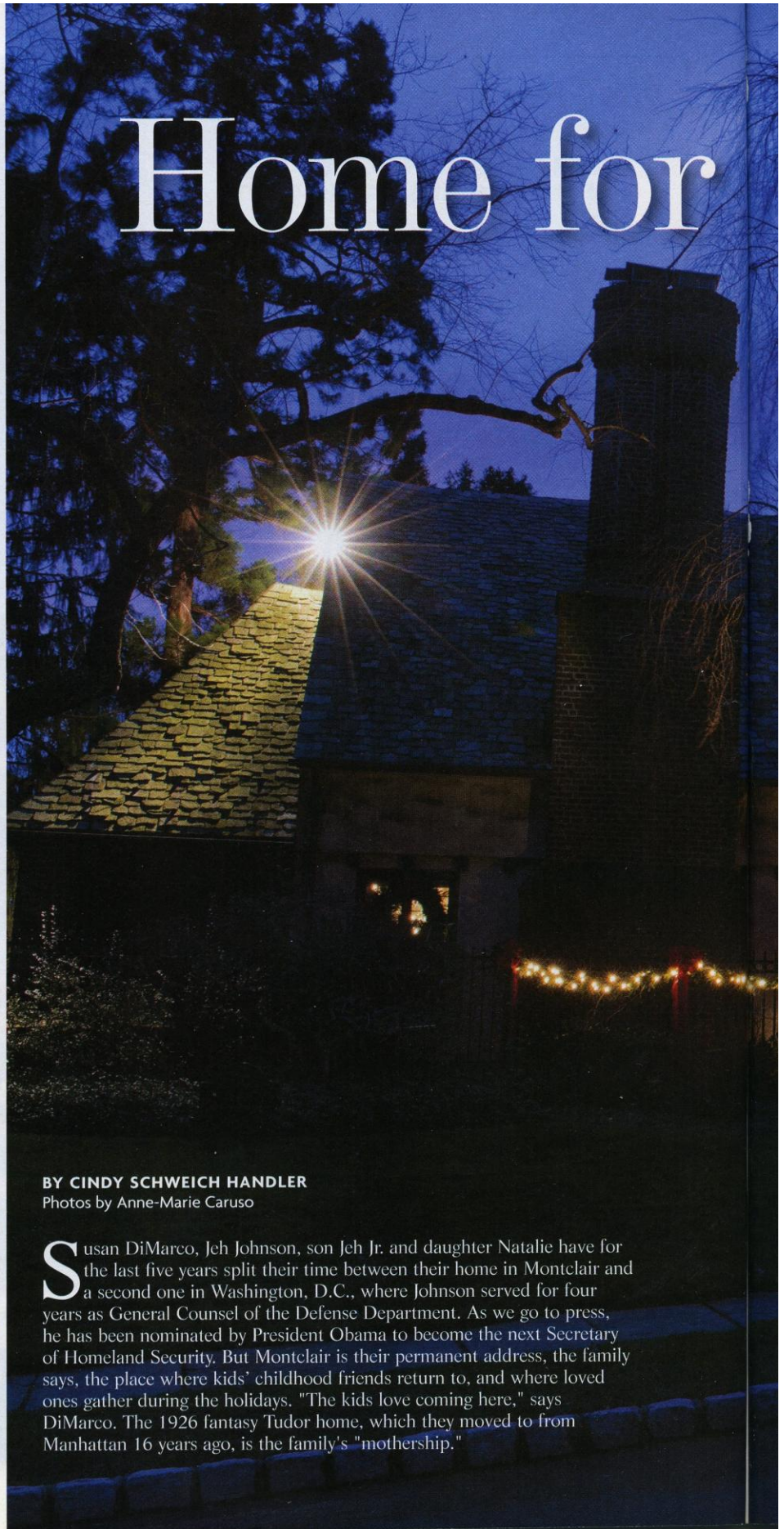
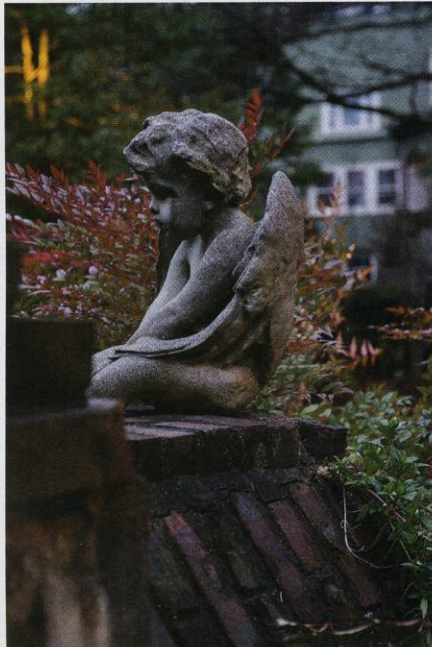
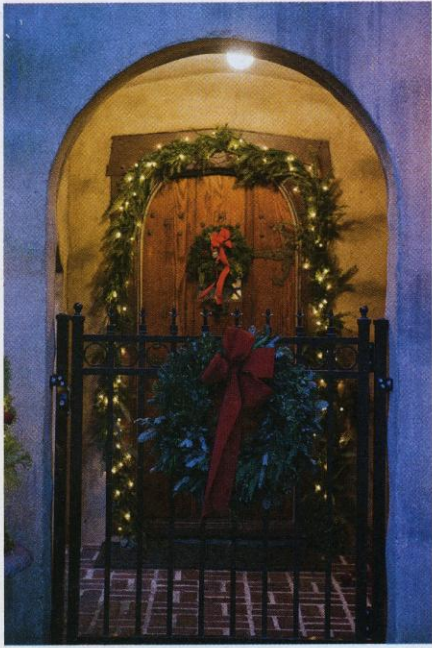


Home for the Holidays



BY SCHWEICH HANDLER



Home for

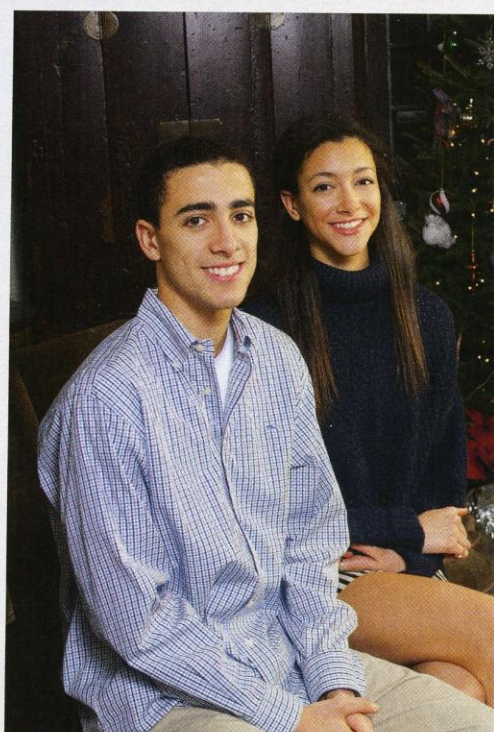
BY CINDY SCHWEICH HANDLER
Photos by Anne-Marie Caruso

Susan DiMarco, Jeh Johnson, son Jeh Jr. and daughter Natalie have for the last five years split their time between their home in Montclair and a second one in Washington, D.C., where Johnson served for four years as General Counsel of the Defense Department. As we go to press, he has been nominated by President Obama to become the next Secretary of Homeland Security. But Montclair is their permanent address, the family says, the place where kids' childhood friends return to, and where loved ones gather during the holidays. "The kids love coming here," says DiMarco. The 1926 fantasy Tudor home, which they moved to from Manhattan 16 years ago, is the family's "mothership."

the Holidays

SETTING THE STAGE

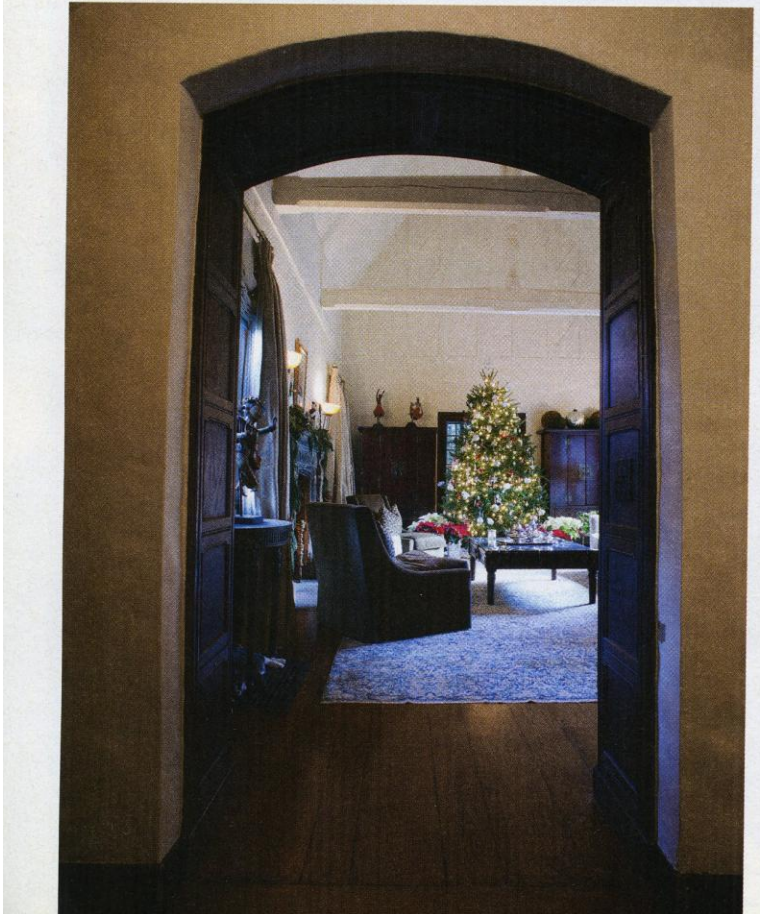
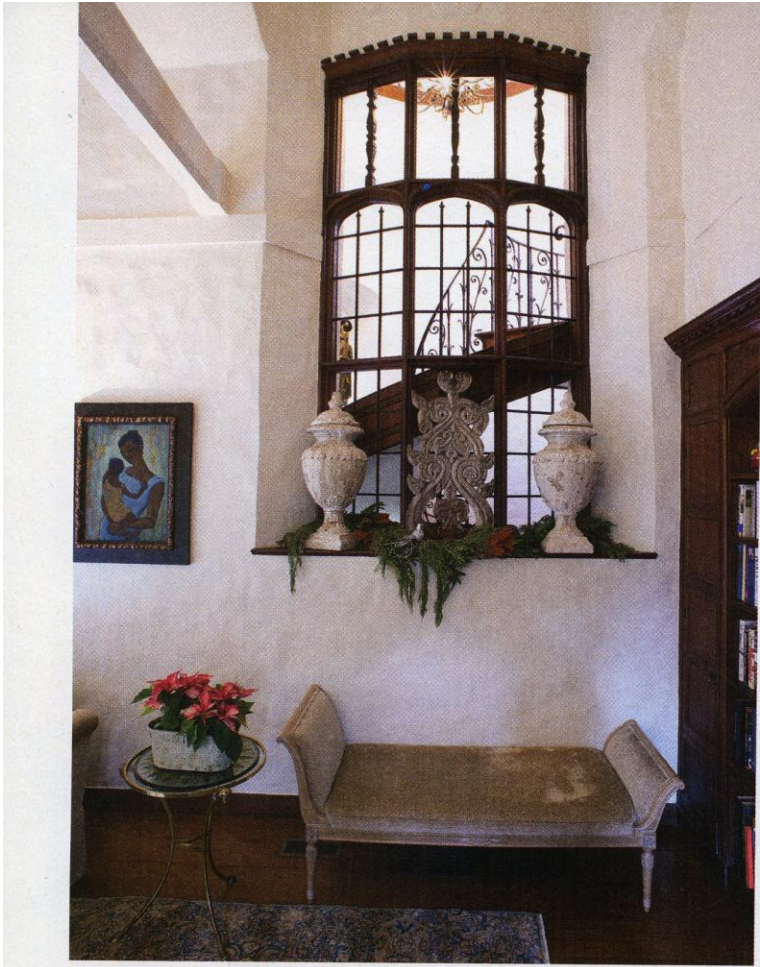
Credit for the festive seasonal décor, both inside and out, goes to Lisa Mierop, who owns and operates The Landscape Guild along with partner Frank Contey. The Johnsons have been steady clients of the Montclair-based company's customized gardening services, and look to them for holiday home-staging. "Susan prefers monochromatic color schemes, and lots of containers, urns and troughs," says Mierop. DiMarco concurs. "We just wanted the look to be quiet but beautiful, not too over the top," she says. Above, outside lights illuminate the home, and the large wreath in the dining room window. Top left opposite, the wreath on the gate is made from blue spruce. The angel statuette, left center, survived intact when an enormous ancient tree fell in the back yard, missing the house by mere feet. "We joke that the angel was guiding the tree when it fell, saying 'A little more to the left,'" says DiMarco. Bottom left, evergreen garlands are decorated with simple red bows and velvet ribbon. ➤



FIRESIDE FAMILY LIFE

Above, Mierop festooned the fireplace mantel with evergreens. A portrait of Johnson's grandfather, a founder of the Harlem renaissance and the first African-American president of Fisk University in Nashville, Tenn., hangs above. Far left, DiMarco and Johnson pose; Jeh Jr. and Natalie sit at near left. Right, the Christmas tree is decked out in a "subtle silver and red palette of bulbs and ornaments," says Mierop. "We kept to one neutral color scheme for a look that's elegant, but not ostentatious." The tree is surrounded by red and white poinsettias. The bronze dancers on the chest at left were purchased at an antique store. The moss ball orbs on the chest at right have been there for years, says DiMarco. ➤







ECLECTIC, EASY CHARM

Top opposite page, the view through the leaded glass windows looks onto a spiral staircase housed in the home's side turret. The window ledge holds two urn reproductions and an antique store-bought Thai grave-marker, a carving originally used to denote a person of status. The bookshelves are paneled in the same wood that outlines the door leading into the living room from the 45-foot-long entrance hall. The home has 125 windows, with original leaded "restoration" glass that appears wavy on direct inspection. "They're beautiful, and allow diffuse patterns of light into the house," says DiMarco. The Thai figure at opposite lower right was one of a pair found at a local design show. Left, tiered herb topiaries grace the window. Above, the dining room table is made from inlaid horn. The Chinese vases sit atop an Italian cabinet that features leather and iron, and stores glasses and wine. A crystal chandelier helps illuminate the room above an herb topiary cone and a pair of candelabra that were among the home's first decorations. "My husband prizes beautiful candelabra," DiMarco says with a laugh. "When we moved into the house, we didn't have a living room couch, but we had to have these. They'll be family heirlooms for the kids." ■