

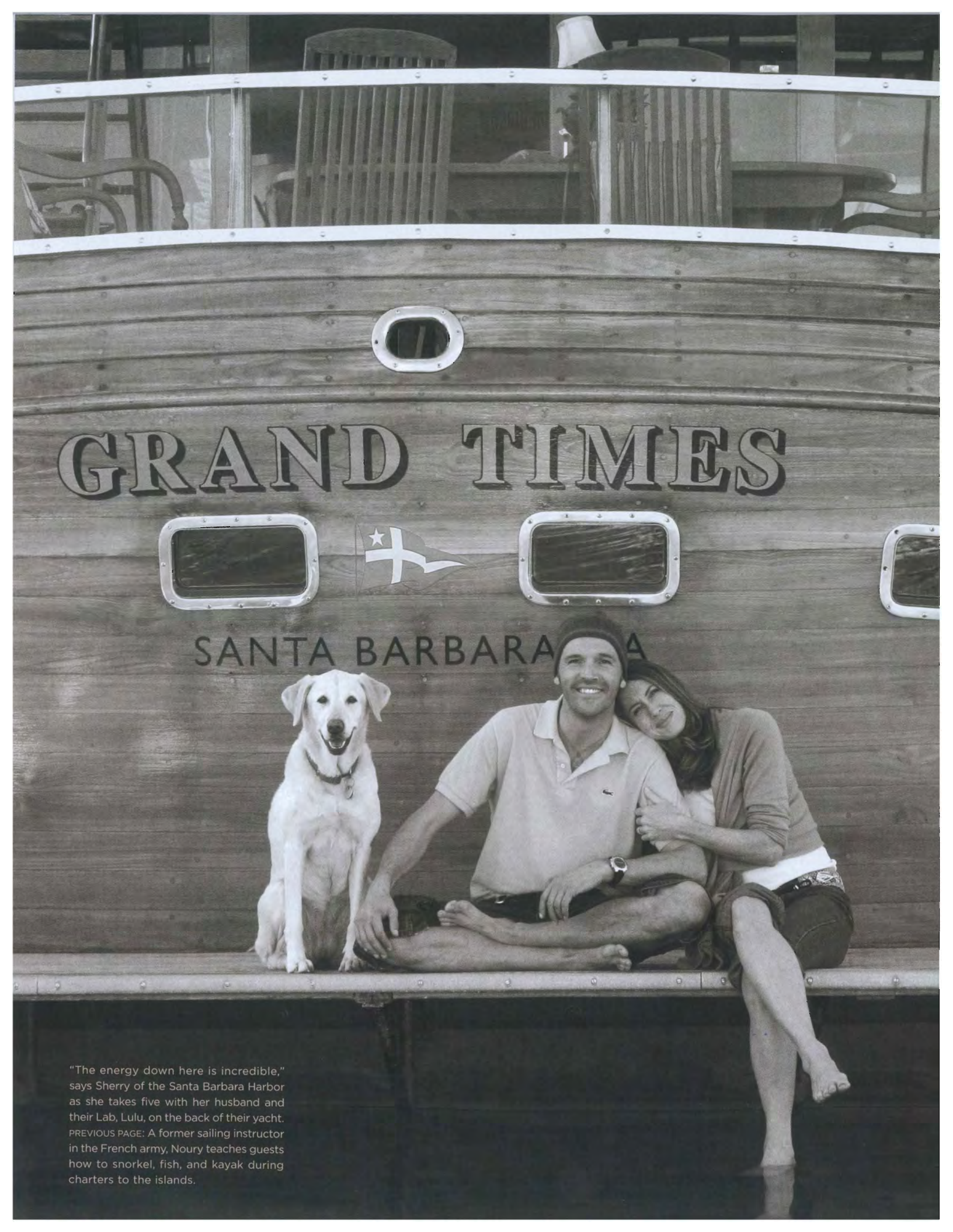
# LIFE'S A BOAT

A SEA BREEZE-LOVING COUPLE CALLS A 57-FOOT YACHT HOME



by STARSHINE ROSHELL photographs by MICHAEL HABER





# GRAND TIMES

SANTA BARBARA

"The energy down here is incredible," says Sherry of the Santa Barbara Harbor as she takes five with her husband and their Lab, Lulu, on the back of their yacht. PREVIOUS PAGE: A former sailing instructor in the French army, Noury teaches guests how to snorkel, fish, and kayak during charters to the islands.

## Paul Noury and Dawn Sherry's life looks a lot like yours and mine.

The couple likes to kayak, watch movies on the couch, and sip cappuccinos on their patio. Like us, they cap off weekdays with a cocktail, a bite at Brophy's, and a soak in the tub. Family photos adorn their walls. Stacks of novels sit beside their king-size bed. Perhaps the greatest difference between us and them is that, on windy days, most of us don't have to strap our Simmons Beautyrest to the floor to prevent serious injury. "If it's going to be really rough seas," explains Noury, 42, matter-of-factly, "we anchor down all the furniture."

Such is life aboard *Grand Times*, a 57-foot Grand Banks yacht that the couple and their laid-back Labrador, Lulu, call home. Docked at the Santa Barbara Harbor with stunning views in all directions, the four-bedroom, two-bath boat is a rare 1969 wooden trawler.

A homey "Chez Noury" sign (he's French by birth; she's a native Californian) greets *Grand Times* visitors dockside, and the narrow "front door" leads into a surprisingly roomy mid-deck salon—a casual space that owes its stately gleam to warm wooden walls, polished brass oil lamps, and the sea-kissed sunlight that rolls in from surrounding windows. Mornings, the couple can be found reading the paper on their cozy aft deck or vast sundeck up top. Evening finds them in the handsome master suite, drifting off to sleep beneath a quartet of silver portholes and a black-and-white portrait of Santa Cruz Island's Pelican Bay, where he proposed to her in 2000. In their waking hours, the boat keeps them busy.

"It's 100,000 pounds of teak and mahogany," says Noury proudly, but the once-grand yacht needed TLC when they bought it in 2002. Together, they rolled up their sleeves and pumped the bilge, replaced rotted planks, revarnished the wood, and ousted some pigeons that had claimed two staterooms for their own. Now Noury, a yacht manager at the marina, and Sherry, an architect with her own downtown firm, not only live aboard *Grand Times*, they also run a charter business with it, shuttling private groups out to the islands, preparing gourmet meals for them in the galley, and treating them to the unparalleled live-aboard lifestyle that the couple themselves have come to covet. "We both love entertaining," says Sherry, 43. "I love cooking, and he's the captain, so it's the perfect match." *Grand Times* can take up to six paid passengers for dinner cruises (Sherry serves French country fare) and weekend trips (Noury offers snorkeling and fishing instruction). "I love taking care of people, opening them up, making them bloom," he says. "They come on board all tense and stressed, but within half an hour, they're like teddy bears."

A floating home has its downsides, of course. Storage is an issue. Maintenance is constant. Gardening is near impossible. And there's the whole tying-down-the-furniture thing. But what *Grand Times* residents love most about their bobbing bungalow is the sense of freedom it offers—the pleasure, in fact, of not feeling tied down. "Some clients think it's odd that I'm an architect and I live on a boat," says Sherry, but the distinct divide between city bustle and sea life offers a freedom in itself. "To me, it's a nice relief at the end of the day. When I'm here, psychologically, I'm completely removed from land."

Rather than awake to the sounds of lawn mowers and garbage trucks, these homeowners hear seagulls, breaking surf, and the clatter of halyard lines on a mast. It's an interactive lifestyle, where strong winds, light rain, and even the gentle wake of a passing boat have palpable impact on each buoyant abode. "In a house," Sherry says, "we often miss noticing these things because the walls are thick and the foundation is strong, and a house is not as vulnerable to the elements."

Of the more than 1,100 boats and slips in the Santa Barbara Harbor, the city permits only 113 to be used as full-time residences. "We know everybody here," says Noury, who only half jokingly calls the neighborhood a "gated community." There's the emergency room doctor next door, the musicians with three kids, the fishermen. "It's fun because on weekends, you take the little dinghy from boat to boat and go partying."

It's a lifestyle he's enjoyed since moving to town 14 years ago. A native of France's Loire Valley, Noury was a sailing instructor in the French army before coming to the United States in search of adventure. He was living on a 27-foot sailboat when he met Sherry one night at Dargan's pub (she was the bar's architect) and invited her over for a



Decor aboard *Grand Times* consists of nautical elements and treasures the couple has picked up on travels around the globe. OPPOSITE: The limited storage space appeals to Sherry's architectural sensibilities. "There are hooks for everything," she says, relaxing in front of the bar.







glass of wine at, ahem, his place. "I was like, *A French guy living on a little boat?* Are you kidding me? I love you!" says Sherry, with a laugh. Though raised in Camarillo, she hadn't spent much time at sea. "Once I saw how he lived, I didn't want to leave. I just realized I was an ocean person."

But she wasn't a fridge-within-reach-of-the-bed person. His boat was too small for two, so in 2000, they bought a 42-foot *Grand Banks* and moved in together. "I had this huge garage sale," she says. "I downscaled everything." And while the storage challenges of yacht life can be frustrating—if Sherry buys one pair of shoes, she literally has to get rid of another pair—they can also lead to another form of freedom. "You figure out who you are really quickly, and what's important to you, and then you just don't have the other stuff," says Sherry. "You don't have 50 purses. You don't need 50 sweaters."

Even now that they've upgraded to a 57-footer, they find ways to conserve space. Their television drops down into a teak cabinet, their desks fold up, and a footrest under the kitchen counter doubles as a floor pantry. A washer and dryer hide in cabinets on the sun deck atop the boat. "It all took a lot of thought," says Sherry, whose architect sensibilities help her appreciate the design puzzle. "Everything has a place."

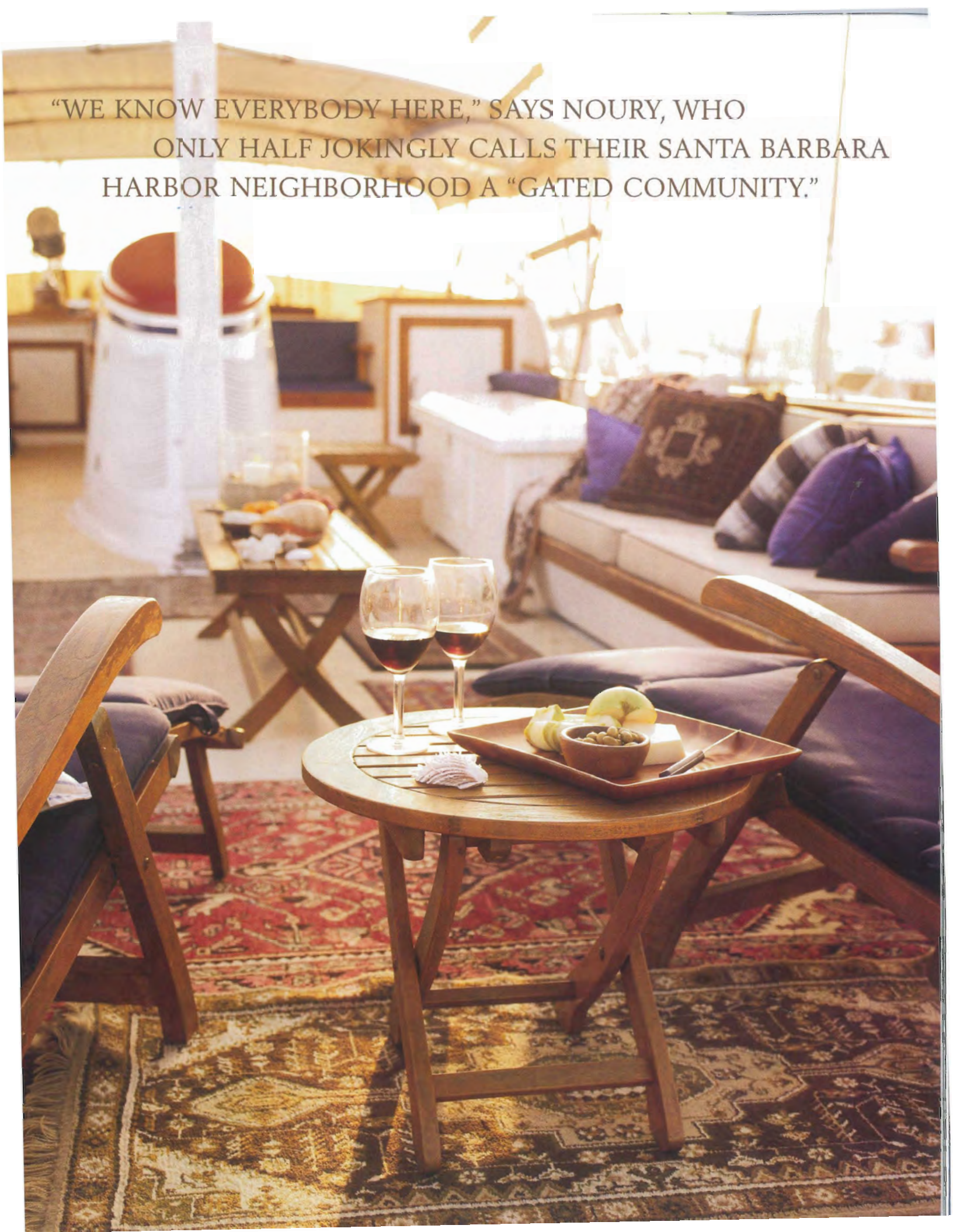
The boat's few decorative elements reveal much about the couple's casual, even bohemian, style: colorful Turkish rugs, tiny Buddha figurines, and authentic African drums—the latter of which charter guests can use for impromptu jam sessions.

*Grand Times* manages to steal away for trips without guests, too. "We vacationed in Catalina for a week this year, and we didn't have to pack because we just took the whole boat," says Sherry. She feels the most free when *Grand Times* is floating in a quiet bay "off the grid," its gas lamps aglow. Solitary and self-sufficient. A wooden, water-bound world unto itself.

"We live larger than most," she says. "But smaller." ■

Charter guests check out the refreshing waters off Catalina. OPPOSITE: Full of secret storage nooks, the sun deck serves as an inviting lounge and Noury stows scuba gear beneath the bench cushions.

“WE KNOW EVERYBODY HERE,” SAYS NOURY, WHO ONLY HALF JOKINGLY CALLS THEIR SANTA BARBARA HARBOR NEIGHBORHOOD A “GATED COMMUNITY.”







Preparing four-course meals of french onion soup, Niçoise salad, and juicy steaks, Sherry is the chef on island charters. "When people get out on the water," she says, "they want comfort food." OPPOSITE: Lulu suns herself on the deck.

Clothing styled by Karina Torrico. Hair and makeup by Stephanie Daniels / Cloutier Agency.

