

# MANHATTAN LIFE & TIMES

RICHARD B. STOLLEY AND HIS WIFE,  
LISE, ON CENTRAL PARK WEST

*Interior Design by Rose Aiello*

*Text by Susan Sheehan*

*Photography by Billy Cunningham*

Soon after Lise Hilboldt became engaged to Richard B. Stolley, they began to look for an apartment in Manhattan, but they weren't looking for the same apartment. "I had my heart set on the East Side," says Lise Hilboldt-Stolley, an actress and journalist who has taken time out from both careers to raise their five-year-old son, Charlie. "I'm a West Side person," says Stolley, the founding editor of *People* magazine and currently the senior editorial adviser at Time Inc.

When they couldn't find

anything on the East Side that didn't require major renovation, they moved into an apartment on Central Park West. "The previous owners had redone it, but their aesthetic was too chilly," says Hilboldt-Stolley. "The den was plum gray—tasteful but grim. The dining room was pale blue—pretty but lifeless. Still, it appealed to both of us, it didn't need any structural changes, and I figured I could transform it in four months." She selected Rose Aiello, who had designed an apartment for one of Dick Stolley's colleagues, to help



Richard B. Stolley, the senior editorial adviser at Time Inc., and his wife, Lise Hilboldt-Stolley (above, with their son, Charlie), asked Rose Aiello to design the interior of their

Central Park West apartment. LEFT: The living room provides "a formal setting for entertaining," Aiello remarks. Pedestal table from Lee Calicchio. Scalamandré drapery fabric.



them with the transformation.

For a decade Stolley had lived in a small apartment on West End Avenue that "was sparsely furnished with modern furniture I bought off the floor at Bloomingdale's," he says. He cheerfully shipped most of the contents of his bachelor pad to his four daughters from his first marriage, while reserving the right to veto his wife's selections.

Lise Hilboldt-Stolley, who is from the Midwest, went to London as a young woman to study acting and was beguiled by English town houses and country retreats and taken with Regency furniture. "I'm drawn to the early nineteenth century," she says. "The fabrics are sexier, and the colors are gentler."

She was inspired by those memories in this apartment, painting the walls of the entrance hall and the living room a light yellow and choosing pastel carpets for both rooms.

The silk velvet, damask and satin upholstery fabrics in the living room are cream, yellow and celadon. "When women come here to dinner parties, usually dressed in New York black, they all look beautiful against the creamy backgrounds."

As for the pieces themselves, "I knew English antiques, but Rose introduced me to Continental furniture," Hilboldt-Stolley says. Together they found a Regency pedestal table, a late-nineteenth-century screen painted in the Adam style, a Russian mahogany side table, an early-nineteenth-century gilt Provençal console with a white-marble top and an eighteenth-century carved and gilded Swedish mirror. "I love antique gilt," Hilboldt-Stolley remarks. "I think gilt tables and frames dress a room."

Also while living in England, she had seen and ad-

mired old hand-printed wallpapers. For the dining room, she chose one originally designed in 1848 that shows a landscape of the mythical country of El Dorado. "I knew the dining room would be the heart of the apartment and that the wallpaper would make the pale yellow of the living room come alive. It also had a theatricality to it, like a set from the days when stages were still lit with candles."

In the eighties Hilboldt-Stolley costarred in the series *Nancy Astor: The Lady from Virginia* and opposite Alan Alda and Michael Caine in the film *Sweet Liberty*. She toured with Rex Harrison and Claudette Colbert in a British drawing room comedy called *Aren't We All* and won an Obie for her performance in *Top Girls* at the New York Shakespeare Festival. In the mid-nineties she turned to journalism. She was pregnant when she met Stolley in 1995; Charlie was a toddler when they started dating.

"I fell in love with Lise and with Charlie," Stolley says. "I've always enjoyed reinventing myself. I had a wonderful time from 1953 to 1973 as a journalist for *Life* magazine, back when it was a weekly, covering breaking stories all over the country and around the world." One of the biggest was when he was *Life's* bureau chief in Los Angeles and read on the Associated Press teletype that John F. Kennedy had been shot in Dallas. On instructions from his New York editors, he immediately flew to Texas and got a tip from a stringer that a businessman had photographed the assas-

ABOVE LEFT: A 19th-century folding screen from Julia Gray is set by a Steinway piano. RIGHT: A reproduction 1848 wallpaper depicts El Dorado. "I wanted dinner guests to feel transported to a faraway place," Aiello says. JAB fabric on Julia Gray chairs. Sotheby's china.



ABOVE: "The library is a relaxed environment for family time, yet it's still elegant," says Aiello. Regency-style desk chair from Julia Gray. Christopher Norman fabrics on chair and sofa. Edelman leather on ottoman. Cowtan & Tout wallcovering. Stark carpet.

sination on his home movie camera. "She sounded out the name: 'Zah-proo-dur,'" Stolley recalls. "I picked up the Dallas phone book, and damned if I didn't find him: Zapruder, Abraham. I called his home every fifteen minutes for the next five hours, and at about eleven P.M. a voice finally answered. It was Mr. Zapruder. I was the first journalist to contact him, and I asked if I could come out and see the film then. He was exhausted and begged off, asking me to come to his garment factory at nine A.M. I thanked him politely and got there next morning at eight. He allowed me to see the film as he showed it to some Secret Service agents for the first time. It lasts only six seconds, and you know exactly

how it's going to turn out, but it was the most suspenseful piece of film I've ever watched. Other journalists began to gather, as I knew they would. But Mr. Z, as he was called, announced that since I was the first to contact him, he would talk to me first. I walked into his office, determined that I was not going to leave without the film, and I didn't." Stolley negotiated all the rights to the film for one hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

After editing *People* until 1982, Stolley went on to edit *Life*. In 1999 he edited the best-seller *Life: Our Century in Pictures*. "Just as I was always ready to reinvent my professional life, I was ready for family reinvention," he says. "Suddenly, after four grown daughters, I was the father of a little boy. Charlie and I go swimming and play basketball and soccer together. The old bones seem to respond. It must be those five marathons I've run, I worry about being an older father, but Charlie

doesn't seem to mind. Being his father is one of the most exciting things that have ever happened to me."

"In Manhattan there are very few grace notes," Hilboldt-Stolley says. "We live in such a hard, fast culture. When we moved to Central Park West, we had an opportunity as a couple to entertain a variety of people. I make sure each actor, author, television anchor, editor,

BELOW: A soft palette was used in the master bedroom. Clarence House headboard fabric. Christopher Norman swing-arm lamp. OPPOSITE: The room's sitting area looks onto Central Park. Roman shade fabric from Clarence House. Brunswick & Fils floral print.

district attorney and judge knows about the other guest in advance so that no one at the table will turn to his neighbor and ask that unfortunate American question, 'And what do you do?' So much social life in New York has to do with business or with fund-raising. People come to our home without being asked to make thousand-dollar donations to anything. They come here knowing they're not going to be fleeced. I want them to forget the strains of the day."

Stolley is content with the stage set in which his guests dine. "I see things in the wallpaper I've seen around the world," he says. "It's like a tableau of my career in journalism: nonspecific, elusive."

At precisely eleven o'clock, however, Dick Stolley taps a spoon on a crystal wineglass, signaling an end to the grace note. "We've had lively conversations, but we're all working people," he says. "We have to get up and go to work in the morning. It's time, everyone, to go home." □

