

LCT

May 2009

THE LITCHFIELD COUNTY TIMES MONTHLY



Trade Secrets:
Great Gardens
In Falls Village

New Milford Chef
Inspired by a Pal,
Mario Batali

Tim McCarver
To Talk Baseball
In Washington

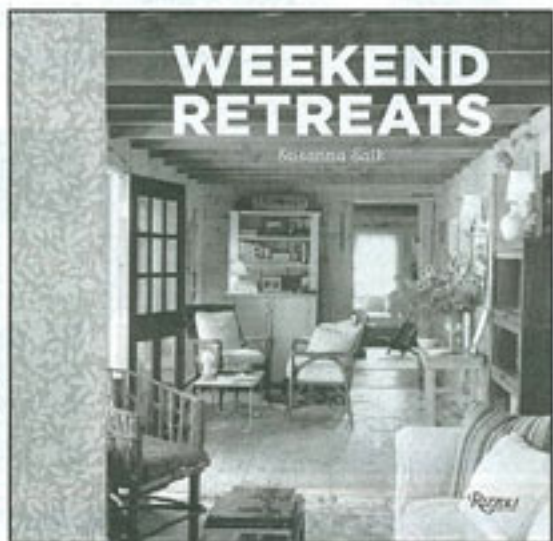
Weekend Retreats;
Knitting Craze;
Mother's Day ...

WRITTEN BY Jack Coraggio



Getting Away in Good Style

Above, a stone boathouse in the Berkshires that was converted into an ideal entertaining spot is featured in Susanna Salk's new book. Right, the cover. Facing page, top, a mural on all four walls of a New Preston dining room depicts the property in the early 1800s. Photographs courtesy of Rizzoli. Bottom, Mrs. Salk at her Lake Waramaug home; photograph by Walter Kidd.



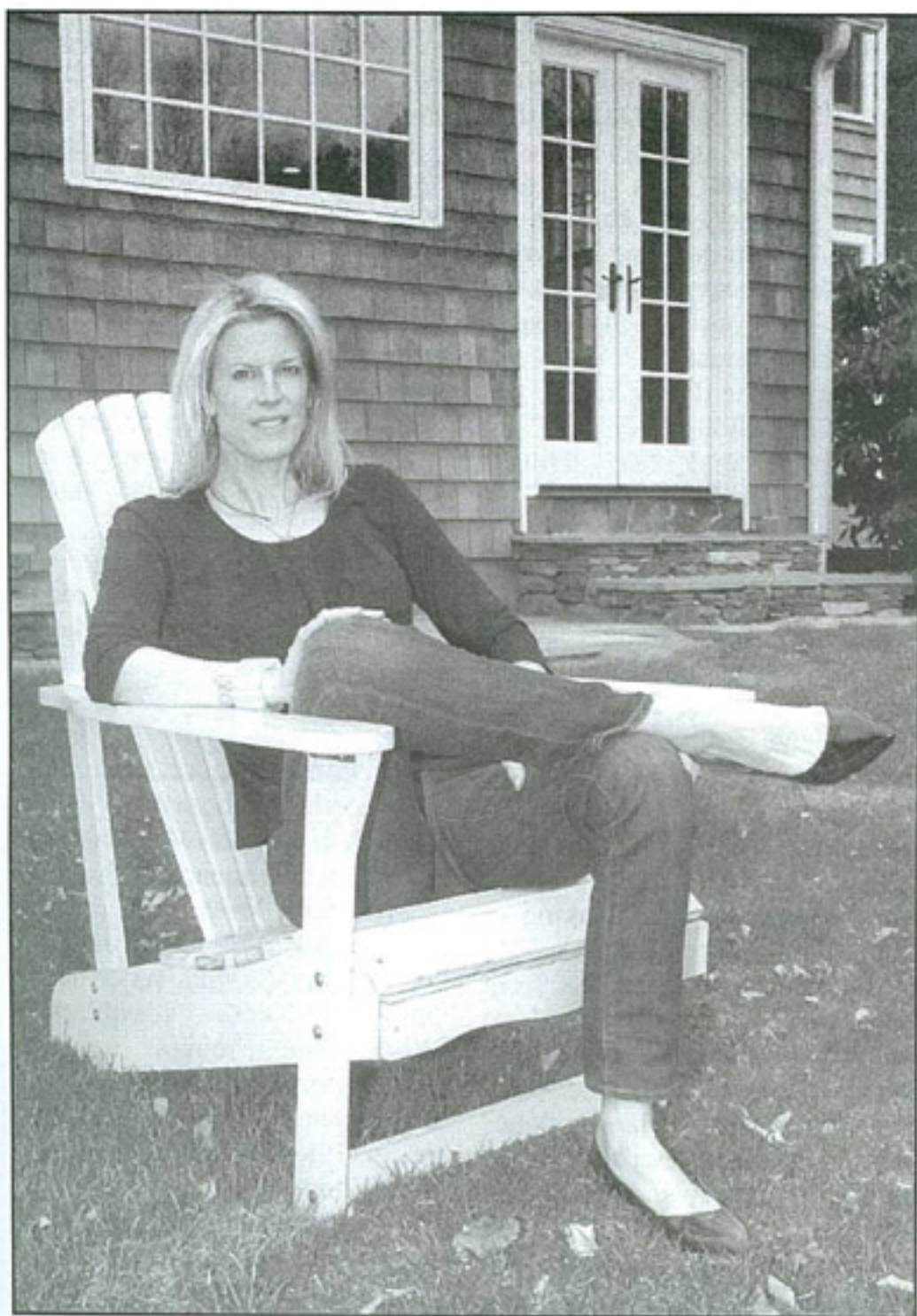
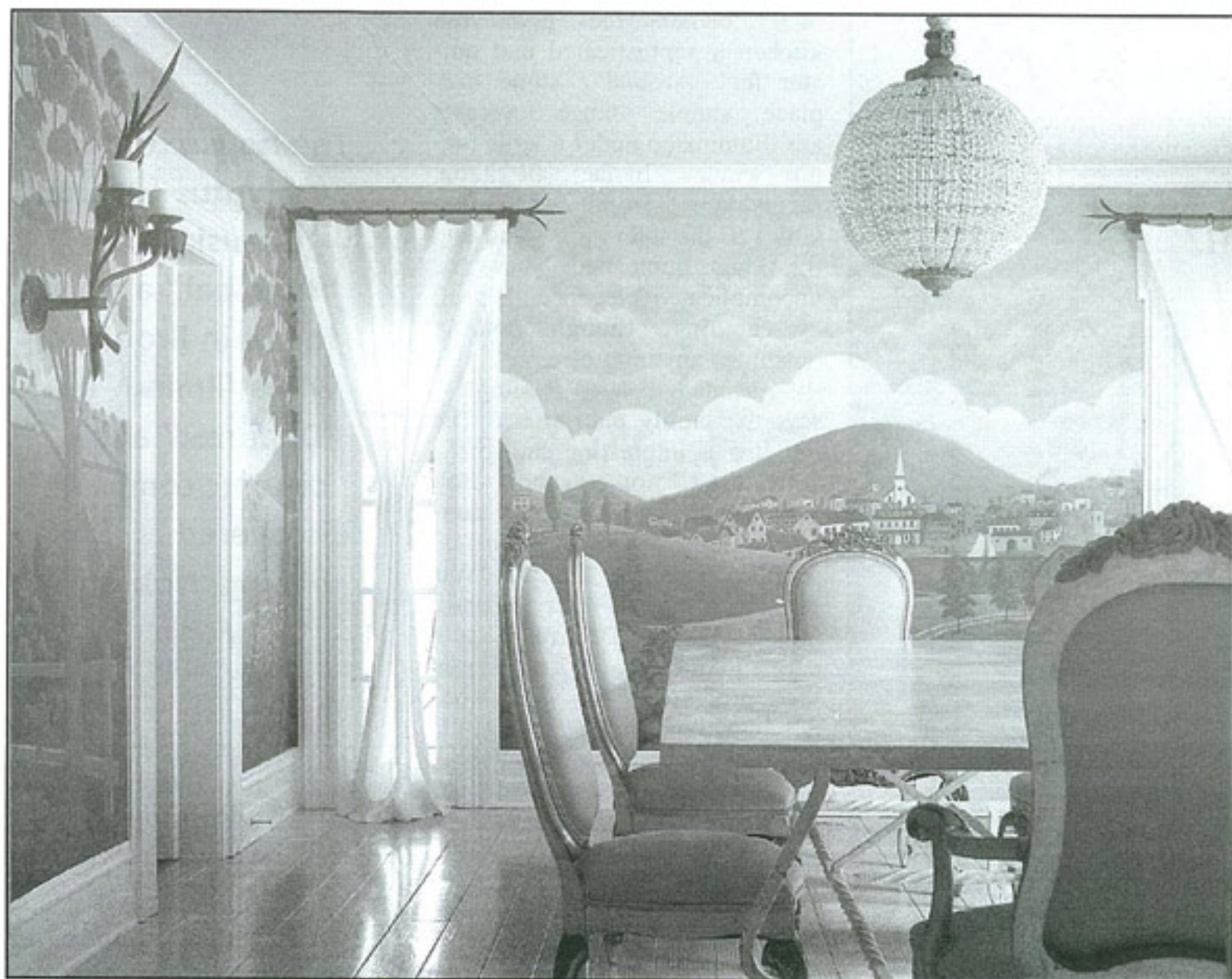
Every Friday evening, especially when the weather gets warm, New Yorkers instinctively make their way northeast to rural Connecticut. For these weekenders, the Northwest Corner is synonymous with beauty and serenity, with the region's rolling hills, unspoiled pastures, pristine lakes and lazy rivers creating the backdrop for sophisticated country living.

Those lifestyles play out in weekend homes that are so beautifully decorated and personal that Roxbury and New Preston

author Susanna Salk was inspired to piece together a coffee table book featuring them.

Simply entitled "Weekend Retreats," the volume reads like a handheld open house tour of 25 dwellings occupied on a part-time basis, almost half of which are in Litchfield County.

But the book showcases more than architecture and interior design. It displays, in vivid color, how a dwelling can reflect the personality of the residents, and how such a reflection can be achieved even on a shallow budget—and that was Mrs. Salk's intent from the day she started.



"I wanted this to be an idea book, so even if you have a small apartment in some city somewhere you can take something from this book and use it in your apartment," explained Mrs. Salk, who has a home in Roxbury and a retreat on Lake Waramaug. "All the homes in this book are a labor of love, with the exception of maybe one or two, but otherwise every single person in here had to make it happen with a budget in mind."

Take, for example, the rustic New Preston abode that Mrs. Salk dubs "Modern Cabin." The Brooklyn-based owners, who remain anonymous in the book, transformed this hunting and fishing haven into a year-round retreat that "stylishly straddles both rustic and modern design."

The family of six had bedrooms and bathrooms installed, but they decorated the cabin with inexpensive materials found online and at antiques fairs. In the end, they achieved what they wanted, a country home that encapsulates an almost retro vibe.

Indeed, with wire-framed Bertoia chairs tucked in around a Renzo Piano walnut dining table, the house has a certain 1950s quality, something the ▶ 42

◀ 41 owners feel gives the kitchen a sophisticated and quieter feel. Around a stone fireplace, simple orange loveseats are illuminated under a large picture window. In fact, all of the furnishings, from the coffee tables to the television stand and the kids' bunk beds, have an uncomplicated elegance. It's all eye-catching, though nothing outshines anything else.

"I wanted to keep it simple," says the family matriarch. "The building is interesting enough."

Featured homeowners Bob Topol and Tony Trotta, two master scenic artists for blockbusters such as Steven Spielberg's "War of the Worlds" or Martin Scorsese's "The Departed," own a small cottage in Morris. Given their professions, it's little wonder that they turned their 1940s log-sided lake home, one which came with green shag carpeting, into a retreat reminiscent of their favorite 1945 film, "The Enchanted College."

When asked, they both agree that this weekend getaway they have created is, as Mrs. Salk had indicated, a reflection of their personalities.

"It's eclectic like we are ... in that we are sort of collectors," they say. "We collect things that mark different periods of our life. Mementos from film sets we've worked on to travels around the country and abroad make for wonderful memories that enriched our life. It's a very comfortable house."

In the winter dining room, the chandelier, though created by Mr. Topol and Mr. Trotta, appears to be a shading fan found somewhere in the Orient. There is also an ivory tusk over the mantelpiece, one that comes from Mr. Trotta's days as a Peace Corps volunteer. The chairs around the table, meanwhile, came from the set of the film "The Cider House Rules."

In fact, their home is filled with movie set memorabilia, such as the antique desk in the hallway, which came from the making of "Quiz Show." The house contains eucalyptus-covered obelisks from "Hannibal," a clock found in Brooklyn while filming "The Departed" and a ceramic compote discovered in an antiques store in upstate New York while filming "Nobody's Fool," and that's just on one shelf.

While flipping through her own book, Mrs. Salk specifically

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noted the home for its unique approach to decorating, pointing out how low on the stairway wall the owners have hung pictures. It's an approach that defies conventional decorating wisdom, but it makes sense because the pictures are then eye-level when ascending the stairs.

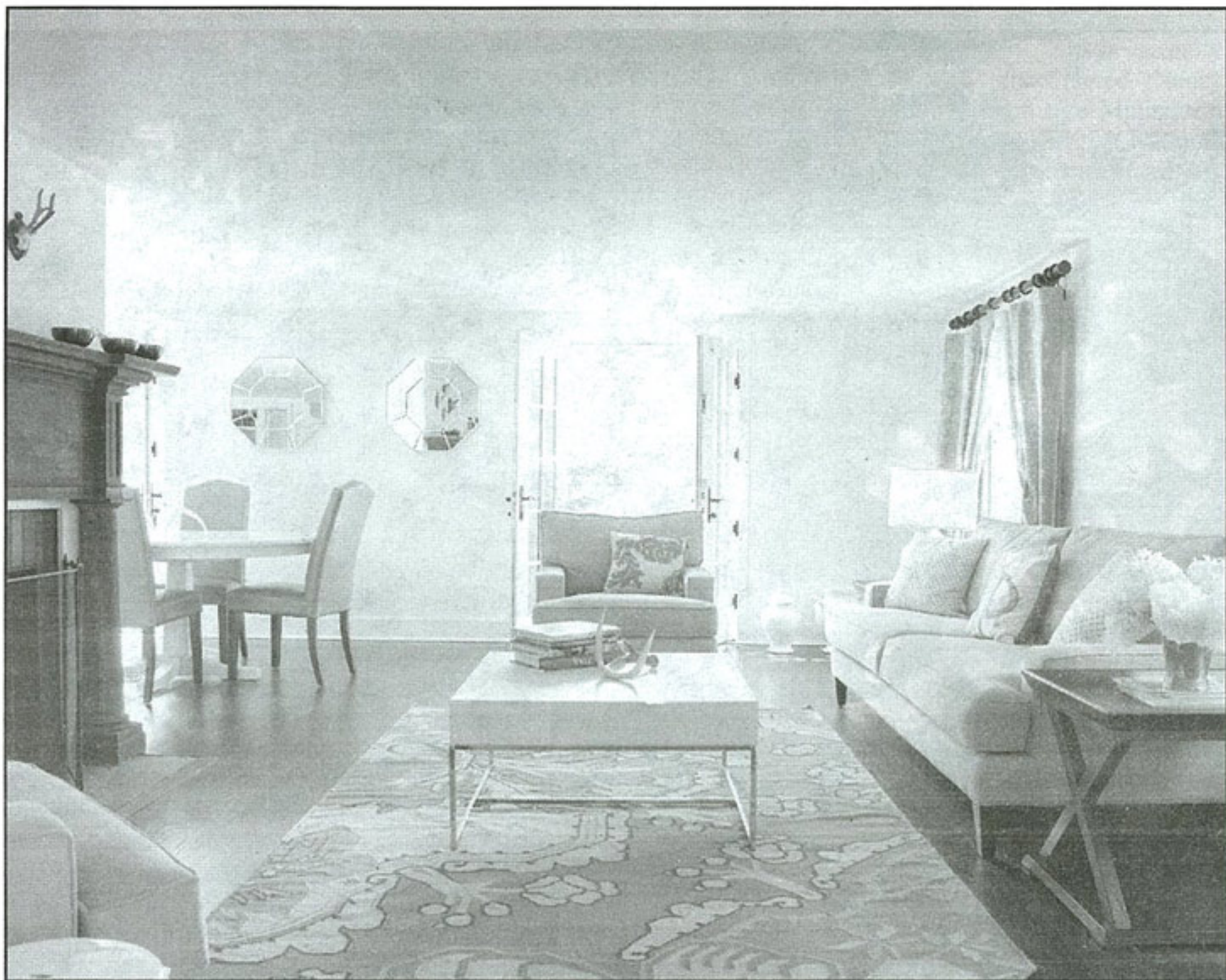
"I love it every time you see a rule broken but it looks fine," said Mrs. Salk.

Not all the homes featured are in Connecticut, including the cozy 1845 Long Island shingle home Mrs. Salk refers to as "Resurrected Charm." Before it was purchased by owner Tricia Foley, it was an abandoned wreck. But with a paintbrush, a hammer and the help of her family, Ms. Foley transformed it into a residence of quaint, earthly elegance.

A drop ceiling was removed to expose wooden beams above, essentially bringing the house back to its roots. The kitchen and the dining room were kept simple. Simple shelves on simple brackets allow more space. And in a display of human ingenuity, a kitchen island was fashioned out of an old aquarium stand.

Mrs. Salk loves these creative approaches, and she captured a lot of them in what turns out to be an eclectic compilation. While the houses are all unique—one is a pool house in Bridgewater, another a small castle in Rhode Island—none outshines another.

"I really love the variety of homes and seeing how other people live and of course ... deco-



Above, a room in Susanna and Eric Salk's lake house in New Preston. Mrs. Salk found the tangerine leather chairs on eBay. Facing page, a room in designer Susan Bednar Long's Washington farmhouse.

rate," said designer Susan Bednar Long, whose weekend Washington retreat is featured in the book.

Mrs. Salk only visited a handful of the homes in the book. She knows some of the homeowners, others are friends of

friends and others were discovered through exhaustive research. But reaching out is what was needed to get a good sampling of tasteful decoration.

"I love it when it's personal," she said.

That's a reference to her taste in interior design, but it could also describe the book she spent the last two years creating. "Weekend Retreats" is published by Rizzoli with a list price of \$45. ■