

find a professional [GO](#)

find shops & showrooms [GO](#)

find a home [GO](#)

AT HOME  
IN ARKANSAS

PERFECT *for your next*  
CONFERENCE

WWW.AGORACONFERENCECENTER.COM



[HOME](#) | [HOMES & GARDENS](#) | [STYLE & SHOPPING](#) | [TRAVEL & ENTERTAINING](#) | [FASHION & BEAUTY](#) | [MY NEIGHBORHOOD](#)

[Antiques](#) | [New Products](#) | [To the Trade](#) | [Arkansas Art](#)



### Tom Chandler

This Little Rock interior designer mixes his talent for design with his love of teaching

Chandler began his career in the design business 30 years ago, working out of his car and charging a mere \$15 per hour. Today, he and his staff work on up to 90 jobs at one time all over the country.

**BY**

Allison Cook

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

Kendy Schimmel

**STYLED BY**

Jessica McSpadden

[Email](#) [Print](#) [del.icio.us](#) [digg](#)

### search our site

[View Current Issue](#)

[View Previous Issues](#)



subscribe now

Don't miss an issue! [Subscribe here.](#)

## Related Articles

- Julie Wait Designs
- Tom Chandler
- Kaki Hockersmith, Allied ASID
- Donna Pittman King



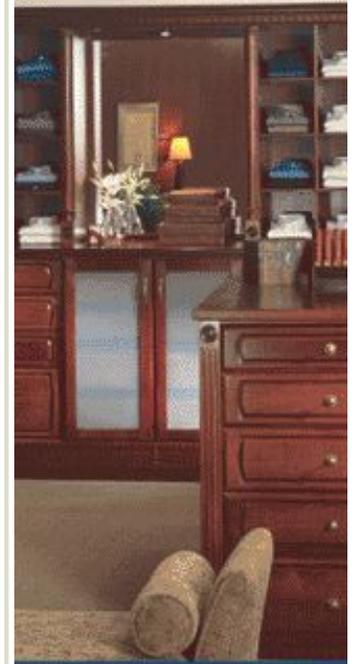
A variety of decorative objects adds texture to a bookcase in Chandler's office.

Tom Chandler's day begins while most people are still sleeping. Usually awake by 3:30 a.m. and at his Riverdale office by 5:00 a.m., Tom fills each day with as many meetings, consultations, installations and classes as possible. "I tend to exhaust everyone around me," he says. It's not unusual for him to work six days out of the week, along with an evening or two. Tom jokes that he's been exhausted for 40 years, but in truth, he just loves what he does.

Joining the design business 30 years ago, he initially worked out of his car, charging \$15 an hour. But it wasn't long before word spread of Tom's keen eye for design and his unmistakable attention to detail. He opened Chandler & Associates in 1980, and the Chandler School of Interior Decorating in 1981. His design firm has grown exponentially throughout the years, and he now employs a 16-member team. "It really takes a team to accomplish what we do," he says. "Every person has a specialty, whether it be fabric, logistics, accessories or floral design, and combining all of these aspects promises well-designed homes for our clients."

Tom and his team enjoy all sizes and specifications of projects; however, their true talents are utilized from the ground up. "We love to get in on a project in the very beginning phases," he says. "We'll work on floor plans, traffic patterns, paint, wallcoverings and more, leading up to the finishing touches

## MASTERS OF ORGANIZATION



[www.closetfactory.com](http://www.closetfactory.com)

### free e-newsletter!

Sign up now for the At Home Arkansas newsletter and get design and gardening tips, party pics, recipes, and decorating secrets delivered to your inbox.

of furniture placement, accessories and florals." It's this attention to detail that makes Tom and the team famous for their installations. "The full installations are always great to work on," he says. "We ask the homeowners to leave the house for a day or two, and we arrive with truckloads of artwork, furnishings and accessories. This gives us time to work with the home, furniture placement, create lighting schemes and truly get the feel for the space and how everything works. When we are finished, we completely stage the house, including candles and flowers, for the homeowners' arrival. The entire team gathers in front to welcome them home. It's quite a production, and it's always fun to see their reactions."

Through Chandler School of Interior Decorating, Tom offers students of all ages and experiences one-of-a-kind instruction in all things interior design. "The first class I ever taught was a design class at a community college," he says. "There was one student, and I taught that one student for 16 weeks, four hours every Thursday night. After a while, I decided I wanted to try teaching on my own, and I opened the Chandler School. I now teach two to three semesters a year, and I lost count the year I passed 10,000 students. I've had the joy of watching many of my students grow and open their own design firms. My students have a lot to do with who I've become, and I hope I've had something to do with who they have become."

Students sign up for a 12-week session of Tuesday evening classes where they learn the ins and outs of interior decorating. Classes consist of lectures from Tom and other professionals, home tours and hands-on learning. It's not unusual for Tom to lecture on the correct uses, sizes and types of Oriental rugs and then take the class to an Oriental rug resource for hands-on examples.



Classes at the Chandler School of Interior Decorating include lectures, home tours and lots of hands-on learning.

[Sign Up Now](#)

[Find a Professional](#)

[Find Shops & Showrooms](#)

[Find a Home](#)

[My Neighborhood](#)

Tom's energy and zest for life spill over into his classes. His early rising hours, constantly full schedule and the fact that he stands at his desk to keep his energy level high, influenced one student to make him a plaque, which now hangs above the door to his office. It reads "Get up early in the morning and be the best you can be." "I say that at least once during every class, and I find that it's true," he says. "Often times, students take my class at turning points in their lives, and I take this seriously. Many drive from far away each week, and I don't want to waste their time. I want each and every student to get the most they can from their time with me. We usually have several students with degrees in design, although we've had a high school student and a 77-year-old woman. We always run the gamut. And, we have had several people take the class more than once. One student has taken it four times."

From teaching classes to designing homes, Tom's talent has spread outside the borders of Arkansas and across the country. "We can have 75 to 90 jobs at one time all over the country," he says. "While some of those just need small items to be complete, it's a lot of work to coordinate and take care of that many clients, especially with the traveling. It's not unusual for us to be working out of town 40 percent of the time. And I'm right there in the thick of it. I'm as happy driving the moving van as I am placing a sofa or drawing floor plans. I'm fortunate that I'm able to do what I love and make a living."

[About Homes & Lifestyles Publishing](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Advertising Information](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Customer Service](#) | [Site Map](#) | [My Account](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

2207 Cottdale Lane - Little Rock, AR 72202

© 1997 - 2008. Network Communications, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

powered by **RIVISTA** | A Godengo Technology