



PHOTO BY MARJORIE MCGIVERN

GAY ATKINS enjoys a rare moment of relaxation in the spacious living area of her oceanfront duplex.

# It's A House! Or It's Two... Maybe Three

By MARJORIE MCGIVERN

Gay Atkins' Holden Beach house is nothing if not flexible. The downstairs is one complete, two-bedroom living unit, but lock off a bedroom (or two) and team it with an upstairs parlor and kitchen and...voila! two houses! Unlock all the doors and you have a spacious four-bedroom home with baths to spare and numerous views of an ocean that laps at the back door.

If the many possible combinations are a confusion to others, they are a delight to Atkins, a Holden Beach real estate broker. She's an old hand at duplex living and prefers it. "I bought half of a duplex when I first moved to Brunswick County in 1981," she said, "and I designed this one in 1991 with a Wilmington builder."

Her preference is based on both business and family concerns. She

frequently rents part of her home, but regularly has house guests, too. "The great thing about this arrangement is that when my mother and aunt visit twice a year, they can have their own separate apartment," she explained. "When I planned the house, I had in mind the possibility they'd move in with me sometime. It's just so easy to have company here."

The sprawling living-dining-kitchen area cries out for parties and for relaxed lounging with the surf close at hand. Big puffy-cushioned sofas and period furniture pieces share space with enormous green plants that are in evidence throughout. A wide bar separates this room from the generous kitchen that adjoins a dining area fronting the ocean. Comfort is a chief ingredient of the scene, but

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THIS HANDSOME two-story beach house on Holden Beach welcomes a variety of families or sometimes just its owner, Gay Atkins, to beachfront living.

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