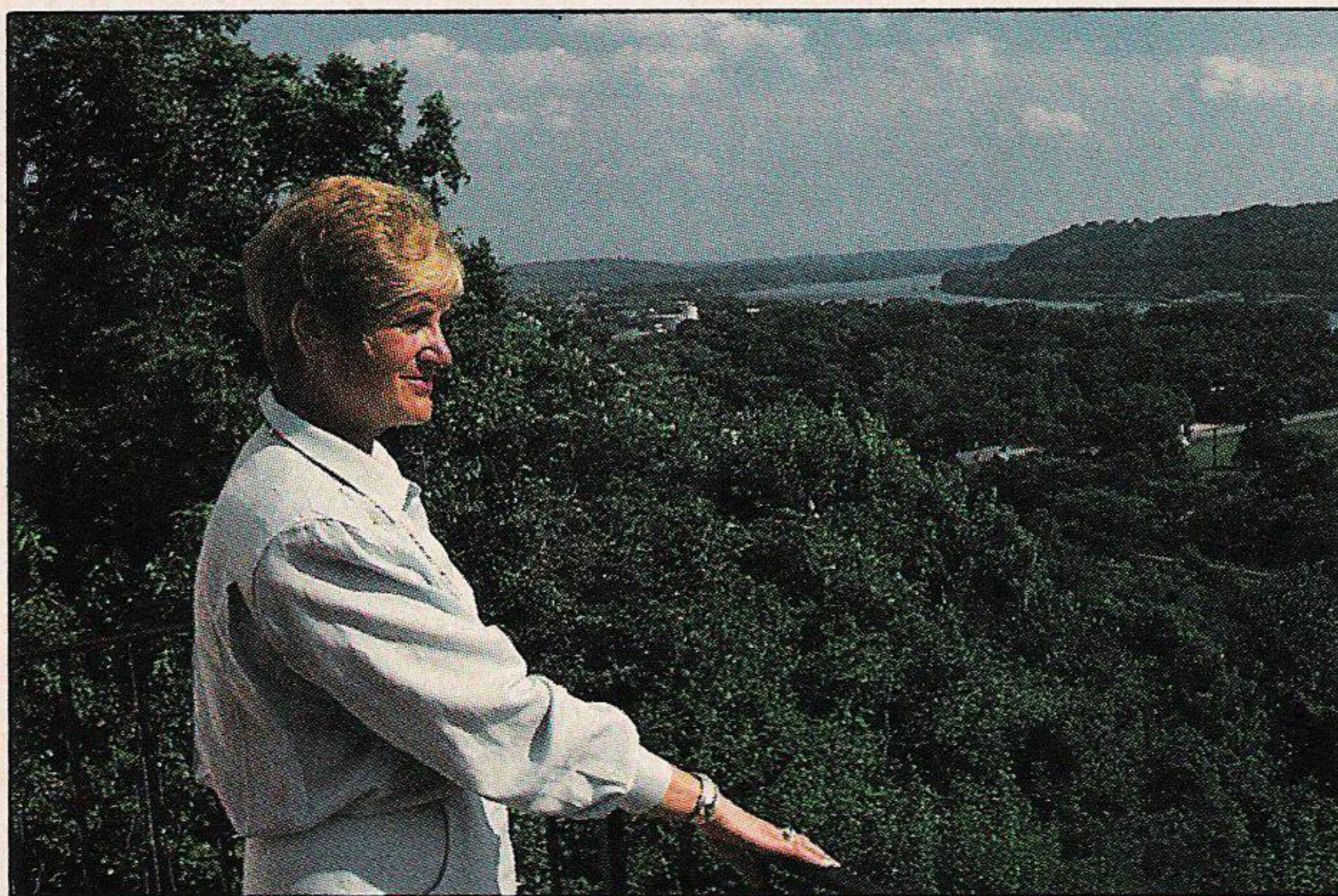




The Mediterranean meets The River

HOME LIFE ♦ ♦ ♦



Anne Gebbie and her "vista," a panorama of the Ohio River, from the balcony of the Gebbie home in Mount Lookout/Tusculum.

By LESLIE CANNON

"Oh!"

A startled gasp is the reaction most people have when entering Anne and Douglas Gebbie's pink stucco home on Ononta Avenue in Mount Lookout/Tusculum. Visitors do not expect the sudden vista that confronts them as soon as they set foot inside. The Ohio River curves outside the floor-to-ceiling windows that line the entire length of the house. No interior walls obstruct the view of Kentucky hills, river traffic, or downtown Cincinnati, which looks like a beautiful toy village at this distance.

"Everyone says the same thing when they come in," notes Anne Gebbie, owner of The Carriage Trade clothing

store at Hyde Park Square. "Oh! The openness!"

This spacious look is the product of five months of remodeling a traditional ranch-type house which the Gebbies bought five years ago. They described to architect Tom Warner exactly what they wanted and he worked with them to turn their vision into reality. Ceilings were raised, walls removed, a second story was added and the exterior, as well as interior appearance drastically changed. By the time they were through, the Gebbies had transformed the tiny plot of land overlooking the Ohio River from American Suburban to French Mediterranean.

"It reminds me of Monte Carlo," says Anne and indeed, the brightly colored house with its wrought-iron trim and arches could easily be imagined tucked on a cliff overlooking sailboats on the sunny Mediterranean instead of barges on the Ohio River.

Inside, the airy, European look is carried out in peach colors, wrought-iron railings, shiny brass and eclectic furnishings. A baby grand piano topped with family photographs faces a British military chest near the front entrance. A Queen Anne dining room set shares the view with a large black lacquered Chinese cabinet in the living room area.

"You can tell when the Reds have a home run," says Anne, "because you can see the fireworks over the city. Even when you're not looking outside, you can see the flares reflected on the surface of the Chinese cabinet."

Up a curving staircase is a gallery



"It reminds me of Monte Carlo," says Anne of the home's Mediterranean exterior. Inside, peach colors and wrought-iron railings give a European air to the spacious first floor.

of family portraits in Anne's French Provincial study, a master bedroom and bathroom with enormous windows, a huge closet and a second balcony. The colors here are blue to complement the sky, which seems to be a part of the rooms.

The decorative detail in the house illustrates the family's history. From paintings of European scenes to an heirloom snuff box made from scraps of an ancient Scottish bridge, every item has a story.

"We like to keep old things from our previous homes around us," Anne explains.

In the Gebbies' case, their previous homes include Scotland, Canada and the United States. The soft roll of Anne's Scottish accent is obvious today, even after 33 years in North America. She and Douglas grew up in Edinburgh, and they met at Glasgow University where Anne was studying to be a registered nurse and Douglas was becoming a general practitioner. Today, he is an anesthesiologist and chief of the Department of Anesthesiology at St. Francis-St. George Hospital.

As young marrieds, they decided to emigrate and left their comfortable lives in Scotland to become medical missionaries in isolated northern Newfoundland.

"We got to patients by canoe in summer and dog sled and snow shoes in winter," says Anne, as she gazes over the midsummer-green hills of Kentucky. "There were no hospitals. People just turned their faces to the wall and died. When we stopped at Gander on our way north, a doctor there asked my husband if he had any

tools for pulling teeth. Douglas said, 'What for? I'm not a dentist.' Of course, he was the only doctor around, so he ended up pulling a lot of teeth while he was there."

When Anne was pregnant with their second child, the Gebbies decided to relocate to the relative comforts of Vancouver. They paused in Toronto on the way, to earn some money for their new home, and they stayed 18 years. Their next stop was a house on Rookwood Court in Hyde Park, where they reared their four children and which they remodeled from a modern split-level into a majestic Colonial with white columns.

After the children left home, they decided to move to a smaller house, and a priority was a river view. When they walked into the house on Ononta and saw that "Oh!"-inspiring vista, they bought the house immediately.

"A lot of our friends were selling their family homes and moving into condominiums, but our hobbies are gardening and cars, so we knew condominium life wasn't for us," Anne says. "My husband has a 1963 Silver Cloud III Rolls Royce and he's never happier than under a car.

"The Larz Anderson Park is just outside the front door and when we bought the house there were lovely plantings in the back, so we decided not to create a garden. But I saw my husband out cutting the park grass now and then, so we knew it was time to get back into gardening."

With their love of the river, they are not content just to look at it from a distance. They have a 32-foot cabin

cruiser named Great Scot II from which they can do some reverse viewing — from the river to the houses on the escarpment above.

Five years ago, Ononta was a neighborhood street of modest older homes which just happened to have one of the best river views in the city — and no one knew about it. When the properties began to change hands, excited real estate agents were calling up their clients and saying, "Have I got a view for you!" The Gebbies were among

the first to remodel their house into a showplace, but in the past several years the street, and all of the streets off adjoining Golden Avenue, have undergone a remarkable transformation. Old houses are being rejuvenated. New houses and condominiums are going up everywhere.

Architectural styles in the area are varied and daring, and property values have become as wide-open as the river view that created this flood of interest.

"Some older Cincinnatians have told us that we'd get used to the river view," says Anne as she watches evening blur the horizon outside. "But it is always truly a joy to come into this house every night, go out on the balcony and have a sherry. It's hard to

get us moved from the windows. There's always something going on."

In the distance below her, players cheer at a night baseball game at Schmidt Field, boaters look up at the hillside and wonder who lives behind all those windows, and a string of lights leads travelers along Columbia Parkway, and into the city. ♦



Visitors marvel at the sense of openness, which the Gebbies achieved by lining the river side of the house with windows.