HAPPY DAYS
Nothing's more stylish than a home filled with laughter and love.
The husband discovered the house. He e-mailed a funny, improvised video tour of it to his wife, who happened to be in France. She watched the video dozens of times, laughing her bell-like laugh, and fell in love. So they bought it: a Georgian Revival pile built in 1915, set on nine lush acres in a small East Coast city. Then, because he knew she would love it as much as the house, he gave her Bunny Williams to decorate it as a present.

Williams, a grand dame of American design, has created some of this country’s most ravishing upper-crust interiors, with rooms as comfortable and unstuffy as they are sophisticated and proper. Here, she made liberal use of classic antiques and fashionable accessories, but everything is layered and natural, as if it gently came together on its own, over years. She envisioned the couple’s three children tripping through the generous entrance hall.
Williams envisioned the children tricycling through the entry hall. (It turns out they use those huge rideable bouncing balls.)

(Although they use those huge rideable bouncing balls.) Accordingly, furniture there is spaced along the walls and is well-scaled, such as an 11-foot-long steel-and-brass Bank of France table the homeowners found in Paris. The elephant on top of it is pure Williams. She loves the movement of animal sculptures and the fact that every culture has them.

Williams broke down the vast living room into warm nooks and seating groups so the whole family could be together, doing different things. The palette is muted, but this is not and decorating. There's washed gold, hazy orange, and gray-green, though nothing shout. On the sofa are vintage Turkish pillows and a gorgeous throw that sometimes winds up on the floor for games. “The writing table is lacquered and Directoire-style, but it’s for putting your laptop on,” says Williams of the casseful, elegant space. “I used a contemporary lamp and coffee table. It looks like somebody has lived here for a while and updated.”

Williams also employed numerous family heirlooms and a container’s worth of European furnishings previously collected by the homeowners. The dining room’s black pedestal...
Forging curtains for simple white shutters prevents a fanciful room from feeling too feminine. 19th c. Zuber wallpaper from
The family lives in the house casually and joyfully. No rooms are off-limits to anyone, not even the dogs.