



# Smooth Sailing

Two very different McCaughey septuplets find  
common ground in a spirited **pirate**-theme room.

Written by Jody Garlock Designer: Jodi Mensing Photographer: Hopkins Associates



OPPOSITE: In the room that Erandon and Joel McCaughey share, painted waves splash across the walls for an at-sea feel. The wall treatment began with a straight line around the room where the two blues meet. Designer Jodi Mensing crafted a template, aligned the bottom of it along the line between the blues, and traced the wave shape with a pencil. She used a small brush to outline each wave, and then filled in the center with a larger brush.

Finding a room **theme** that Brandon and Joel would both like wasn't easy. Inspiration finally came from a **cartoon.**





**FAR LEFT:** Twin beds shaped like boats offer nifty storage space in the bows and deep drawers on the sides. Storage was high on the family's wish list. "We don't come close to filling it all up right now, but I know as they get older we will," mom Bobbi McCaughey says. **LEFT:** Personalized framed prints make it clear whose bed is whose. **BELOW:** Step stools give Brandon and Joel a helpful boost into their beds, which are higher than standard due to the drawers underneath. The buoy-shaped lamp on the nightstand is outfitted with a nautical-map lampshade.



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hen two brothers share a bedroom, it's usually the older one who calls the shots—or at least who can convince or, um, coerce his younger sibling into doing what he likes. When the brothers are a mere two minutes apart in age, though, smooth-talking and arm-twisting aren't usually options for reaching an agreement on a room redo.

Such was the case with the bedroom Brandon shares with little bro' Joel, the last-born McCaughey septuplet. Though buddies, the two boys march to the beats of different drummers. Brandon is stereotypical boy, heavy into baseball and outdoor pursuits. He's enamored with army figures and watching World War II footage on The History Channel. Joel's softer side is evident in the makeshift collections he loves to create

# House Rules

Part of the public's fascination with the McCaugheys is how the parents manage to raise eight kids—seven of them the same age. Bobbi and Kenny knew they'd have to run a tight ship to make it work. Here are some of their rules pertaining to their kids' bedrooms—made partially to instill good habits and partially to keep the family functioning and their rooms looking good.

● **Abide by curfew.** When the clock strikes 7, it's bedtime for the kids. "Since they were very small, we've had a pretty strict bedtime," Bobbi says, noting it helps the kids know what to expect every day. The 7 p.m. bedtime has become more flexible as the children have gotten older (they're now 7) and involved in nighttime activities.

● **Make the bed.** The septuplets have been making their beds each morning since they were about 3. "We weren't sticklers on square corners," Bobbi says. "They had to at least try to get their covers pulled back. It's gotten pretty much to where we don't even have to tell them to do it." Nathan and Alexis, both of whom have forms of cerebral palsy, get help from their siblings.

● **Tidy up.** In addition to making their beds, the McCaughey children straighten up their rooms before they come down for breakfast. "Our expectation is that PJs are in drawers, dirty clothes in the hamper, and the toys are where they belong—mostly things so that when Kenny and I go into their rooms it doesn't look like a cyclone went through," Bobbi says. "It's just kind of expected. It just goes with building good habits—training them that Mom or Dad shouldn't always have to clean up after them."

● **Dress yourself.** With all eight McCaughey children attending public school and needing to be at school by 8 a.m., you might think their parents would line up all the clothes the night before. Not so. Except for Sunday church outfits, the children choose their own clothes each morning—and to heck with matching. "I only choose if they're dawdling too much," Bobbi says.

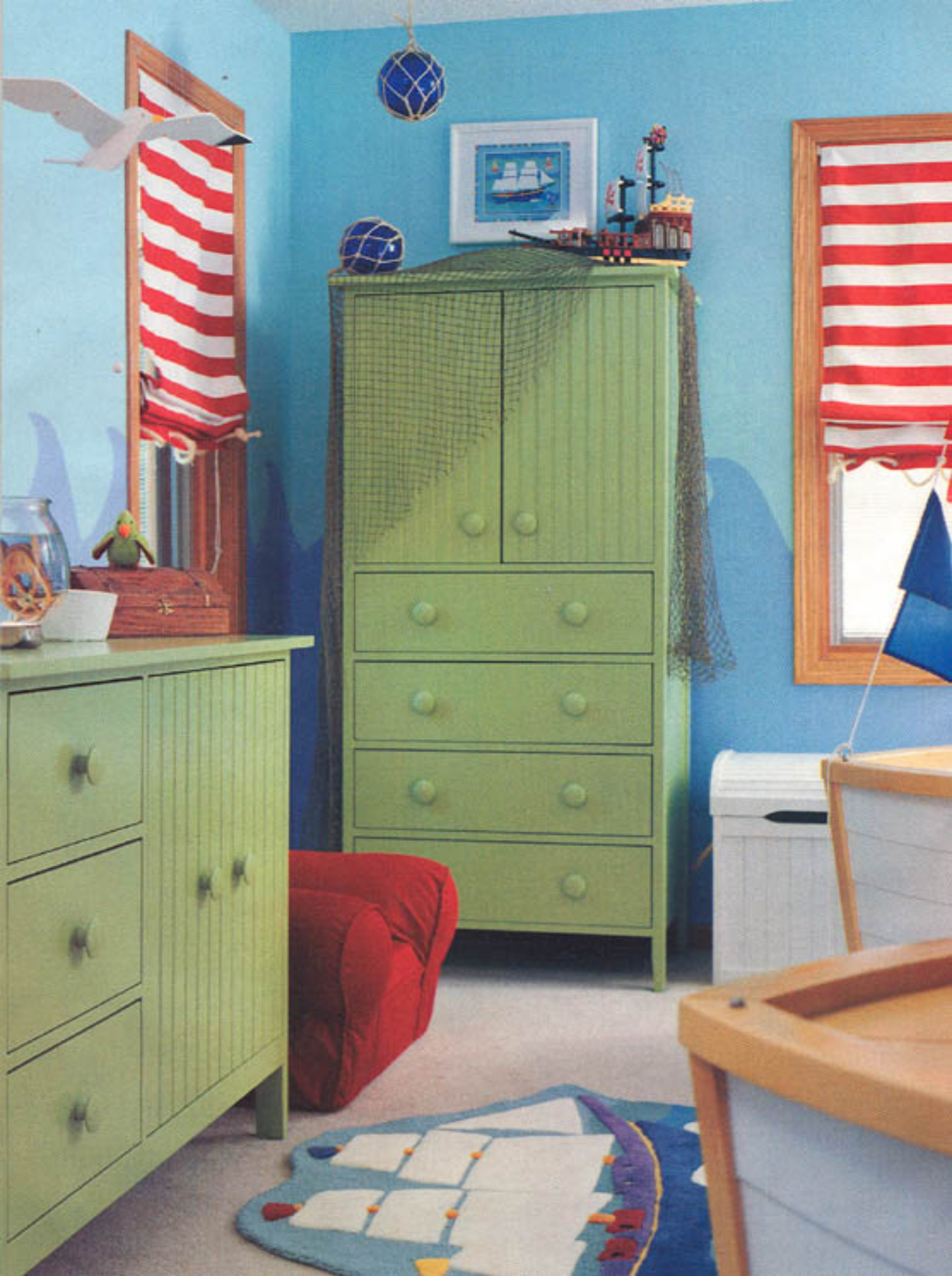
● **Follow Mom and Dad's rules.** Even though the McCaughey kids scored some new gadgets—a TV, CD player, and telephone, for example—for their rooms from the Kids' Rooms™ redesigns, Bobbi and Kenny set limits on when they can be used. Mikayla, for example, is expected to ask permission to watch the TV or talk on the phone that's now in her bedroom or risk being grounded from using them. "We don't mind if she's in her room reading," Bobbi says. "We just don't want her sitting up there talking on the phone or watching TV all the time."





Knowing that no pirate worth his gold would set sail without an inkling of where to find buried treasure, Mensing hung a treasure-map poster above the dresser, in perfect view from the nautical beds. "It's a great and easy idea for theme-related artwork," she says.







OPPOSITE: Nautical-theme rugs, including this shipshape design, add some detail to the floor. FAR LEFT: Real fishnet drapes the armoire to soften the large wooden piece. Mensing shopped online for many of the nautical-theme accessories, such as Brandon's jaunty white sailor's cap. LEFT: Boating rope looped through metal grommets lends a finishing touch to the striped window shades. BELOW: A goldfish found a happy home in the pirate-theme room and has since moved into much larger digs.

## brandon

from just about anything and snuggle up with when he goes to bed. His favorite heroes come in the form of a cartoon cucumber named Larry and a tomato named Bob, from the Bible-based "VeggieTales" video series.

So when it came time to tear down the youthful Noah's Ark wallpaper border in their room, designer Jodi Mensing knew that finding common ground would be a challenge. Parents Bobbi and Kenny McCaughey's only words of wisdom fell somewhere along the line of "Good luck!"

Mensing's *aha* moment came from Joel's favorite cartoon. The pirate theme she decided upon is a deft blending of the boys' likes. The pirates were gleaned from the "VeggieTales" video about Jonah, which recounts the biblical story of a man who was swallowed by a whale. More to Brandon's liking are the



RIGHT: Canvas prints of a happy mermaid and sailor repeat the red-and-white stripes of the room's fabrics. BELOW: A decorative life preserver hung above each bed adds a splash of color to coordinate with the striped duvets on the beds and Roman shades on the windows. FAR RIGHT: Lime-green furniture, which Mensing dubbed "Pirate's Parrot Green," prevents the room from becoming a sea of blue and red. The sails on the boat beds swing as far as the boys would like, but can also be removed if they get in the way of play.



joel



movie's fishing scenes and weapon-slinging pirates—though not the action figures he was hoping for.

"Brandon struggled with the idea a little bit at first," Bobbi admits. "Once he actually saw the watercolor drawings of how the room would look, he decided he liked the pirate theme. And now he thoroughly enjoys it." What's not to enjoy? Boat beds, a beanbag that opens into a toothy shark mouth, and a big treasure map are all fun. Though there are no lovable veggies or tough army guys, when it's lights out, Joel can doze off with new treasures tucked under his covers, and Brandon can dream of battles on the high seas.

The moral of the story? "It can be tough to find anything in common when designing a shared room, but there is always a compromise!" Mensing says. \*

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"It can be **tough** to find anything in common when designing a shared room, but there is always a compromise!"  
—designer Jodi Mensing





A beanbag chair that forms a shark mouth and a palm-tree curtain on the closet create a tropical-inspired corner for lounging. Mensing removed the closet doors and hung the more visually interesting bamboo curtain that features hand-painted palm trees. "The boys think it's fun to separate the bamboo strands to get something out of the closet," she says. "It's easy to get into the closet, and doors are never left open."

