



BY JOSEPH MONTEBELLO

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WENDY CARLSON

# dynamic duo

*At home with Alan Shayne and Norman Sunshine*





**EXTERIOR VIEWS** A corner of the outdoor dining pergola; sheep grazing in the meadow; the gate to the front entrance. A view of the house from the sculpture garden, where apple abstraction bronze sculptures are displayed (opposite page).



**the road leading** to Southview is narrow and long. At a certain point you are sure you've made a wrong turn. Then suddenly the gates of the property appear and welcome you to this extraordinary spot. Looking at the house, it is difficult to imagine it the single lonely farmhouse in the middle of a hayfield that it once was.

"We had lived in Connecticut before and I was visiting friends while Alan was working in Los Angeles and started looking at houses, because that's what I love to do," says Norman Sunshine of his partner Alan Shayne. "We already had a house in Los Angeles and one in Malibu and we certainly didn't need another one, but that didn't stop me from looking."

The rundown 1840s barn, which had been moved from Kent, sat on a hundred acres, but with no trees and no view. But there was something about the property that encouraged another visit. And eventually an offer. Shayne and Sunshine saw the potential of the land and the opportunity to build around the original structure and create a very special place for themselves. So, they bought the barn and fifty of the available acres.

Now they own the entire one hundred acres. The original barn has been restored while five additional structures have been added, creating a seamless enclave surrounded by magnificent trees and gardens. The two have done all the decorating themselves, and have filled the rooms with treasures they've accumulated in their travels around the world.

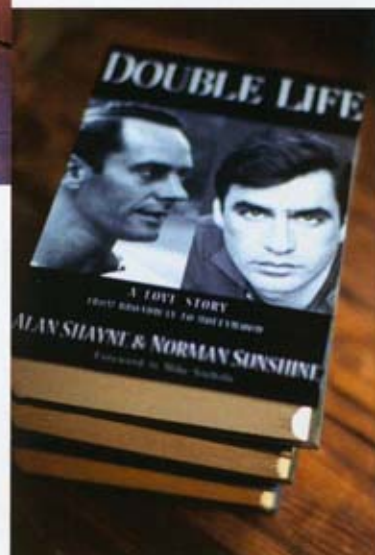
The main complex includes three bedrooms, a kitchen, dining room, a loft, and a circular library where Shayne does his writing. The focal point of the house is the living room, which is the original barn. Its cathedral ceiling extends generously into the air, highlighted with a metal chandelier designed especially for this space. The front entrance, with its unique blue door, is graced with a perennial flower garden that winds around the side of the house and leads to a dining pergola replete with a fireplace. The once small, shallow lake has been replaced by a much larger one that reflects the plantings on the other side of the property. The swimming pool is tucked behind a white picket fence creating its own oasis of tranquility.

In addition to having owned this house for over twenty years, the two have recently celebrated fifty years of being together—a remarkable length of time for any couple. And to commemorate this milestone, they have written a book about their lives: *Double Life: A Love Story From Broadway to Hollywood*, with a foreword by director Mike Nichols. “We had no intention of writing a book, and certainly not together,” says Shayne. “But every time we told stories about our life, someone would say, ‘Get it on paper.’ So, I thought about it and began to do just that.” However, in the beginning, Sunshine wanted no part of writing a book. “I decided I’d write about our life together and interview Norman,” Shayne explains, “since there were things I didn’t know about his early life. I taped the interviews and Norman hated what I wrote.”

Thus began the process of two men writing one book, in alternating chapters telling the unique story of their life together.



**WORK AND PLAY** The living room with its rough-hewn pillars, showcasing paintings from the owners' collection (below left). Shayne's circular library work room which was the original silo; the front hall entrance to the living room; a copy of *Double Life*.



**TO ENTERTAIN** The kitchen with its library sitting room and stone fireplace; an early American blanket chest sits under one of Sunshine's paintings; relaxing in the den. The den with its beamed ceiling hung with lanterns and fireplace with Canton plates on the mantle (opposite).



Although they did not work side by side in the beginning, they helped each other and tried not to criticize. "I didn't think I had anything to write about," says Sunshine. "But I began to tap into so many things I'd forgotten about, that shaped our lives over the years. It was such an interesting process for me."

Shayne worked on the book for three years and then together the men spent another two revising and rewriting. "The rewrites were the worst for us; then we did sit side by side," he says. "What was disturbing were the things we discovered that we hadn't know about each other. But we felt it had to be an honest presentation of our lives."

*Double Life* isn't just an ordinary memoir. It is a look at the world of film and Hollywood, the advertising and art worlds, and a gay partnership. It is the story of two successful men with amazing careers—Shayne on stage and in television and Sunshine as an advertising creative director and a successful painter. It presents a realistic picture of what it was like for two gay men in the 1960s.

"No one ever admitted that they were gay in those days," says Sunshine. "In many cases, it would ruin your career if they discovered you were gay," adds Shayne. "In my early days as an actor, admitting that I was homo-







**AUTHENTICITY** A 17th-century Italian painting hangs above the Jacobean chest with its display of Greek and Roman terra cottas; A corner of Sunshine's bedroom, with French doors leading to the patio. Bed flanked by matching Provencal oil jars atop English cricket tables.





sexual would have meant the end of my getting good male roles." Nevertheless, the two forged a relationship, first in New York and then for many years in Los Angeles when Shayne became president of Warner Brothers Television. Even during the times they lived on different coasts, the two knew that they had something special. "Our friends and colleagues never asked, they just accepted that we were together," says Sunshine.

Over the years, the men have stacked up all sorts of awards, including Sunshine's Emmy for collages he created for one of Alan's television specials.

*Double Life* has amassed quotes from everyone from Joan Rivers to Candace Bushnell, Larry Kramer, and the historian Barbara Goldsmith, who said: "A groundbreaking book. Alan and Norman tell of a love that endures for half a century through all its complexities and obstacles. Painfully honest and a joy to read." Mike Nichols, who wrote the foreword, was one of the first to champion the book.

"The book has been very good for us," says Shayne. "It's allowed us to remember what we've accomplished and how lucky we are. The public has not always been exposed to good same sex lifestyles. Now, with gay pride and gay marriages allowed in some states, it's important for role models and we hope that this book will be an inspiration to other couples."

While originally they had no plans to do it, the couple were officially married in Nantucket a few years ago. "It may seem anticlimactic after all this time," adds Sunshine, "But we were very moved by the actual ceremony."

"We feel very blessed, with this wonderful house in a beautiful part of Connecticut, with our friends and each other. We live very much in the present and are very fortunate to be in such a perfect place." ■