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Tales of the Cocktail



THE COLORS OF SUMMER

Summer in her Patio



Nicki Huggins

Introduction by Anna Claire Vollers

There's nothing more inviting than a front porch glider on a breezy summer day. Sipping sweet tea and visiting with friends is a closely-held southern tradition and Gulf Breeze, FL native Nicki Huggins understands this perfectly. "In my own home," she explains, "I designed the outdoor areas before I ever thought about the interior. People would come over and we'd have to sit outside."

Nicki—designer, photographer and collector of vintage American outdoor furniture—is the driving force behind Retropatio, a collection of restored and refinished vintage American outdoor furniture. The furniture, all from the early-to-mid 20th century, is salvaged, sandblasted and powdercoated, and gets new hardware and upholstery. For nearly a decade, Retropatio pieces have graced the outdoor areas of homes around the country.

Nicki's parents are native Alabamians, and some of her fondest memories are of summer days spent with her grandparents. "Those were idyllic times—climbing pecan trees, picking sand pears, visiting Lake Martin and watching horse-drawn buggies taking fruits and vegetables to market." According to family lore, the first glider Nicki obtained looked exactly like the one her grandmother Huggins had on her porch in Alexander City, AL, though Nicki would have been too young to remember it.

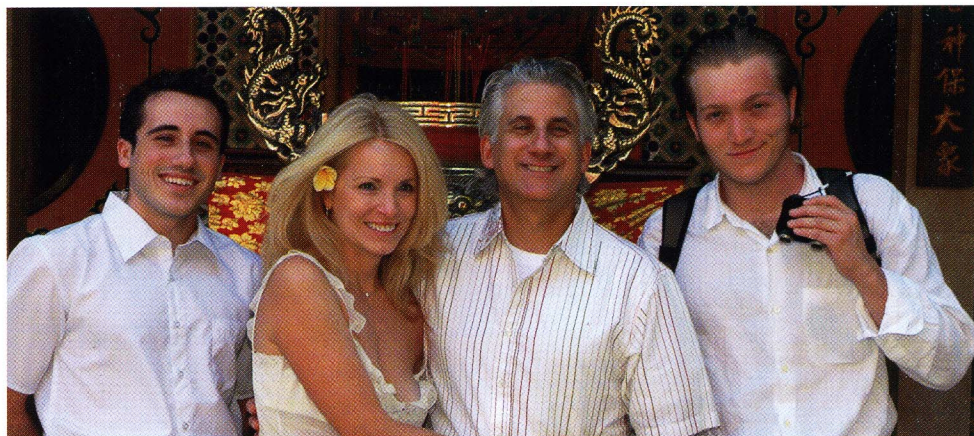
Nicki now lives and works in Los Angeles and in WaterSound, FL. She has appeared on TV, in magazines and books. Late last summer, Nicki and her family—husband Scott Sternberg and sons Noah and Taylor—traveled to Bali, where she worked with teak craftsmen on a boutique collection of outdoor furniture. Inspired by the casual island lifestyle, the collection will soon be available for purchase. A 10-year retrospective of her work can currently be viewed in a group show at Santa Monica College; she unveils an exhibit of large-scale, southern-inspired digital duotones at Watersound in July; and her conceptual photography installation, Grove of Tears, debuted online Veteran's Day 2007.

Ever since the glider—the first truly American-designed piece of outdoor furniture—debuted in 1919, Americans have been obsessed with perfecting the art of outdoor relaxation. Nicki keeps that "American dream" alive. "What I truly believe led me outdoors is this," she says. "It's always summer in my soul."

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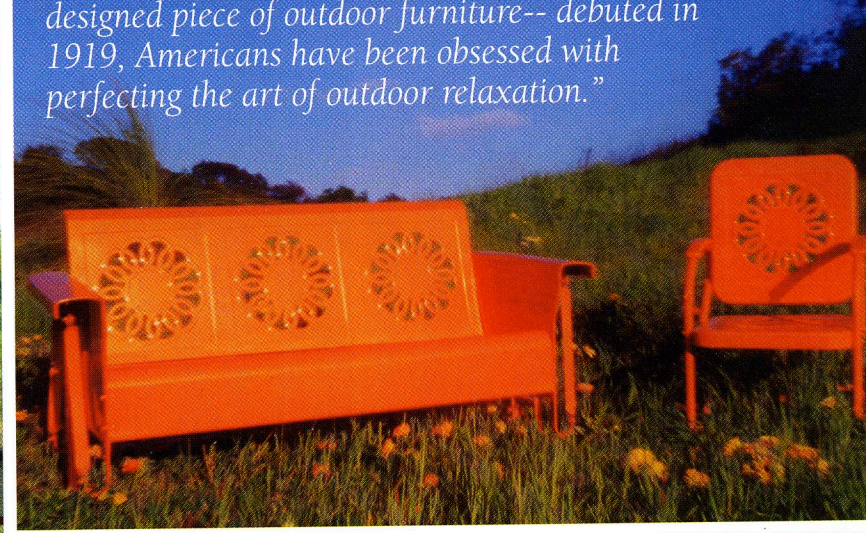


Above: Nicki on her front steps at her home in Los Angeles. **Below:** In Bali with husband Scott Sternberg and sons, Noah and Taylor.





"Ever since the glider—the first truly American designed piece of outdoor furniture-- debuted in 1919, Americans have been obsessed with perfecting the art of outdoor relaxation."



Q&A

My Favorite Things

- Favorite Jewelry:** Anything my husband has given me, and pieces I design from gemstones and pearls I buy in my travels.
- Favorite Food:** I think a tuna melt and a brownie are the most perfect foods.
- Favorite Film:** I love movies, so this is a hard category for me. *Il Postino* is one of my favorites.
- Favorite Flower:** Right now I'm mad about chartreuse spider mums.
- Favorite Song:** I make compilations of different versions of the same songs. My favorite two are *Me and Mrs. Jones* and *Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)*.
- Favorite Book:** I love short stories and admire classic writers like Flannery O'Connor, and current writers such as Dave Eggers, Edward Jones, Michael Chabon and Ethan Canin.
- Favorite Gift:** Presence of mind
- Soul Mate:** My husband Scott Sternberg



In five words, how would you define your style? Evolving femme en cheek.

If you could choose a period of time in which to live because of its look, which one would it be? I look towards a future where we aren't enslaved by recycled fashion trends, but create new ideas born out of our own unique requirements and desires.

Who is your personal beauty icon? As trite as it sounds, I admire inner beauty, those who can inspire us to greater internal growth as human beings.

Who are your favorite artists? We have several pieces from the Architect's Brother series by Robert and Shana Parke Harrison. This past spring San Francisco/New York-based artist Damon Soule "tagged" the walls and ceiling of a 14-foot hallway in our home with his unique vision inspired by contemporary street art.

How do you deal with stress? I meditate. Using my breath, I can click into a non-stressful state within seconds.

What's most surprising about you? My home in Los Angeles is very contemporary, with only a slight nod to the past, mostly in the outdoor furnishings. I collect furniture by modern design icons like Patricia Urquiola, Jasper Morrison, Philippe Starck, Frank Gehry and Aero Saarinen.

What's your greatest regret? Wasting time earlier in my life in insecurity, and not listening to my inner voice and going for it.

Biggest challenge? Being a mother. My son Noah continues to inspire me and teach me how to be a better person. My son Taylor has taught us all how quickly you can achieve your dreams if you hold steadfast to your vision. I am blessed to have two wildly talented artistic professionals as my children.

Greatest indulgence? Shoes. I just can't get past a shoe department. My favorite summer pair is red patent ballet with 4.5-inch heels.

What have you learned about life? I have learned that to be vital and relevant, you must challenge yourself to learn new and different things.

When in life were you happiest? Now

Describe your perfect day. The best days are weekends, when my husband and I never get out of pajamas and just pad around the house, catching up with each other after our hectic week. **C&LM**