



Candace Dyal with
Sons Evan (*left*)
and Nick (*right*)



Candace Dyal Shares Her Penchant for Taking Risks and Building Green- Conscious Homes on Kiawah Island

By Christy Conway

Photography by Patrick Brickman & Matt Bolt

Described as a risk taker by both herself and her two sons, Candace Dyal is no child of inheritance or jackpot divorcee. She climbed her way to the top by putting everything on the line... while having a conscience (as she would say). See, Candace has a set of personal rules that she has garnered through her years. Some are simple: Don't lie. Just say yes. Get uncomfortable. And some are more complicated. All the rules, however, are on the forefront of her mind as she lives day-to-day up in the Northeast near her boys, Nick and Evan (who attend Drexel University), or down here on Kiawah Island, where she has developed a nationally recognized green community, Indigo Park. The neighborhood, home of the 2013 HGTV Dream Home, is a living example of her rule: do it right the first time. In her inconspicuous cottage overlooking the Ocean Course, Candace, Nick, Evan, and I discussed how incredibly unexpected life can be, how strong her bond is with her sons, and how she became the lady behind the first Platinum LEED certified resort community in the country.



(above) The Ocean Course Drive home features an understated sitting room off the foyer that Evan and Nick use for watching basketball on the television that is hidden behind the white, coastal built in. (right) Candace enjoys pairing unusual patterns, and upon entry, one can see how keen (and quirky) her eye for design is.

You're heavily involved in the home-building industry now, but did you always know this was your calling?

Candace: Originally, I was a stock broker; now people call the job wealth management. To those people, I say, "Get over yourself." I did that for a long time. It was fun, and I was successful at it. I'd like to think I helped some people, but to me, it was the same old, same old.

I've always loved business. You get to use your talents and facets of your life and pull them all together. And, my parents always did real estate on the side. We always had an extra house to rent, fix up, or sell. So, we did baseboard painting, sanding, cutting, drilling, and tiling instead of going to the mall. I used to yell at them for that.

So, do you attribute your success to your parents?

Candace: I think my success comes from many things: my parents as instructors of life, my whole family for being lifetime learners, Wheaton College for nurturing what my parents formed, and myself. I love myself. [laughs]

From my parents, I learned my work ethic. My father would talk to me about quality. He'd say, "Candace, you need to sand it again." And I'd say, "Really? They won't rent it if I don't sand it again?" He'd tell me, "It doesn't matter. *You'll* know. Do it right the first time."

When I was at Wheaton, there were 14 students in each class. You know you're going to learn. And, you're going to get to know your professors because they'll

have dinner with you. They'll play tennis with you; they'll know you—the whole package. I like to say that they pushed with a hug.

What did you study at Wheaton?

Candace: My major in college was psychology. I was always fascinated by how one person can look at something this way, and then someone who wears a different pair of glasses can look at it another way. It's all how you look at it. And once you step outside yourself, it's actually quite clear.

So, you didn't study business? No MBA?

Candace: Well, in London, I took some graduate courses in conflict resolution and psychology in business, but my real MBA [laughs] was when I started this





(right page) Photography by Michael Cyra

(above) Candace's home is protected from the coastal hazards of straight-line winds and flooding because it is set back behind the dunes and the front nine of the Ocean Course and tucked within lush, tropical vegetation. (right) The beauty of the Indigo Park property can be seen in the Kiawah vistas, the well-appointed interiors, and the inviting exteriors.

company called Galapagos Wear. I'd always liked design, and I was in New York City at the time. I saw all this clothing that I thought would be really cute on children, so I sold similar children's clothing to Neiman Marcus, The Children's Place, and other stores like that. But, it was the 1993 recession, and I ended up only getting ten cents on the dollar from the stores that owed me.

I don't look at it as a failure, though. I just call it my MBA. It just took me three years instead of two. I learned some lessons about how to run a business, what you need to have control of, and how to watch the reins.

With such a learning experience in New York, you're obviously deeply rooted in the Northeast. How did you find yourself on Kiawah Island?

Candace: My family was looking for a retreat place. We looked at Sea Island,

Marco Island, Naples, Greenbrier, the Hamptons, and the Cape. My husband at the time worked for Morgan Stanley, who owned Kiawah with the Kuwaiti government. So, I suggested we check it out. We came down here for two weeks in August of 1999, and we all loved it instantly. I was like, "Oh. It's a recharge-battery place!" At first, we rented. Then, we purchased this Ocean Course Drive home in 2002.

What about this Ocean-Course-Drive home caught your eye?

Candace: This home appealed to me because it is away from everything. It's not a home that says, "Look at me!" Also, I love the beach access, the view, and the pool area. Outside by the pool, I can hear the ocean. I can feel the breeze. I *can't* hear the phone ring. It's very quiet. I find that it's harder to paint a picture when there is all that noise, versus just a white canvas.

You have so many interesting, decorative pieces in your home: sweet grass baskets, tribal masks, and Audubon prints to name a few. Do any features of your home have a story?

Candace: I have a chest that was found at the bottom of the ocean. It weighs a ton, and there were jewels in it. Of course, the jewels didn't come with it. I also have a trunk from China. I asked the dealer, "What was carried in that?" He told me the trunk held seed on the Orient Express!

Also, I have a lot of black, carved elephants. I like animals. Probably my most favorite animal is the elephant. I also have some great photography from Africa that both Evan and I love.

When you put those exotic pieces with traditional stuff, like the dining room table from the South of France, you come up with my style. It is clean; I don't like clutter. It's starting to go a bit modern





(top left) Candace's home can accommodate up to 14 visitors at one time; many of the rooms have more than one bed in them. (top right) The front façade of the home, while beautiful, is hard to see from the road because of a group of mature palm trees. Above all else, this facet of the home appealed to Candace the most.

or contemporary. I wouldn't say, for instance, it is English or it is Victorian. It's just me.

It seems you have a true love for this home. Do you often host parties or entertain friends?

Candace: The home has been a platform for a lot of great times. Like after the last Kiawah marathon, 20 people were here for dinner. Some were local, and some flew in. I like that very few guests knew each other. And, because I am me, I can't just let you have a cocktail and stiffly say, "What do you do?" We have to play games, you know, get uncomfortable.

Also, my family comes down a lot. I have a very large family, and this house can sleep 14 comfortably without smelling like fish. Yeah, even family can smell like fish. If more people want to come, I can just put the extra people in the Maritime condo.

So, you own a condo. That's probably handy with so many family members. Do you rent that out when your cousins, siblings, and other guests are not using it?

Candace: Yes. I bought a condo in the Maritime on Green Dolphin Way. That is for rent. It's my baseline, my food. And because I was investing in some pretty risky things, I said, "Let's just

rent this home [Ocean Course] out too so that it can pay for itself." You know, it's just stuff.

Are there any other homes that you own here on the island?

Candace: I also purchased and remodeled 109 Flyway Drive, an old, 7,000 square-foot Georgian, which was the first home on Kiawah Island to receive a Silver LEED certification [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, an internationally recognized, green-building certification]. We had the first solar panels and solar water heating system. And, the property reuses rainwater!



Candace: People were bidding on this parcel—Parcel 23—which was 15 acres of virgin, Kiawah land. You know, that opportunity is just never going to happen again.

The property could hold up to 54 condos, but I just had to stop it and get a conscience. So, I embarked on something that was way over my head. Let's just call it like it is. I did not know what I was doing. But, I had a vision of raising the bar for the island and going totally green. I did it, and I was scared. I figured the worst-case scenario was that I would be a lot poorer. But, I would still have a roof; I would have food, my health, and my boys. So I said, "Let's see what happens."

I realized that I had to do it right because what I didn't want to do was just another high-end development. Please spare me. Before we started building, when it was still a jungle, I saw Indigo Park all done. We were climbing over trees and stuff

like that. I said, "We want to downsize, offer smaller homes"

Obviously, you were not trained in the green-building industry. How did you learn?

Candace: I went to a lot of conferences and read. And Royal Indigo [Dyal Compass' construction company] was very supportive. Ben Daley, Craig Gentilin, and Bob Meister were great teachers. They're constantly learning about the latest and greatest. They go to these building seminars that introduce new products, which reminds me every time, when it comes to a job, keep attending because the second you know everything, you don't.

It seems like you have a great team assembled. Who else did you choose to help you form your vision?

Candace: Christopher Rose Architects

was integral. I interviewed Christopher Rose with five other architects, and he did not have an attitude. He stood with me on the driveway at Flyway Drive, and he didn't think I was taking drugs when I said, "Okay, we're going to keep this house, take the roof off, bring the hips down, and make it an Adirondack. And, we were looking at an old Georgian." He was like, "Okay." He gets it on the creative part.

After working so long together, the team—Dyal Compass, Royal Indigo, and Christopher Rose Architects—is so in sync. Like in sports, athletes might have a team that they'll remember forever. That's this one.

So, how did HGTV get involved?

Candace: I wrote a letter to HGTV, and I said, "You should really know about this. There are some products that we're using that are not even on the market, like



(above) Candace had a vision to expand the master bedroom so that the whole top floor became a suite—a true retreat! (right) Developer Candace Dyal and Architect Christopher Rose



NuCedar, geothermal pumps, and aluminum roofing.” The aluminum roofing reflects unlike copper, which sucks the heat in. Also, they strap it down in such a way that if a hurricane comes, it’s no big deal. We built to have Mother Nature come because she will. We’ve now been able to study the energy efficiency for two months, and we’ve learned that geothermal pumps save almost 70 percent on the heating bill.

So, HGTV, which employs people who study houses and trends across the nation, understood what we were doing.

I’ve got to hand it to Jack Thomasson [Producer of the HGTV Dream Home show]. Throughout the process, I kept saying, “Make your decisions with a conscience, and do it with class.” And he did. We’re very happy with how it turned out; HGTV was a huge commercial for this.

Did you have any influence on the HGTV model, and are there any differences between the Dyal Compass models and theirs?

Candace: We had some say. They, for instance, had a different window company, and we wanted our Henselstone hurricane windows. We also told them that they had to use geothermal heat pumps and NuCedar shakes.

The main difference is that their model doesn’t have an elevator. Instead, it has a bunk-bed setup that is really quite unique. And, they utilized the garage space for ping pong, storage of golf clubs, an outdoor shower, etcetera.

So, each of the three models in Indigo Park (Azalea, Sweetgrass, and Camellia) are LEED certified?

Candace: The two models out there, in addition to the HGTV Dream Home model, are Platinum LEED, which is the highest certification by the US Green Building Council. But, going forward, we’re adding a fourth model which has five bedrooms. Some people wanted more bedrooms. We’re still honoring our signature LEED, but it might just not be Platinum, depending on the buyer.

With all this business going on down here in your “recharge-battery place,” do you still have the time to enjoy Kiawah?

Candace: Recently, I moved to New York from Boston. There’s a direct flight to Charleston from there. That’s a lot easier. Gosh, that has saved me so much time.



Not surprisingly, Candace's French country kitchen color selection is bold and successful (just like herself).

"CANDACISMS"

If anyone asks you to go anywhere or do anything, just say yes.

Take risks.

If you do something wrong, own it. **Never lie.**

It's okay to be open.

You're as sick as your secrets.

Live your life with a conscience, and the rest will follow.

Get uncomfortable.

Stay alive while you're going through the journey.

Failure is not a four-letter word.

Keep attending [life] because the second you know everything, you don't.

I think I've gotten a whole month back of my life. So, I come down almost every month. Usually, I'll be here Thursday through Monday, attending a slew of meetings and checking up on things.

Like with anyone that works at home, I wonder, "Where is that line?" I am disciplined enough that if you call me at eight o'clock in the morning, I'll tell you that I'm in a meeting, and that's me walking the beach. Because, I will be a better person at a later meeting if I go to my meeting first.

Throughout our conversation, I've noticed that your mom has a lot of words of wisdom and rules to live by. Nick and Evan, does Candace share her words of wisdom with you?

Evan: They come at all times. You're painting a room, and she'll just drop one.

Nick: Candacisms, I call them. We'll get emails from her with subjects like Ten Fun Quotes. We're very involved in each other's lives. There are a lot of calls. She'll say, "I just want to touch base..."

Candace: I think Nick, Evan, and I all have each other's back. Thinking back to recent conversations, if one of us is in a funk or going over a bump, I'm like, "Have you looked at it this way? Have you looked at it that way?" And they do the same for me.

Nick: Team Dyal! [laughs]

Is there one 'rule' that stands out among the rest?

Candace: If anyone asks you to go anywhere or do anything, just say yes. Figure the rest out later. It just makes you a more interesting person. The world could use a few more of those.