City, Va., home.

Working late one night from his residential office, Mr. Kaplan solved a mess involving labor costs for certain warranty claims that threatened the survival of the maker of backyard decks. He celebrated by stepping into his adjacent wet bar and drinking a glass of wine from one of roughly 300 bottles kept in his nearby wine cellar.

"I could run the world from here," he says.

Home offices have become more than a place to work when executives aren't at corporate quarters. Many now serve double duty as a recreational status symbol within high-end homes.



*'Color allows me to explore another of
the adventures of life.'*

LOREEN ARBUS The broadcast executive created a work space done in red, pink and lavender to keep up her spirits during work weeks of up to 80 hours.

For full-time telecommuters like Loreen Arbus and Jim Butterfield, home is where the only office is. The TV producer and private-equity executive blend practical and personal touches in their New York and South Carolina offices.

The study inside Ms. Arbus's Manhattan apartment—painted bright red, pink and lavender—con-

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imes More Than a Place to Work



SAILING THROUGH WORK Jim Butterfield telecommutes full time from his South Carolina office, above left. The room, clockwise from top, which recalls high-end Chris-Craft boats, features decorative porthole windows, a dock hanging lamp, and a custom nautical door with a relief of King Neptune that hides a full bathroom.

chest she designed.

She thinks she works best by having "things around me that I like." She especially appreciates her office's cornucopia of colors. "They just lift my spirits," she says. "I enjoy getting work done much, much more."

After moving there in July 2011, Ms. Arbus spent a year redecorating the rest of her white-walled apartment with equally vivid hues. She also installed colorful chandeliers

and commissioned Impressionist-style murals for the foyer. "Color allows me to explore another of the adventures of life," she says.

MAKING WAVES IN 'THE BOAT'

Mr. Butterfield, a principal at Riverside Co., a private-equity firm, has loved boating since his Long Island childhood. During vacations at a Maine lake, he piloted a 13-foot motorboat from age 13. So he designed his approxi-

mately 600-square-foot home office to resemble the interior of a sailing yacht.

"You have more clarity of thought, because you feel like you're on a boat," Mr. Butterfield says. "I wanted to enjoy where I work when I am at home." The executive, who mainly scouts for potential investment targets, travels half the time.

Mr. Butterfield spent \$90,000 assembling and decorating a previously unfinished space above his two-car ga-

rage. He completed the office in 2011. Handsome wood covers the floors, walls and ceiling. The Brazilian cherry with maple-inlay flooring looks like the fancier grade in Chris-Craft boats.

Other nautical touches abound. Besides the King Neptune door, they range from decorative porthole windows to a dock hanging lamp, antique ship's wheel and model sailboat.

It is also a practical workplace. Thanks to a special phone system



Tips for Work at Home

Software executive Catherine Courage knows how to work well from home—outside or inside her San Francisco residence.

Ms. Courage is a 39-year-old senior vice president of Citrix Inc., whose core business connects people, applications and data. The company's brands include GoToMeeting, a Web videoconferencing software.

With GoToMeeting installed on her laptop, she often confers with colleagues from her multilevel backyard deck enveloped by trees and flower beds.

"To be outside energizes me," the triathlon runner says.

During inclement weather, Ms. Courage occupies the indoor space, with a desk, couch and antique maps of her native Newfoundland. "For me, the term office is a little old school," she says.

She works from home about a third of the time, allowing her to escape many lengthy commutes to Citrix's headquarters in suburban Santa Clara.

Here are Ms. Courage's top tips for making the most out of your work at home:

- Choose the **right technology** so you can do your job right.
- **Stimulate creativity** by regularly switching between interior and exterior venues.
- Pick the **right location** for a task. You may have to kick out the dog and close the door.
- Surround yourself with **inspirational items**.
- Don't overlook **low-tech tools** like Post-It notes, which can ignite brainstorming. —Joann S. Lublin

on his solid-oak desk, Mr. Butterfield can reach any colleague by dialing four digits.

After hours, he occasionally takes advantage of "man cave" areas in his office, with a brown leather couch, a 32-inch TV screen and a refrigerator filled with Guinness beer.

"Maybe someday, I will have a sail boat," Mr. Butterfield muses. "But for now, I have the beached boat—also known as my home office."

The Executive Home Office Becomes

Continued from page M1

tains a fax machine on a sliding shelf not far from a closet crammed with clothes for her teacup poodle. Mr. Butterfield's boat-themed home office on Daniel Island, S.C., features a fast phone link with co-workers worldwide and a custom nautical door with a relief of King Neptune. A sceptor handle opens it to a full bathroom.

The cachet of having a home office persists as technology improves communication outside the workplace. Toll Brothers, the biggest U.S. builder of luxury houses, now installs an enclosed study in all of its single-family dwellings, up from 90% a decade ago, estimates Tim Gehman, design director of its Toll Architecture unit. They usually get a showcase spot near the front entry. "Studies have increased in importance," he says.

Home offices consistently rank near the top of the most popular "special function" areas, according to quarterly surveys of architects conducted since 2006 by the American Institute of Architects.

But such offices have broadened into multipurpose spaces. Toll Brothers, for example, no longer offers built-in bookcases for them, giving more flexibility to using the space. "It's a lifestyle room," suitable for get-togethers with business contacts or friends, explains Charlotte Jensen, a San Diego interior designer.

Even without bookcases, some of her executive clients spend more than \$200,000 outfitting elegant home offices. Their favorite amenities include a top-notch treadmill, multiple television screens and customized shelving to display treasured collectibles, Ms. Jensen says.

Here is a look at how an unusual home office shaped the worlds of Mr. Kaplan, Ms. Arbus and Mr. Butterfield:

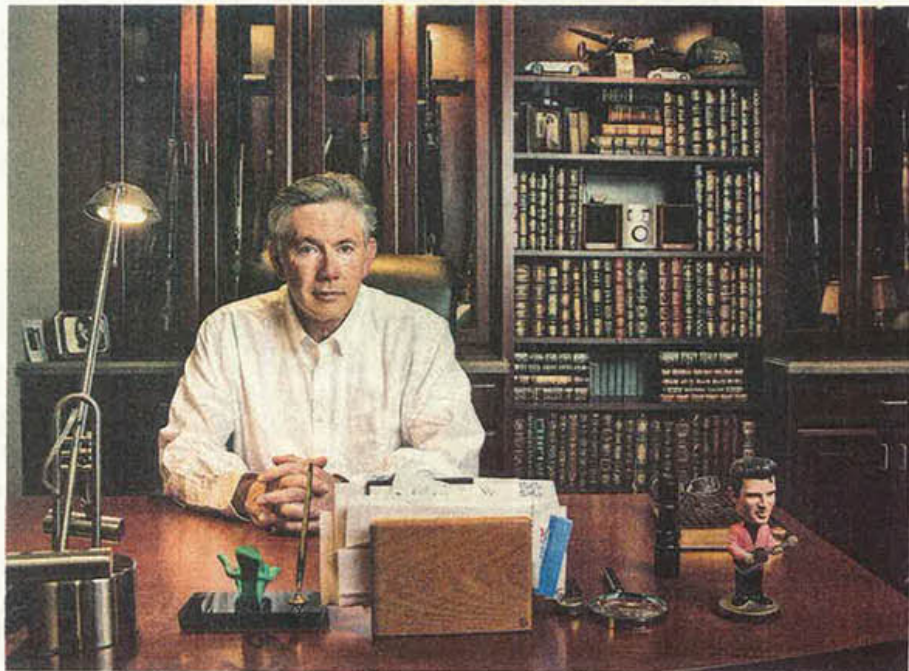
A LOCKED LAIR

Mr. Kaplan turned his house's unfinished ground floor into a 195-square-foot office plus seven other rooms after he joined Trex in 2008. He works from his private hideaway for at least an hour every day, relishing the lack of interruptions. "This is for my heavy-duty thinking," he says.

He spent \$85,000 finishing and decorating his big basement; \$12,000 of that was on the home office. From a black leather chair, Mr. Kaplan gazes at prized possessions such as his late father's eight World War II medals and a model of the veteran's Flying Tiger bomber plane, plus a collection of 100 leather-bound, gilt-edged classic books. "I surround myself with stuff that's meaningful to me," he explains.

Mr. Kaplan crafted a Trex turnaround strategy in that setting, jotting down ideas in a spiral notebook on how to get his employer out of serious financial troubles, he says. He adds that he spurred the manufacturer's recovery partly by laying off seven of the nine vice presidents during his first year.

When thorny work problems frustrate him, Mr. Kaplan says he clears his mind by briefly reading one of three books on his cherry-wood desk. They are an edition of Shakespearean sonnets, a volume of Old Testament psalms, and a pamphlet with the U.S.



TARGETED WORK Ron Kaplan, CEO of Trex, spent \$12,000 creating a 195-square-foot office in his Virginia home's basement that he uses daily for 'heavy-duty thinking.' He works amid prized possessions, such as his father's eight World War II medals and a model of the veteran's Flying Tiger bomber, 100 leather-bound classic books and 23 guns.



'I have everything that I need here.'



Stephen Voss for The Wall Street Journal ©



COLORFUL WORK The 336-square-foot office of Lorean Arbus overlooks Central Park. She works at an 11.5-foot, custom-built desk and has shelves full of personal mementos, clockwise from right, and a closet with clothes for her teacup poodle. Her staff's separate office is equally bright and decorated with fanciful touches.

Constitution and Declaration of Independence.

Among the 23 guns in his locked and windowless office, Mr. Kaplan has the first weapon he got from his father at age 14. By 19, he had become a finalist in the shooting trials for the 1972 Olympic Games, he recalls. He recently killed his first boar, using an old Remington rifle from his collection.

"I have everything that I need here," Mr. Kaplan says.



Bryan Roberts for The Wall Street Journal ©

A WHIMSICAL WORK SPACE

Long before dawn most mornings, Ms. Arbus starts work in her nightgown. The chronic insomniac pads down the hall to the 336-square-foot office in her spacious home overlooking Central Park.

Ms. Arbus often toils 80 hours a week because of her many professional pursuits. She is president of a TV production company that has made 35 series and specials over the

past 15 years. She also is a philanthropist, head of two foundations, author of six books, board member of 11 major nonprofit groups, classical music composer, tango dancer and artist.

Seated at her 11½-foot, custom-built desk, Ms. Arbus typically plows through a dozen towers of paper, reviews footage for her next documentary, writes speeches, crafts chapters for her memoir or uses her hidden fax machine. "I have the TV on when

I am working," the veteran broadcast executive says. She says she wasn't able to estimate her office costs because she simultaneously finished it with the rest of her apartment.

Family mementos crowd her bookcase, including a letter President Carter sent her father, the late Leonard H. Goldenson, founder of ABC Inc. On the opposite wall, Ms. Arbus mounted five of her whimsical drawings above a mother-of-pearl china