

Interior designer shares 'Sacred Spaces'



Sacred Spaces

Shiree Segerstrom

I've been sensitive to my surroundings since I was a little girl. I can vividly remember at the age of 12 or 13, one of my aunts using an interior designer in her house in Chico. That was such a novelty to me. I'd never heard of such a profession.

"You mean people get paid to decorate? What a thought."

Her kitchen cabinets and appli-

ances, she told me, were avocado green and they did look fantastic. She had a corner glass curio holding

some type of Eastern female statue, lit from above. At one end of the living room were glass windows and a dining room set overlooking the backyard and pool. On the other end were chairs and a sofa, where my cousins and I used to perform songs and silly skits during family get-togethers.

I'm a grown woman now, with a decorated home of my own. As an

interior designer it is laboratory of sorts. I'm aware of my surroundings more than ever and seek much solace from my nest.

Five years ago, my husband, Jim Segerstrom, passed away unexpectedly. It left our large family, our young adult son Christian, and me devastated. Jim and I were married

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25 years. I had no idea how I would move forth without him.

I did though. I exercised and fed myself fresh, healthy meals. I went to dinner with dear friends who even now continue to prop me up. After a time, I started having guests to dinner and started my design business again.

One of the things that helped me during the first months after losing Jim was in my own backyard, literally. My garden, with its magnificent light and mature trees acted as a sheltering, sacred place where I could reflect on memories.

That first spring and summer I spent almost every day in the garden, or more specifically different spaces in the garden. One spot in particular was a little seating area I had set up just below the rose beds.

The sun sets behind the roses and the wicker bistro chairs, table, and iron daybed with big feather pillows in ticking, faux fur,

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and paisley fabrics acted as my room. This spot, at three or four in the afternoon, is magical. The shadows are long, the light dappled. With my iced tea, the chirping birds, and the sound of the fountain, I'd sit and go through my memories intent on remembering everything. His voice, his features, his personality.

The garden is terraced, with old stone walls, framed by an ancient oak tree, an old crepe myrtle, a 100-foot liquid amber maple, and a gorgeous flowering Japanese cherry. There are large azaleas growing in clipped mounds in over 23 colors and varieties. There are numerous lilac trees, a dogwood, and five clipped, standard bay trees in an allee' of big celadon pots. All the beds are rimmed in various types of boxwood. There's winter-green boxwood and little euonymus boxwoods, both solid and variegated. I have a few statues, chosen to be unimposing, and a beautiful aging fountain that I had installed in honor of Jim.

Another space that is healing is the outdoor portico, which is located off the

living room. It has plenty of seating, a wicker settee and chair with feather cushions and plump pillows, a few Adirondacks, a picnic set topped with a collection of ivy topiary. But the chair I prefer has a view of the great old stone stairs that lead up into the garden. I can sit there for hours with a magazine sometimes reading, sometimes napping, the afternoon light hitting the tips of new, moss green growth on the large, round boxwood globes.

I have several places in my home I consider to be healing, but the outdoor ones are my favorites. Being close to the sounds, smells, and beauty of nature allows me to feel closer to my true self. It's a feeling of being grounded, on the road to healing.

Shiree Hanson Segerstrom studied and apprenticed in interior design for three years before launching her own firm in 1999. She is the author of the blog www.joyofnesting.blogspot.com and has been featured in the San Francisco Chronicle, Wall Street Journal online, Sacramento Bee and the California living magazine, C. Contact her at www.shireesegerstrom.com or 532-2193.