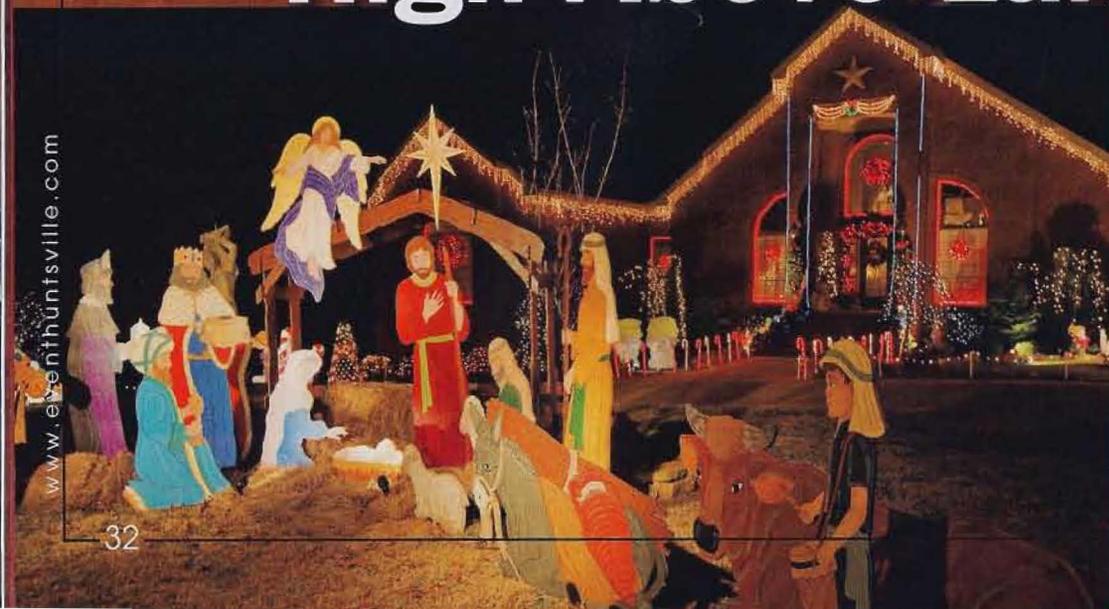


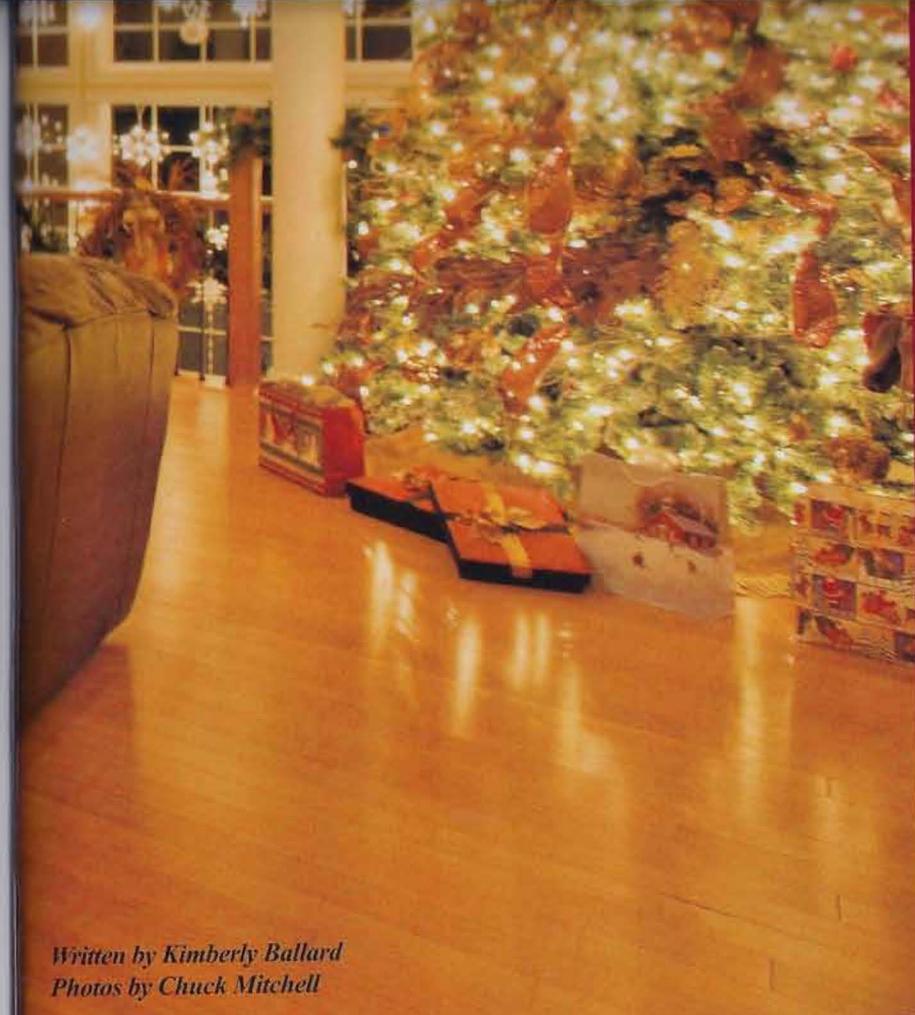


Santa's Winter Wonderland High Above Lake Guntersville

Perhaps you have a theory about where the elusive Claus family lives. Is it Drobak, Norway; New York City; a specious location 8 kilometers north of Rovaniemi, Finland; or the famous Arctic North Pole? All offer intriguing discussion, but *EVENT* Magazine found the elusive couple's enigmatic winter hinterland sitting on a bluff one mile above the convergence of the Tennessee River and Lake Guntersville in Grant, Alabama.

One of only a handful of houses in Cardessa Lane Estates, the 2.1-acre wonderland sits on a bluff facing east, overlooking North Alabama's most beautiful waterway. Ten miles from Cathedral Caverns State Park, and 20 minutes outside Guntersville, during a full moon the illumination coming over the river gorge places the house in a spotlight. Homeowners Mark and Margo Pedigo personify Santa and Mrs. Claus - they both love Christmas.





*Written by Kimberly Ballard
Photos by Chuck Mitchell*

Driving in by the circular drive, a number of Christmas scenes welcome you, including a Nativity and Santa's sleigh, all built and hand-painted by Santa... er, Mark...while snowflakes made from PVC piping pour down the sides of the house.

"It takes us two full months to complete decorating every year, and we enjoy every minute of it," Margo says. "We start around the first of October and we begin taking it down the first of January. It takes two days to trim the 12-foot Christmas tree in the great room, and over a week for Mark to complete his collectible villages."

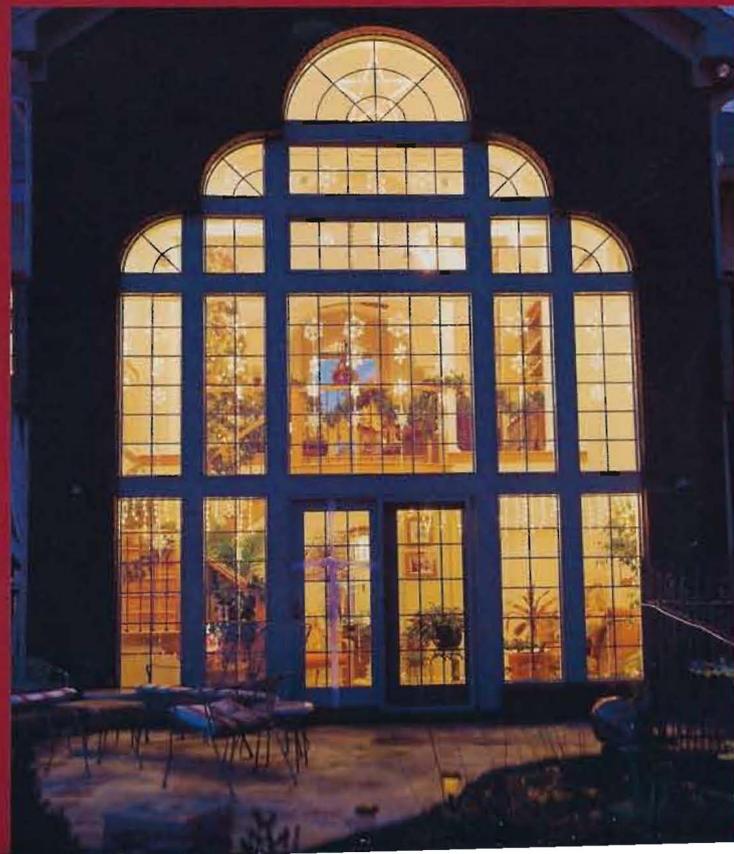
From your first step through the front door, Mark's village collection grabs your attention. Like a bright-eyed child, complete with mouth gaping, one can suspend reality for a time to take in the countless miniature village





scenarios gracing the built-in shelves on either side of the great fireplace. Not all of the scenery is from a Christmas collection, like the 1950's-style drive-in diner complete with period vehicles, a mail truck, and a fire truck. Because the myriad settings so closely replicate a perfect slice of Christmas Americana, the overall effect is that of a glistening, but diminutive, moonlit world where every day is Christmas. It takes all the strength you can muster to resist rolling the little cars along the snow-blown streets and peek inside the miniature shops so meticulously created by hand. Mark began the collection in the 1990s, starting with a couple of original snow villages. Today his collection includes selections from the Coca-Cola Collection, Department 56, and Thomas Kinkaid, to name a few.

Mrs. Claus... er, Margo... explores the surrounding woods to gather foliage in all its forms to make enormous new wreaths every year for the hearths over the house's four fireplaces; create tabletop décor like the reindeer gracing the great room coffee table; and weave swags and garlands for the lighting fixtures and bathroom mirrors. Fir and cypress branches, pinecones, magnolia leaves, and winterberries are abundant. Margo sometimes spray paints them in metallic gold to make her own tinsel, and ties oversized red bows on all the cabinets.



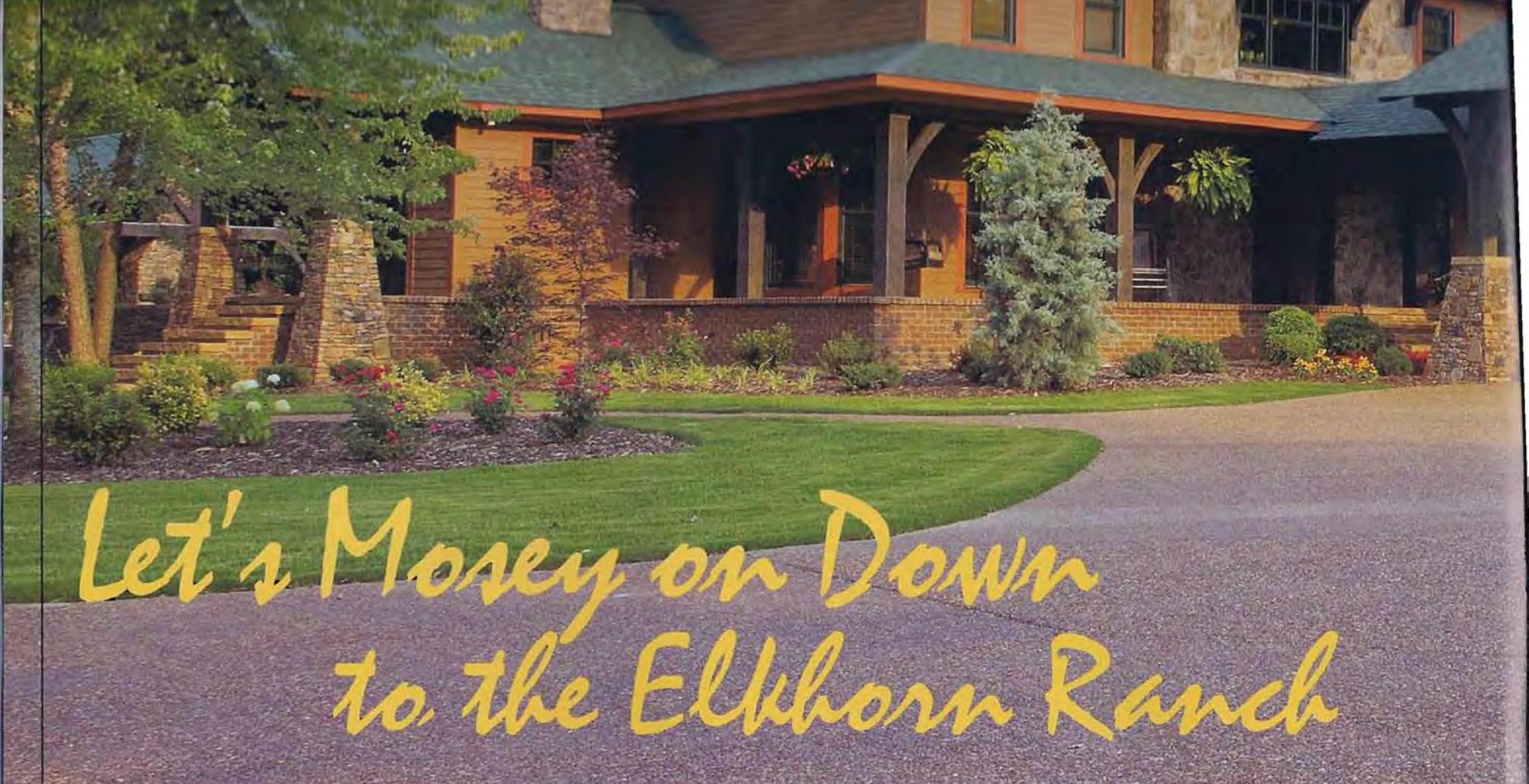
"It takes us two full months to complete decorating every year, and we enjoy every minute of it."



The 5-bedroom, 3-1/2-bath home has more than 5,000 square feet of living space, with one of the bedrooms converted into Santa's... er, Mark's workshop. One of the two living rooms, which the Pedigos refer to as the hearth room, is decorated in a whimsical manner with its own fully decorated Christmas tree. It lies off the high-performance full gourmet kitchen with grille and griddle, convection oven, granite countertops, and glazed cabinets. Margo enjoys cooking, but the holidays are a special treat.

You will find fine Italian tile in all the bathrooms and a Jacuzzi and fireplace in the master suite. Stuffed teddy bears and even a teddy bear tree sweeten up the guest bedroom. Artwork by Thomas Kinkaid and Tomasz Rut join the Russell Wright designs throughout.

Alive amidst a profusion of color and blinding holiday grandeur – if Santa really does live in some place called Joulupukin Kammari, Lapland, he might do better to check out this wonderland on Cardessa Lane in Grant, Alabama! ■



Let's Mosey on Down to the Elkhorn Ranch

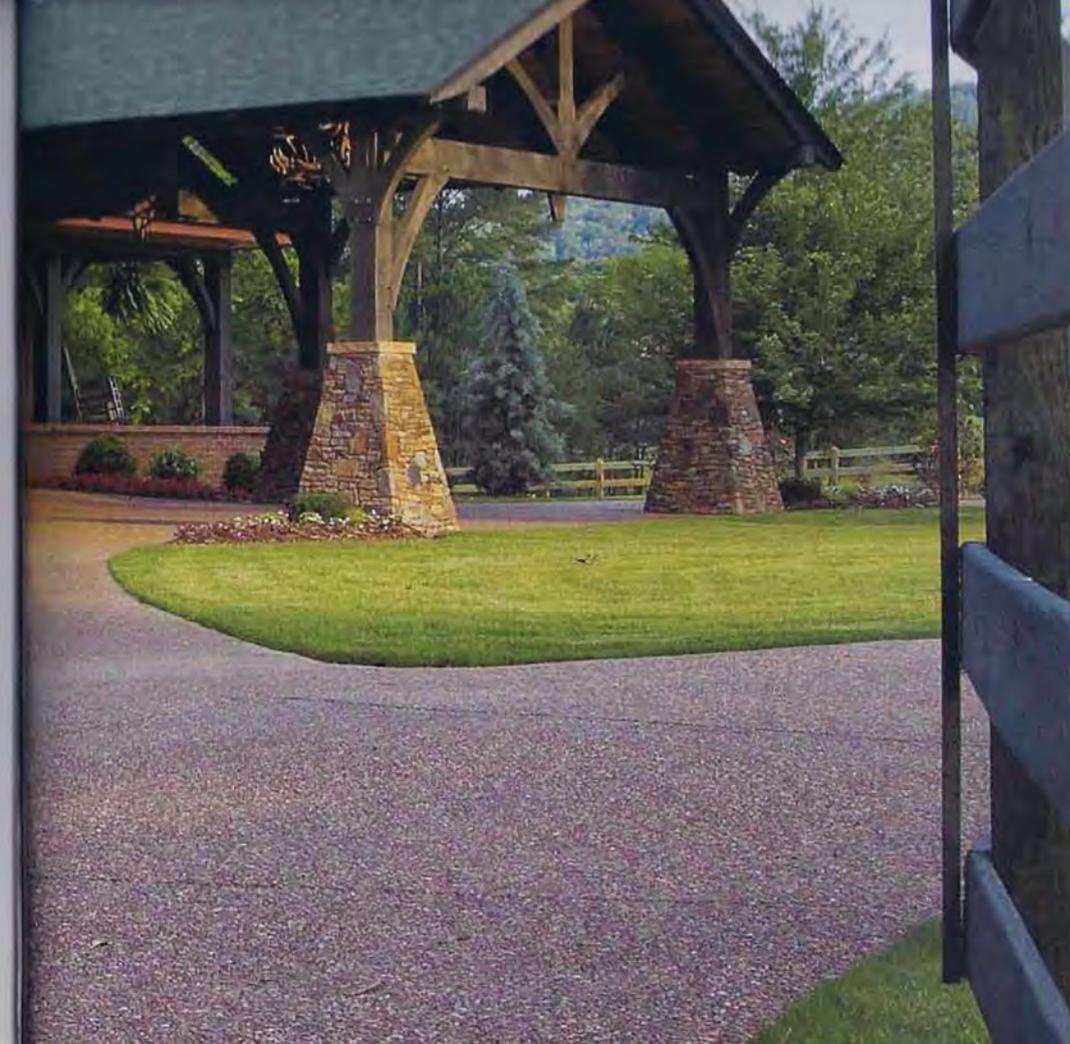
Written by Kimberly Ballard Photos by Thor Harland

The only thing missing is the hitching post; otherwise, it could be the infamous Ponderosa. Turning in between the twin pillars and following the driveway down to encircle what is called out west, a “ramblin’ rancher”, Elkhorn Ranch is bigger, better, warmer, and more contemporary. For instance, Big Kahuna’s “man-house” replaces the barn; and instead of an Appaloosa named Buck grazing in the stalls, there is enough horsepower residing in the Salisbury stable to trample a herd of buffalo. Side-by-side like three Preakness fillies are Mike Salisbury’s high school sweetheart, a 1966 Chevy Impala; his lover, a 1963 Corvette split-window Coupe; and according to his wife Karen, his one true baby – an

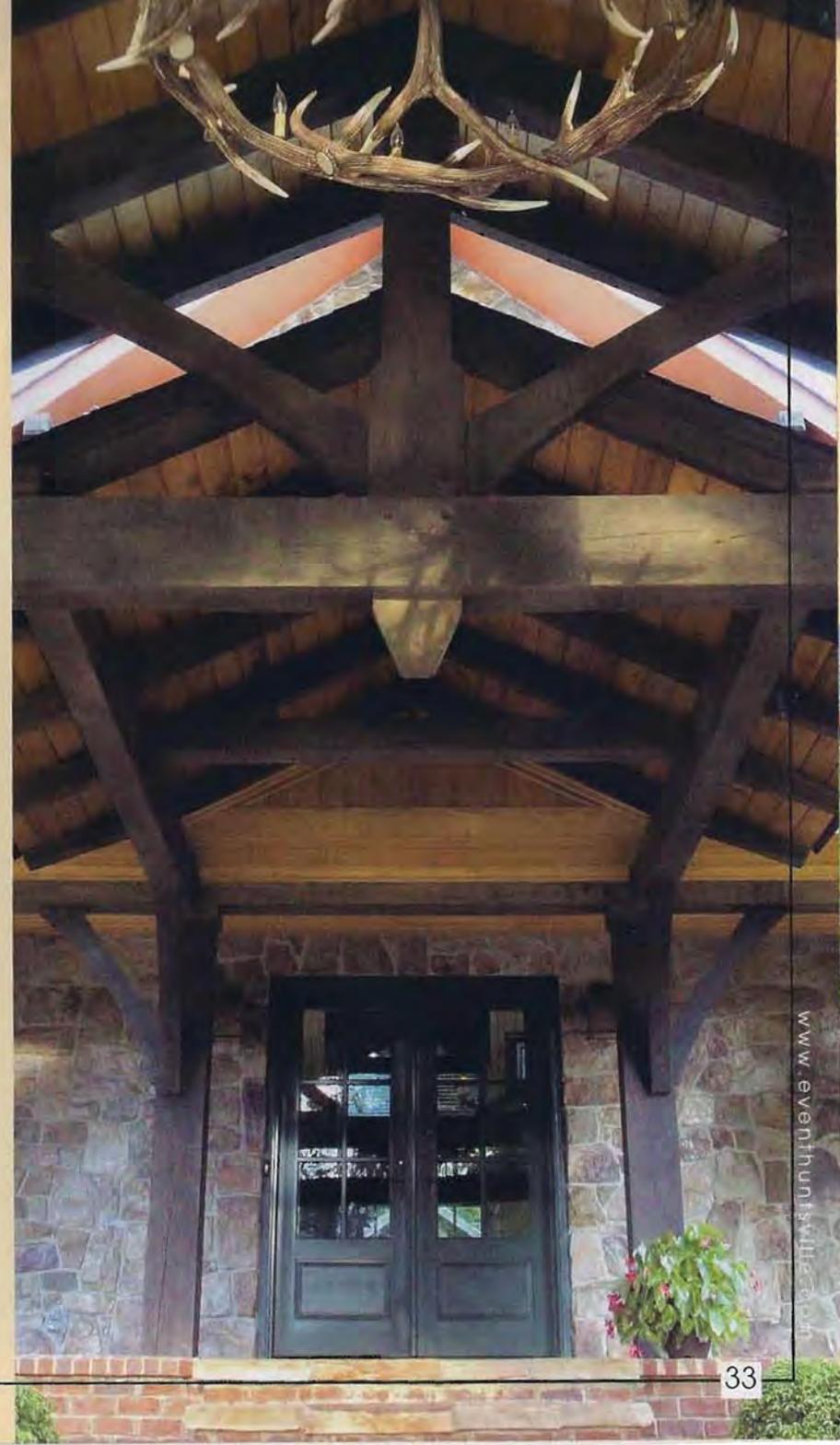
L72 solid-lifter, four-barrel “Big Block” 427 Corvette. All three are in mint condition, just itchin’ for a horserace.

All this before you even open the front door to the main house! Mike and Karen Salisbury’s five-bedroom, eight-bathroom Elkhorn Ranch sits on six acres in Owens Cross Roads. Mike, known as Big Kahuna to his grandchildren, purchased the land in 1986, and designed and built the house himself over a period of three years from 1990 to 1993.

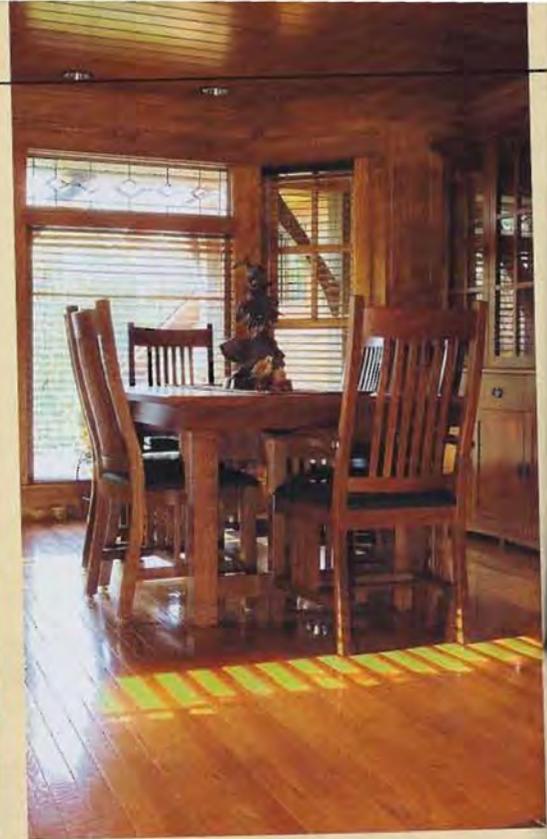
The great room with its 40-foot arched beam ceiling features a massive fireplace built of stones plucked from a nearby creek bed and hauled up to the



property. The second-floor balcony overlooks a warm and inviting room decorated with artifacts from across the American West. Visiting friends in Cody, Wyoming, the Salisbury's spend 3 weeks every year traveling the surrounding region and collecting everything from Mike's famous gun collection to Indian headdresses. Artwork adorns the solid wood-panel walls, amongst trophies of once roaring, mauling, man-eating beasts. The house is a big game hunter's heaven, and it isn't just Big Kahuna who does the shooting. For her 13th birthday, the oldest of the Salisbury girls, Sarah, added the head of an Axis deer to the collection. From the mounted young black bear rising from the grassy mountainside, to all manner of elk and deer, only the gargantuan buffalo head looking out across the great room didn't come from a Salisbury hunting expedition.



HAVEN



Sprawling though it is, with four children and a houseful of teenagers, Mike expanded Elkhorn Ranch a few years ago by adding a private wing for himself and Karen. Shut off from the main house by a winding sunlit corridor, the Salisbury master bedroom is a sanctuary with a sunken den and fireplace, elaborate bath, and dream closets the size of an efficiency apartment. "After putting out plenty of food, I tell them, 'When this door is closed, do not enter!'" Karen laughs.

"This house has always been about family, our love of the outdoors, and of the old West," Karen says.





Also expanded is the kitchen with its inset wooden refrigerator complete with original 19th Century icebox hardware. The reconverted laundry room now serves as a bathroom, laundry room, mudroom, and walk-in pantry. A full playroom and media room combination with sleeping quarters and kitchenette lie downstairs.

The “backyard” consists of a rock garden, swimming pool, outdoor kitchen for barbecuing, and a shooting range with plenty of room for target practice without worrying about injuring a neighbor.

A persistent breeze blows in off Green Mountain year-round and it is just a matter of choosing one of many glorious spots to enjoy it. “This house has always been about family, our love of the outdoors, and of the old West,” Karen says. ■





HMCBA's 2008 SHOWCASE HOME. . .

Tuscany Point at the Village of Providence

A masterpiece of Italian art imitating life.

Written by Kimberly Ballard • Photos by Lisa Love



Every year, the Huntsville-Madison County Builder's Association (HMCBA) interviews home construction companies bidding for the year's Showcase Home. When Brant Neely and his two sons, B.J. and Brandon of B.T. Neely & Sons Construction Company won the annual honor, they already had a vision for the 2008 Showcase Home - Tuscany Point at the Village of Providence. "We knew it would be Italian with the feel of old Tuscany," Brant says, "It would have an Italian courtyard layout with carefully landscaped grounds and an outdoor living plan. We wanted Tuscan

décor throughout the interior and exterior, and I wanted it to have a 3-level high tower."

Located at #6 Hope Street in the Village of Providence, the Neely masterpiece is an inspired concoction of artistic brilliance. "Members and associate members from the HMCBA come together to either discount or donate time, talent, and materials to create this spectacular Showcase home. From sheetrock, plumbing and tile, to decorators, architects, and suppliers of furnishings, audio/video, appliances, and countertops. We interviewed and chose contractors and

resources to provide for every aspect of the house,” Neely says.

Jan Weir-Johnson has been a construction and design consultant for over 30 years in Huntsville. “I usually work with the homeowner on the logistics of the house to suggest the best use of storage, traffic patterns throughout the grounds, and spacing for the furniture, all in the pre-construction process. But since the Showcase Home is a vision of the homebuilder rather than a homeowner, I worked closely with Brant and the architect/designer, Bob Martignoni (of the Building Science Asso-

ciation or BSA) to select and coordinate the décor of this house.” Some of Jan’s many interesting contributions to Tuscany Point is the addition of the Kohler cast iron sink, the retractable spice racks along each side of the stove, and a glass-paned display cabinet built over an opaque window. Sunshine pouring through the textured pane highlights anything displayed in that cabinet. Other amenities include the built-in Miele coffee center with a microwave oven, espresso and coffee machines; stainless steel appliances; custom-built cabinets; heated floors, and an innovative His & Her marble





Chateau shower with presets for water temperature and a timer.

"Everything from the hand-painted Tuscan murals in the entryway by local artist Rhonda Mitchell of the Cellar to the faux finishes of the living room and great room fireplace by William Daniel & Associates is a testament to the remarkable craftsmanship we have available here in Huntsville," Jan says.

In the formal dining area, Audio Insight installed the first Soundance Advance Invisible Loud Speaker System in North Alabama. Invisible to the eye, this audio system is installed behind the sheetrock. "A special electronics equalizer is installed in an equipment rack behind the sheetrock on the ceiling. It is adjusted to the thickness of the wall coverings," says Tom Miller, owner of Audio Insight. "The system has a lifetime warranty."

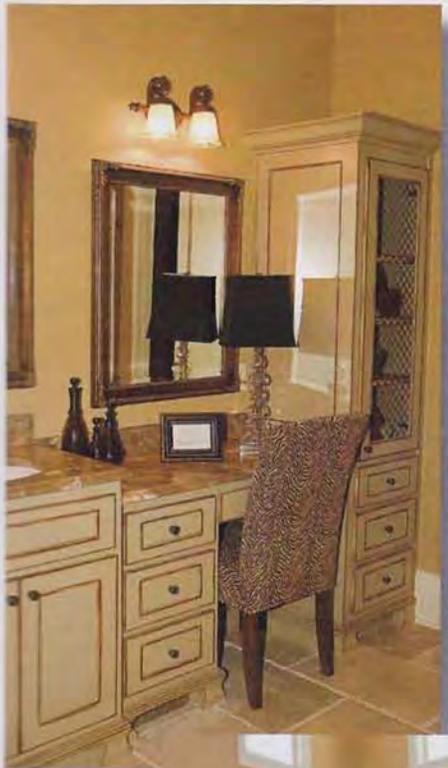
Roy Norris of Haversham Furniture Gallery explains the logic behind the first-floor furnishings, "We chose a casual elegance. Working with Tom Weir, we knew the great room had to be functional in order to play with the kitchen and dining area, so we placed swivel chairs before the fireplace so you can warm up to the fire its own way, easily turn and warm up to people sitting on the sofa as well."

According to Mary Elledge, owner of Reflections Home Furnishings, the Italianate home style is traditionally more formal and frilly than the current décor. "We wanted the house to be more family-friendly taking children into account. As a result, we decorated the bedrooms, bath, and upstairs media room in a much more livable style," she says. A round chair-style recliner with theater seating and a game table reinforced the concept.

The most creative aspect of the Tuscan Point house is the backyard. According to Brant Neely, who worked with several landscapers,

garden. Stone paths lead to an outdoor Morning Room perfect for coffee and tea, a Meditation Room for the quiet moments, and the courtyard Main. Furthermore, MosquitoNix installed a pioneering outdoor bug and mosquito fog repellent system to protect against annoying insects.

The HMCBA currently owns the 2008 Showcase Home at #6 Hope Street in the Village of Providence, but Remax realtor Thelma Dawson won the bid to represent Tuscany Point on the real estate market. All proceeds from the sale of Tuscany Point will go to the HMCBA. Listed under \$800,000, Tuscany Point has 3 bedrooms and 3 1/2 baths. This masterpiece of Italian art imitating life is just around the corner and within walking distance of Village of Providence town center. ♦





History Lives On in the Pynchon-Powell-Dorning House

by Kimberly Ballard

Photos by Chris Jensen

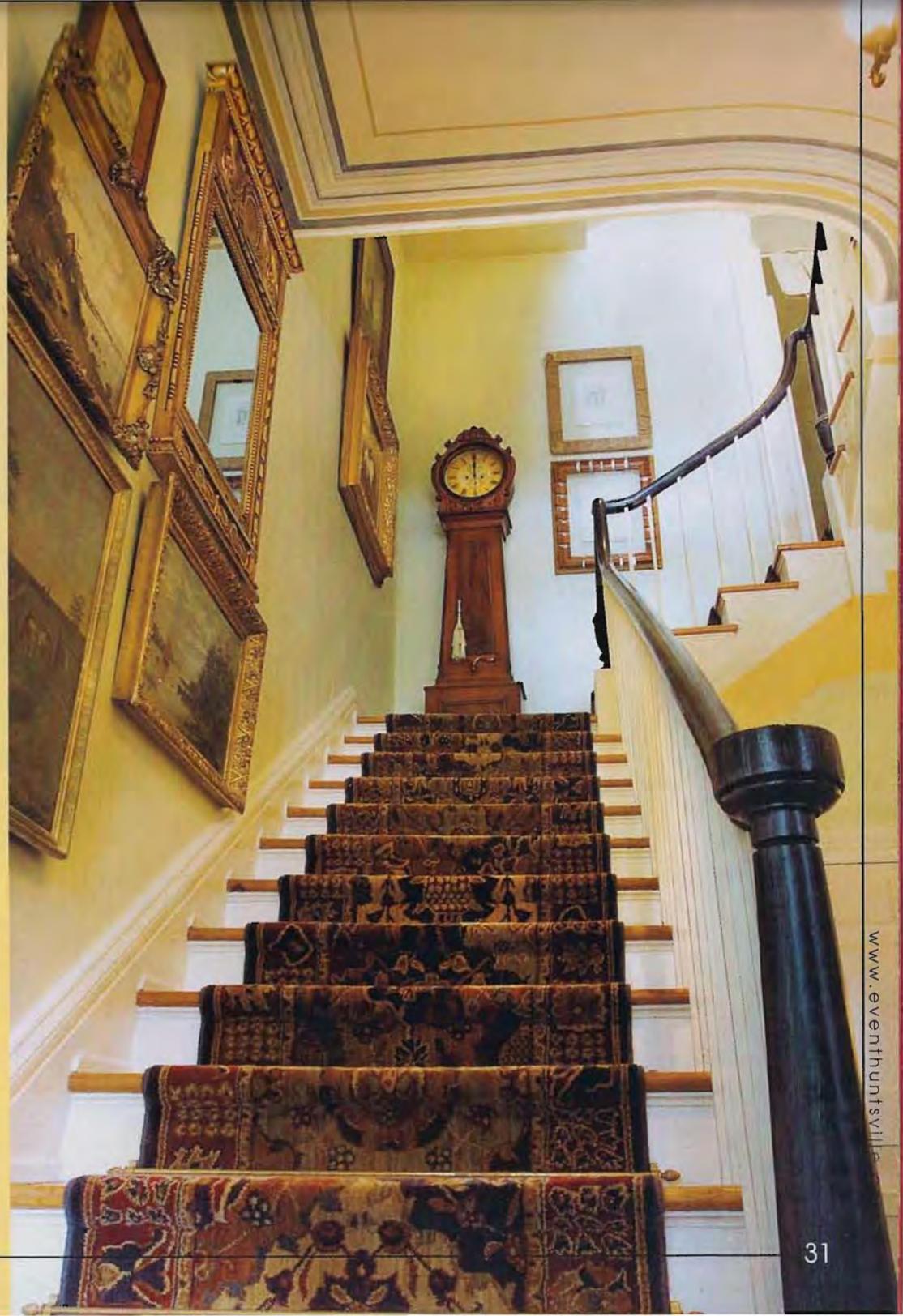
Alabama's second first lady, Pamela Bibb, glances through the sidelights gracing the massive front door. Her vision is slightly distorted through the bubbly imperfections of the new glass, as she greets important guests for the evening's soiree.

A cacophony of summoning bells resounds at the command center off the back porch as servants rush to help visitors off with their coats, to serve tea in the parlor, and lay a fire in the formal dining room. As slaves rush up and down a narrow, wooden stairway carrying food, beverages, and firewood, their footfall is forming a sloping depression down the centerline of the back steps.



Layne and Claude Dorning bought the Pynchon-Powell-Dorning house at 518 Adams Street in 1990, maintaining as much of its historic integrity as possible. The glass in the sidelights is 175-years-old. Square-headed nails used in pre-Civil War construction mar the front door and the original locking mechanism still works. A single summoning bell rests quietly in a bronze rack, and a solitary broken bell pull, one of many wired through the chimneys to a pull cord in every room, hangs limply from the parlor mantle. The sinking depression down the back staircase is a clear testimony to years of backbreaking work.

“You have to love old houses to appreciate one,” Layne says. She points to some of the house’s flaws – chipping plaster, a drastically oblique windowsill, and faded frescoed ceilings. “This would drive some people crazy, but I love it.”





abnormally low ceiling is now exposed up to the gable. There is a small, fire pit where slaves once heated water for tea and an iron for laundry; and a companion porch overlooks a lovely rose garden.

In the 1850s, New Orleans cotton merchant, John Fackler, grew the antebellum home into the 19-room mansion it is today. There are subtle differences between Clarke's Rococo and Fackler's Federal style. The newer baseboards are twice as wide and the molding is more ornate than Clarke's simple bull's-eye imprint; Fackler added chair rails and wider, more pronounced thresholds; Clarke's parlor and dining rooms have white marble fireplaces and mantles, while the newer fireplace is black slate. Fackler also hired a live-in French faux painter who spent 18 months painting the frescoed ceilings in the parlor, which the Dornings restored.

Reflected in the house's museum-like décor, a renaissance-style version of Susanna and the Elders hangs in the formal dining room. The painting, based on the Book of Daniel, came from a chateau collection Layne found visiting Leone, France. It graces the wall of the main dining room and holds its own against a Gentileschi.

The original slave quarter flagstones lead out from the converted lower level – a modern, private living quarter beautifully landscaped and meticulously maintained. The Dorning home speaks of a bygone era, but its historical integrity keeps it very much alive. ■

In one of the bedrooms indicate completion around 1835 by Susan the widow of William Clarke, a captain in the Virginia Militia's Blues. The original 3-floor, 9-room structure was a country estate house built amidst vast farmland that by Governor Bibb's day, made in Huntsville's first residential section and today's Twickenham district.

A staircase spiraling up two floors from the entryway is an amazing feat, accomplished without power tools. Hewn from cut trees, the joints and structural curvature of the stairwell required manual labor. The original double doors opening into the parlor hang in absolute balance after more than 150 years. Doors throughout the house maintain their original hardware with working skeleton keys. The modern kitchen with its



From Tara to *Mayberry*

*Written by Kimberly Ballard
Photos by Chris Jensen*

In the opening scene of a landmark film, the bedazzled Tarleton Twins discuss the war with a flighty Scarlett O'Hara as she sits amidst the vine-entwined columns of the wide front portico (the Greek word for porch) of Tara. Since the movie-set Tara was a mere shell of the true Greek Revival style, it was missing the characteristic gabled roof supported by imposing columns that served as porch posts to the second story sitting porch. Designed to be impressive as one approached the elaborate entryway to the mansion, the downstairs portico was a precursor to a similar style known as Gothic Revival.

Made popular by architects Andrew Jackson Downing and Alexander Jackson Davis, Gothic Revival porches featured latticework, newel posts, hand-carved railings, and even aprons. Often richly decorated with rattan or wicker furnishings, front porch swings, and the

infamous rocking chair, according to Downing, "The unclouded splendor and fierce heat of our summer sun render [the porch] a source of real comfort and enjoyment.... While during the warmer portions of the season, half of the days or evenings are there passed in the enjoyment of cool breezes..."

The portico or, in Latin, porticus, dates back to prehistoric times when a mere rock overhang served as shelter, but the Egyptians, classical Greeks, and Imperial Romans built porches, balconies, galleries, and even the simple stoop with an overhanging roof. No one, however, has so elaborately incorporated the porch into the very fabric of society, like Americans. They became prevalent because of our sun-drenched climate and the American porch survived many architectural transitions over the past 150 years.





Found throughout the Gulf States and the Caribbean, the French Colonial style feature wide verandas, also known as galleries that sometimes wrap completely around the house. They provide a cool and breezy gathering place for family and friends and serve as an integral part of southern living, prior to the mid-twentieth century when central air-conditioning, exhaust-belching automobiles, television sitcoms, desktop computers, and Wii, drove people indoors.

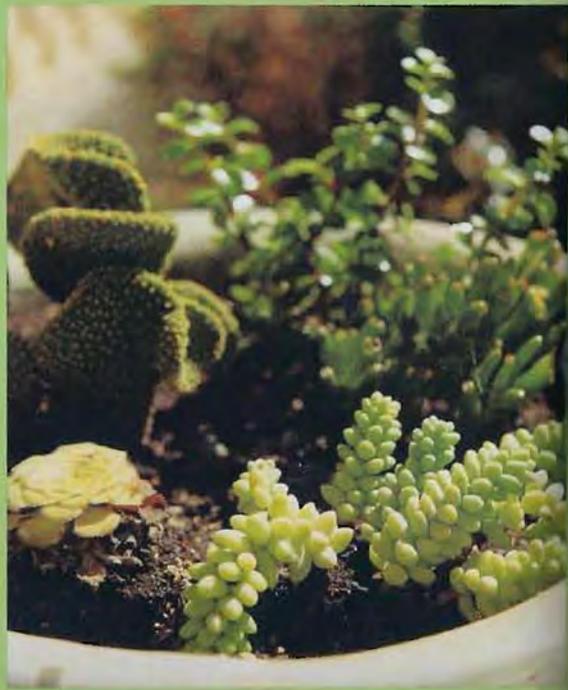
Porch-sitting, as it was called in the south, was a great way to interact with family and neighbors. The porch was considered the woman's domain and women often did many of their domestic duties while sitting on the porch. They could avoid the heat that had been trapped inside the house; socialize with other womenfolk in the neighborhood; and keep an eye on the children as they played.





How many episodes of the Andy Griffith Show took place from Andy's front porch? Opie and his friends ride their bikes while neighbors shout friendly hellos as they stroll by on their way to and from church. Aunt Bea rocks steady as she darns a pair of socks; Barney snoozes after a big Sunday dinner; and Andy strums his guitar as he relaxes after a long week of sheriffing. From Andy's porch, we fostered a sense of community, neighborliness, and the sanctity of private life.

In this way, the American porch is a reflection of American life. Connected body and soul to the land and nature, the porch is a bridge between the unpredictable elements of the great outdoors and the creature comforts of home. ■



A Family Gem on the Monte Sano Ridge

Written by Kimberly Ballard

Doug Owens and Richard Adams have owned many types of homes over the past 32 years, from beachfront bungalows to English-style manors and French chateaus. When Doug was transferred to Huntsville in 2007 as vice president of sales and marketing for Townhouse Galleries, they at first set their sights on something that blended into the southern tradition. Renovating an old southern mansion seemed to be the perfect fit. "We found an old mansion at a great price in foreclosure and had already claimed it as our own, when someone at the last minute outbid us," Doug

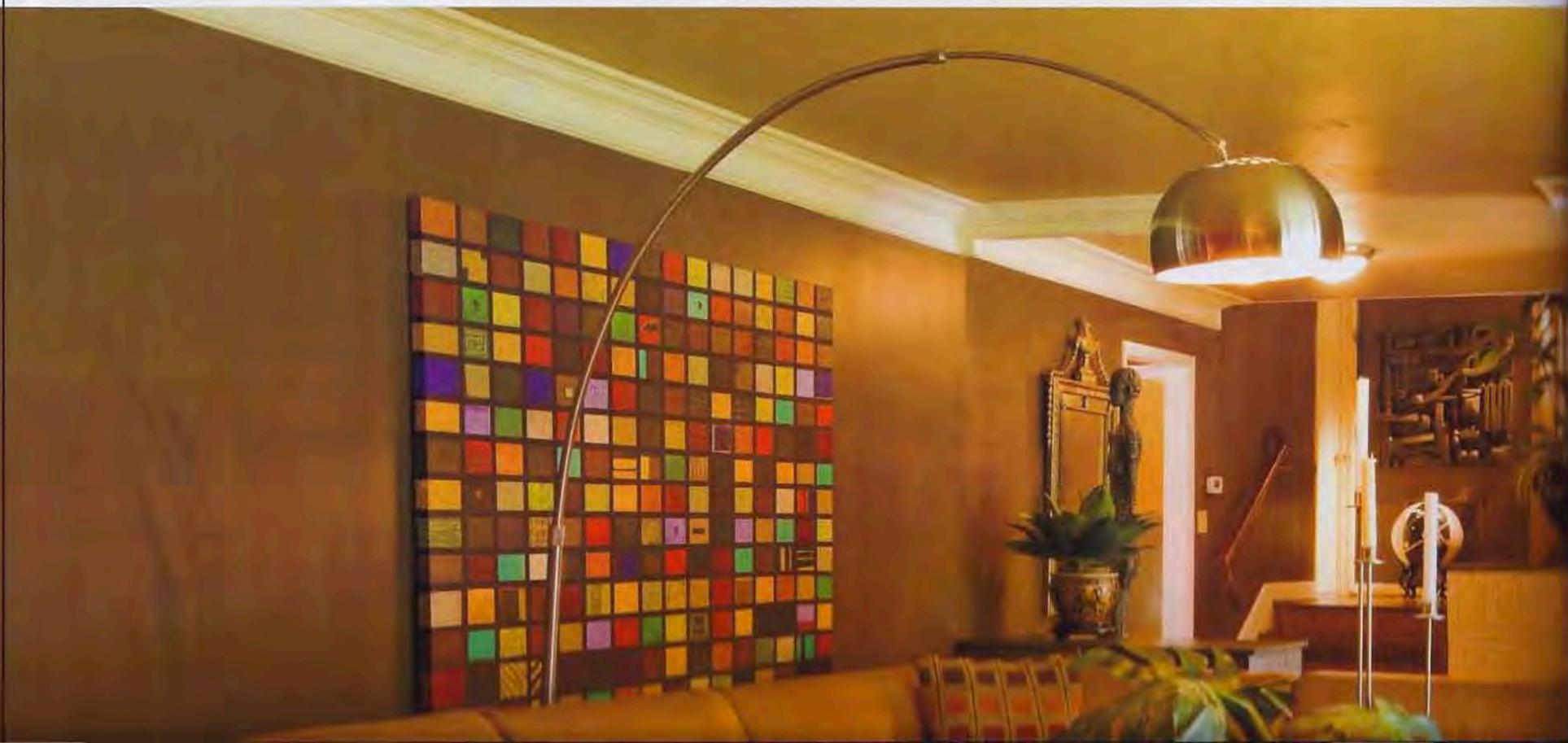
Photos by Chuck Mitchell

explains. A little disappointed, but reflecting on the extensive work that would have been required to restore the dusty old manor house, they changed course toward a house they had previously considered.

Located at 2302 Chambers Circle, halfway up the Bankhead Parkway along the Monte Sano Ridge, was the house that they would make their own. At first sight, the Chambers house was a 1960s-style split-level with heavy window treatments, hippie décor, and mod-squad shag carpeting - the spacious backyard even had

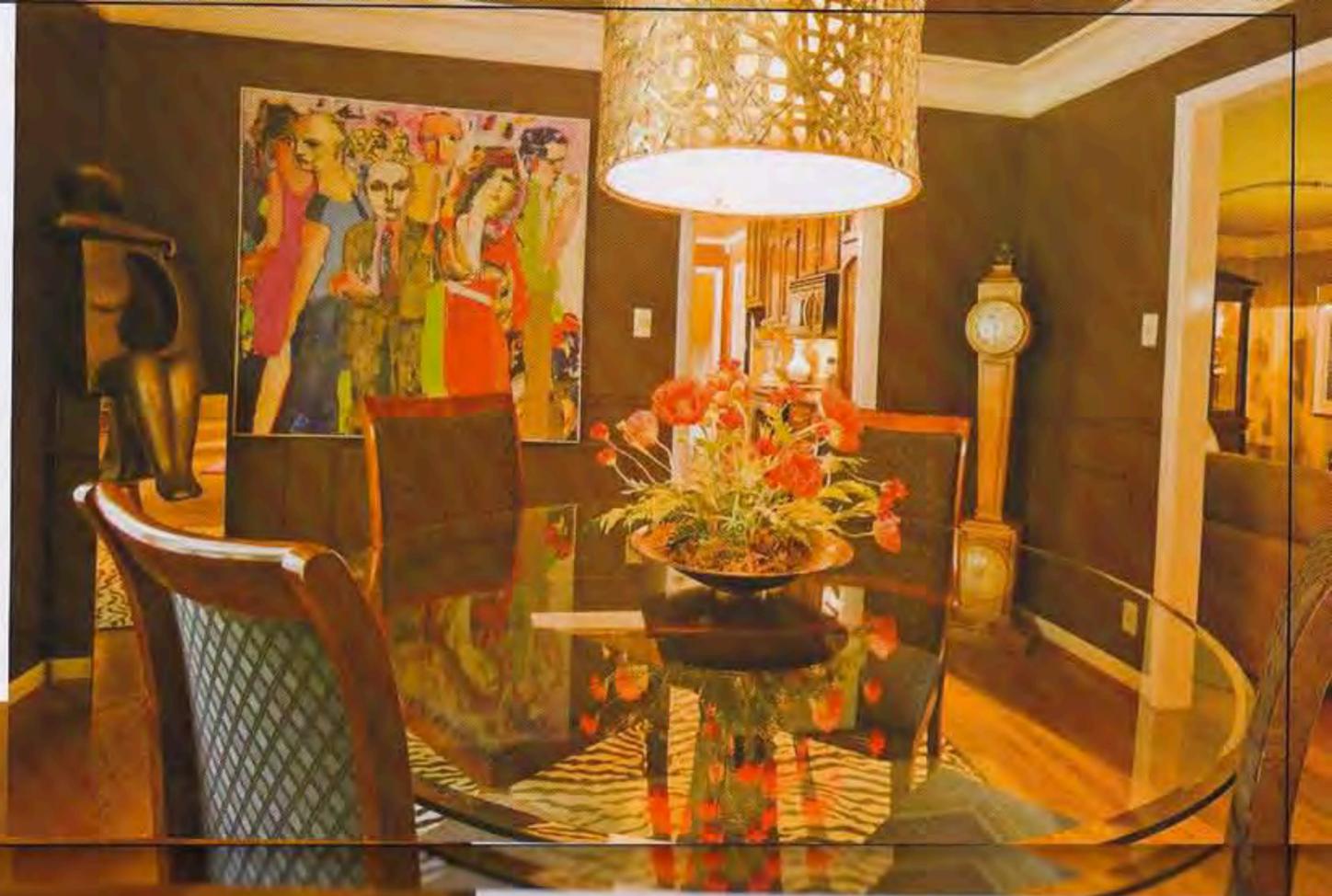
a tree house. "We wanted to go contemporary this time," Richard says. "It all had to go." With keen artistic eyes, the owners set about bringing to life their contemporary vision.

Today, the Chambers Circle house is a modern mixture of organic Frank Lloyd Wright and charming Southern Colonial. Its owners enjoy the abstract impressionist art style, and more than dabble in it themselves. They have completely transformed the house with Richard's bold, rich oils on canvas and Doug's Louise Nevelson



sculpture renditions. The house subtly flows upward or downward from graduating levels so no one ever has to climb stairs or descend into a darkened basement.

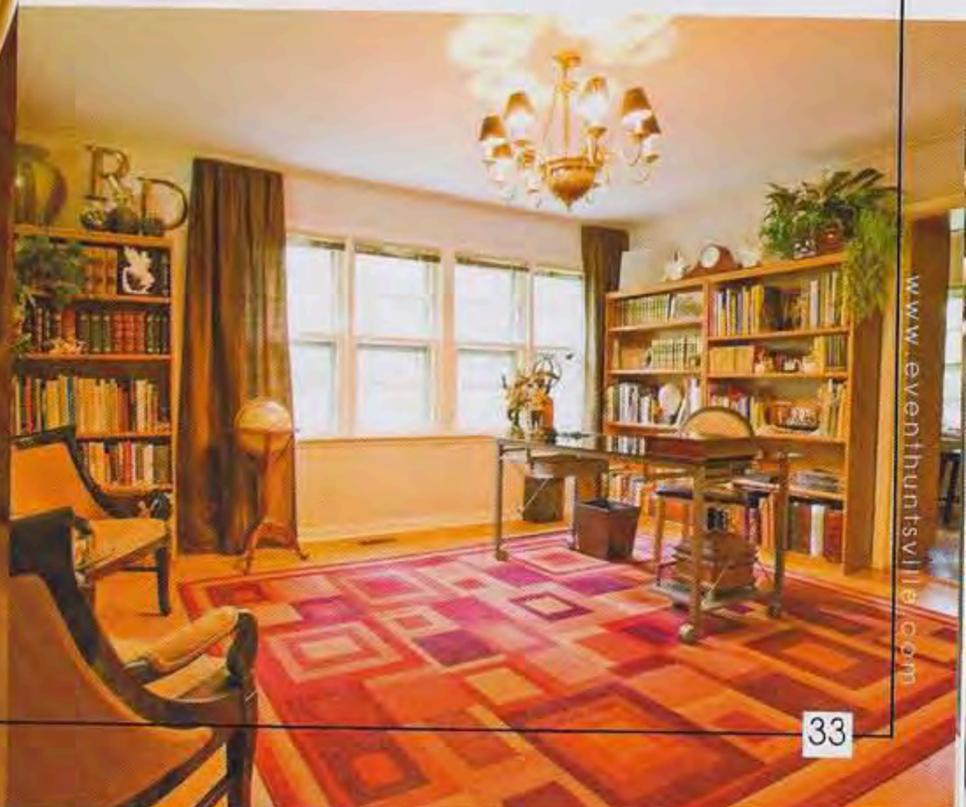
The lower level's high-tech media room with widescreen TV and cozy atmospheric lighting is anything but your typical '60s basement hangout. Off to the side sits a fully stocked artist's studio with all the oddities expected from *artistes* working in multimedia like broken furniture, reused metals, and paint. A flagstone terrace with soothing water fountain and a trellis-climbing rose



garden are the perfect setting for a garden party. The rest of the yard is more reminiscent of a local park than a residential backyard.

From the second level deck, a 320-foot waist-high dry-stacked rock wall surrounds the perimeter. Doug says, "You look at it now and it's hard to know how rocky this yard was. We didn't pick up those rocks and build that wall, we *dug* them up out of the ground so we could sod over the yard and build the textured landscape." Richard laughs, "One particularly hot day this summer, we stopped to rest for a minute. We were both muddy and sweaty, and Doug turned to me and asked, 'Why are we doing this again?'"

The reason is obvious now. The yard has strolling paths, outdoor morning and meditation rooms, textured landscaping, a Chinese privet, and Doug's spattering of welded metal creations. A former antiques dealer and



*“We wanted to go
contemporary this time
... it all had to go.”*

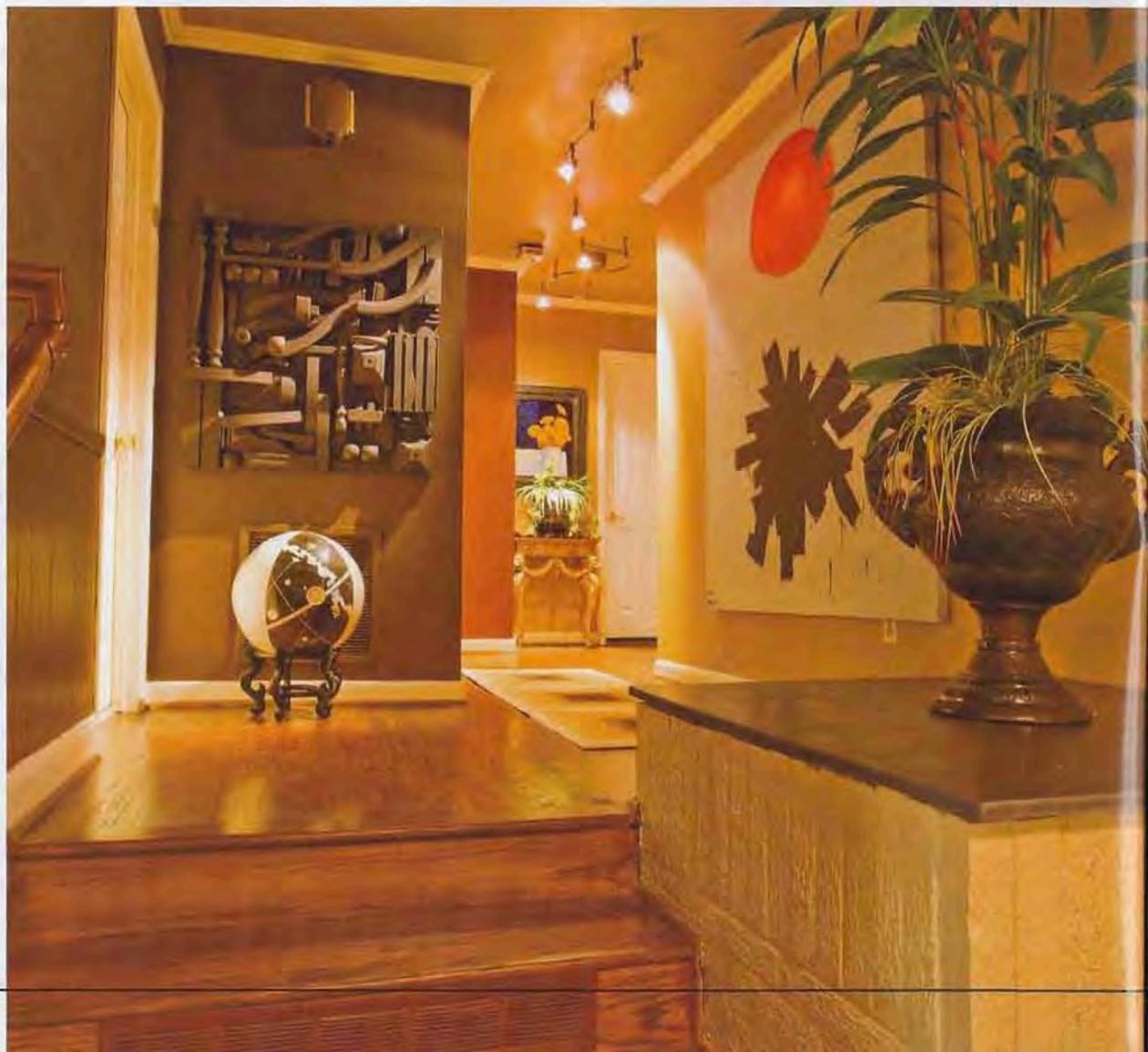


lifelong collector, Doug has a knack for making art out of what some may call broken-down junk. Its effect provokes thought and perspective.

On the upper level are four bedrooms large enough for king-size beds. Off the master suite is a walk-in closet that would make 007 weep. “This was another small bedroom,” Doug explains, “but we needed more closet space and didn’t need the bedroom.” The newly-created closet has, as a result, a special and unique feature - a window overlooking the back garden.

“The original master bath was peculiar,” Doug explains. “A wall with no purpose separated a vanity area from the bathroom. We pulled it down and made the master bath twice its original size and much more functional.”

“We replaced all the appliances in the kitchen and put in a 17-bottle wine refrigeration unit. A comfortable loveseat and table add social space, not for eating but for chatting, in the kitchen. “We do a lot of holiday entertaining and people migrate to the kitchen, where all the preparations are going on, and also because of the deck.”





Richard, who is a hair stylist at Dillards, says, "Coming up the mountain is just beautiful in the early evening, so peaceful. We enjoy entertaining and we have plenty of room to do so, but also, the house is comfortable and the neighborhood here off the mountainside is friendly. We have never looked back at buying this house."

There is an extraordinary circumstance surrounding the choice of this particular home. Doug's family connections to Huntsville date back to his grandfather, but months after the purchase of the house, family revealed an interesting tidbit. "We discovered my grandfather's stepbrother, Henry Brown, built this house in 1962. Uncle Henry was a homebuilder who built most of the houses in this area, which was a new subdivision at that time. It's funny, I left Huntsville at four years old and returned in my...well...the irony is hard to ignore!" ■





Breathtaking on Monte Sano

Written by Kimberly Ballard

Photos by Chuck Mitchell and Thor Harland



Perched on a panoramic outcrop atop Monte Sano Mountain, this newly constructed four-bedroom, three-and-a-half bath home has a breathtaking view overlooking Huntsville. Abutted on all sides by Monte Sano State Park, the grounds sit in the midst of a legendary neighborhood dating back to the 1950s when Wernher von Braun brought his team of German rocket engineers to Huntsville. Just finished last July, the house rests on the foundations of the former home of Otto Hirschler, the electronics and guided missile expert.

The original architectural plans for the new house called for an English Cottage style, with exposed beams and natural, earth tone stone. "To be honest, it sort of evolved

into more of a mountainside chateau with the great room's timber-frame construction," says builder, Steve West of Westmark Construction. "The exposed oak trusses and beams with oak columns and unbelievable setting make it a true mountain home." The oak timber columns are special cut and measured for the house.

The spacious kitchen features granite countertops with an intrinsic vein that blends naturally with the rock and quartz walls. Its pattern is so distinctive that the homeowner admits she avoids detracting from its surface by setting décor on the eating counter or the countertops. One night, after eating at downtown Huntsville's Cotton Row, they were so impressed with the décor that they requested

the name of the designer who created the restaurant's wine cellar and bar. "We immediately hired him to build our sideboard and wine galley," she says. The eating counter seats four comfortably for family casual dining, but a dining room adds a touch of formality for guests and special occasions. The kitchen opens onto an outdoor sunroom, worthy of weatherproof furniture that otherwise could serve as an indoor sitting or reading room.

The lavish master bedroom with its grand, four-poster bed is situated at ground level and features a bay window set out at angles with a bird's eye view of the city below. The palatial master bathroom has a fireplace and a grand bay window overlooking the water fountain in the side



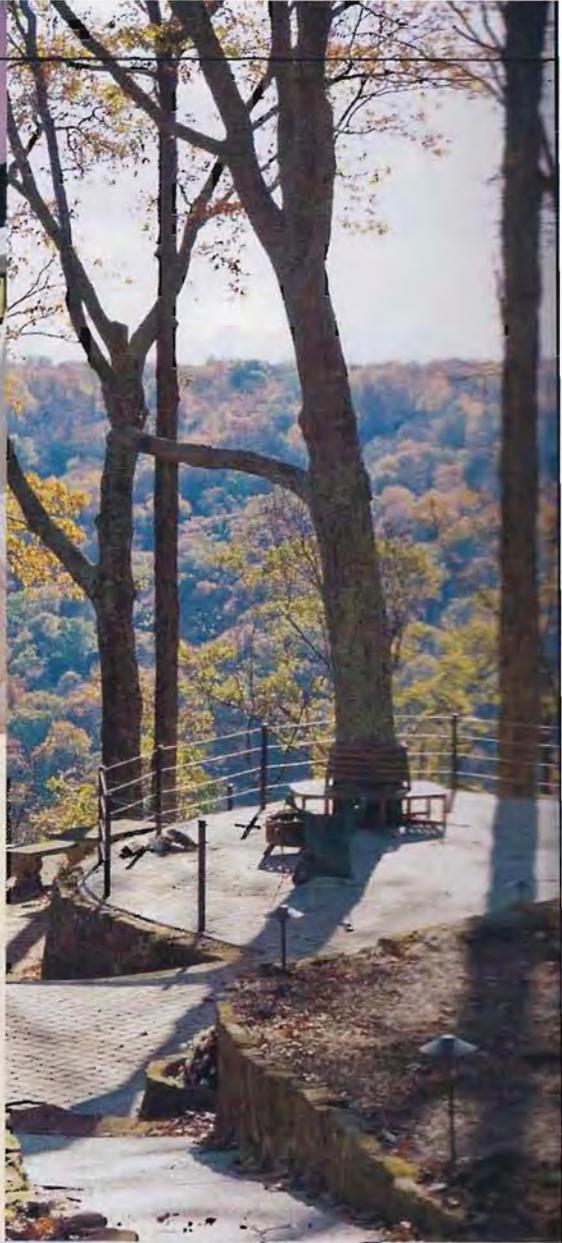


“ . . . “The exposed oak trusses and beams with oak columns and unbelievable setting make it a true mountain home.” ”

yard. Pointing towards the rear of the bathroom, “This is what I call our onyx ‘man-shower,’ the owner laughs, drawing attention to the high tech, walk-in shower with Kohler hardware built into the entire back wall.

Downstairs is a teenager’s paradise with what is virtually a private apartment within the home. A main media room with wide-screen TV and stereo equipment supported by the same custom cut oak pillars that are so prominent in the upstairs great room. The bottom level is completed with a wet bar and mini kitchenette. The patio has porch swings and a magnificent mountain view. A girly-girl room is decked out in purple and pure white in the front and the 2 boys’ rooms are on the opposite side separated by the Jack-and-Jill bathroom.





The new homeowners have salvaged some of the unique aspects of the exterior grounds, which bear the markings of the much talked about Monte Sano parties of the 1950s. “The Germans” were devotedly family-oriented in culture and their cookouts and social soirees on the mountain were infamous, if not a virtual catalyst to the brilliant ideas that led to their success. “Over seventy-five percent of the outside has been completely preserved,” West says. “We converted the old goldfish pond into a waterfall and fountain, maintaining the original statuary; brought everything up to current building code; installed modern irrigation systems; and used stucco to resurface the exposed concrete. But the walkways and even the walls are from the original design.” The “backyard”, which overlooks the city, is crisscrossed with walking paths that wind through gardens of foliage, and right at the edge of the cliff overhang is a landing with outdoor grilling facilities and outdoor kitchen, which have been renovated for use. ■





422 Locust:

More Than a House... A Family Home

Written by Kimberly Ballard

Photos by Chuck Mitchell

It was not common in 1917 for a widow to pack up her family following the death of her husband, and move them over 1,000 miles; however, that is what a resilient Helen Rublee Shaver did after her husband, Charles Edwin Shaver died. Shaver journeyed from Troy, New York to Huntsville, Alabama, where she then purchased a plot of land and boldly hired a contractor to build her a house.

Shaver, known lovingly as Nanny to her grandchildren Susie Harper and John Shaver, built an original bungalow-style house which, though remodeled in the 1950s, remains intact and has earned its historic *Shaver House* marker in Huntsville's downtown Twickenham district. When Susie and her husband Tommy moved into the house in 2005, they took every care to recycle building materials from the original house, to reinstate some of the original structure, and to salvage as much of the history of the house as possible.

Immediately noticeable upon approach to the house from the street is the lack of steps leading up onto a porch. *Shaver House*, built completely at ground level, is unique in that respect to that period. One also notes the customary Southern porch swing swaying gently in the breeze, and the thorny Jackson vines indigenous to North Alabama, transplanted from Susie's maternal grandmother's home off Holmes Avenue.

In the front living room, the Harpers exposed the original hardwood floors and refinished them, leaving a seam where the new floors begin at the hallway, the scar adding character to the old house. The original French-style doors across the front were replaced in the 1950 renovation,



but the Harpers installed energy-efficient replicas that recapture, as closely as possible, the original style. “These doors are not fully functional, but it isn’t necessary that they are,” Tommy explains.

Most old houses have that one odd room not found in modern architecture that confounds a contemporary. Bungalows like *Shaver House* have a “music-room” - a small, pocketed room designed to be closed off from, or opened into, an area for entertainment. “As a kid, I came in here to listen to the *Lone Ranger* on a big old radio with a lot of knobs,” John recalls.

Off the music-room lies the “little den.” It was originally a screened-in porch, but today it is a comfortable room with 9½-foot *tres* ceilings, accented by the original crown moldings from the front porch.

Along the corridor, the dining room lies off to the right where the Harpers opened a 5-ft. doorway, letting in more natural light and giving the room the appearance of being much larger.

What is it about a kitchen that gives it such warmth and character? In *Shaver House*, it is the natural brick wall exposed when the Harpers tore down the old cupboard installed in the 1950s. It gives the modernized kitchen with its marble island and granite countertops a quaint feel. “Look what we found when we took all this out,” says Susie as she raises a little door to a 12” x 12” cubbyhole tucked into the wall like a miniature dumbwaiter, barely noticeable underneath the cabinets at countertop level. “It was Nanny’s private little nook, hidden in the wall,” she marvels. How many secrets has it held?





“ . . . Indeed, it is those kinds of memories that make 422 Locust not just a house, but a family home.”

Just off the kitchen, the original house ended. Were it not for the “big den” the Harpers have built off the back of the house, it is easy to see that the house was originally quite small by comparison. This modern media room, with its big-screen HDTV, is graced at each entrance by open transoms. The beadboard from the old stairwell forms the wall behind the backless bookcases, and the mantle over the fireplace was physically moved from an old house in Paint Rock Valley in the 1970s. A bright and cheerful sunroom opens off the new room, and during the holidays is called the “Christmas Room” because the huge Christmas tree looks so natural there.



An entire suite of rooms including an office, plenty of storage spaces, a workroom, a bedroom, and a bath lie below in what was once the carport. There was also once a coal bin in the basement. "I could tell you some stories about getting into that coal bin as a kid..." John says, smiling.

The upstairs space is the perfect attic playroom, a result of the true bungalow-style features - the exterior low-slung roof, wide eaves, and dormered windows, the steeply slanting ceiling and series of rectangular roll-out windows strung along roof level. In fact, it would be so easy for a teenager to sneak out those windows onto the roof and crawl down a trellis, with no one any the wiser....

"It's been done before!" Susie and John nod knowingly. Indeed, it is those kinds of memories that make 422 Locust not just a house, but a family home. ■





Mountaintop Living
at the Ledges

#4 TURNBRIDGE LANE

Written By: Kimberly Ballard

Photos By: Chris Jensen



Atop the mountain ridge above Jones Valley sits an exclusive gated country club community, The Ledges. As you pass through the gates, head up the steep incline, and crest the hilltop, you feel as though you have happened upon a grand paradise of stately homes lying under the mists which surround Monte Sano at sunrise each morning.

The airy colonial at 4 Turnbridge Lane is the home of Wanda and Andrzej Przekwas. Wanda is the owner of the European Boutique here in Huntsville, while Andrzej is a physicist who owns his own company. Superb artisanship and Wanda's love for antiques are immediately evident upon entering the home.

Detailed crown moldings adorn each room, while wrought iron banisters frame the staircase. Antiques are beautifully displayed throughout the home, and the library features historical Civil War memorabilia including original photographs, art prints, and other collectibles.

The great room, kitchen, and sunroom areas offer comfortable living spaces which lend a feeling of warmth to the home. The great room, which serves as a primary living area, features antique Persian rugs and an antique German pendulum clock. The bright sunroom is perfect for reading or relaxing. The kitchen is graced by an English table, custom-built



cabinets with marble countertops, a cast-iron sink, and an island enhanced by a built-in wine cooler and wine rack. Wanda notes that the kitchen's two dishwashers greatly add to the home's hospitality. Between the kitchen and formal dining room, an outer pantry houses a full wet bar, while the inner pantry is a room unto itself.

Toward the rear of the home lies a unique feature not often seen in newer Southern homes, a mud room. Wanda notes that the mud room provides great in-and-out convenience for the family and their three dogs.

The home's upper level features three spacious bedrooms, including a palatial master suite. The master is decorated with hand-painted furniture and tapestries from Wanda's ancestral Poland, and boasts a Grecian-style bath. A second-story balcony overlooking the city is a wonderful place for morning coffee or nighttime stargazing.

Wanda expresses that she and Andrzej were in the process of building a home when they found 4 Turnbridge Lane and became enamored: "When we looked at this house, we bought it and sold the one we were building!" Needless to say, 4 Turnbridge Lane is a treasure in Huntsville's mountain mist.



The Preserve *at* Clayton Pond

Written by Kimberly Ballard

Photos by Doug Smoot



Atop Green Mountain, sitting amidst undeveloped natural woodlands and pristine forest, is an exclusive 66-acre gated mountainside community called The Preserve at Clayton Pond. This quiet development in southeast Huntsville is so recent it doesn't yet show up on a GPS device. There are only a couple of houses there so far, and according to Diana Foroughi, The Preserve's soon-to-be resident, there are no more than 50 select, luxury homes planned for the future. "I used to come up here where it was so peaceful and beautiful and think how marvelous it would be to build a house here," says Foroughi.



Keller Williams agent. Now she and her husband, Danesh Foroughi, of Stonecraft Construction and Imagine, Inc., own half of the development. "This house was originally built as a spec home, but it definitely has my personal touches, so yes, I guess I always knew it would be mine."

Tucked into a cul-de-sac on Spring Haven, this 5 bedroom, 4-1/2 bath castle-like home has a contemporary layout. Richard Cable, of Richard Cable Interiors, designed and furnished the house with its infusion of classical French, English, and

Italian architecture and furnishings. "The style is aged European with its classical columns, floating piano balcony, solid eight-foot poplar doors set into arched doorways, and three-dimensional brick and stone octagonal turret rooms," he says. The formal dining room is set off from the entrance foyer and great room by the use of dark cherry wood inset flooring along the outer edges. "We then used a herringbone flooring pattern in white oak, which is fluidly French, in order to eliminate the need for a rug," says Cable. Above the dining room table is an oval-shaped lowered soffit painted by local decorative

artist, Ricky Sauls, who did most of the artistic faux décor throughout the house. This intriguing ornamental highlight to the dining room is a masterpiece of elegance.

Yet, in spite of its old-world grace, Spring Haven does not hesitate to boast its 21st Century conveniences and structure. Danesh Foroughi is one of Huntsville's most progressive builders, specializing in Insulating Concrete Forms (ICF) construction, and foam-spray insulation to build highly energy-efficient homes. ICF is a technique that provides a sturdy structure





that will outlast most homes, while providing amazing insulation against exterior noise and stabilization of room temperature. The house uses argon-filled Marvin Integrity windows deep-set with indoor ledges that can be used for seating or decoration. They are soundproof with thermal resistance to maintain room temperature and prevent dangerous UV rays penetrating indoors.

This home goes beyond the average gourmet kitchen with its oil-rubbed bronze faucets, pullout microwave oven, built-in coffee and tea center, and pot filler installed over the stove. This kitchen displays a technological cooking wonder, the Thermador high-induction hybrid stovetop that boils water in 90 seconds but never gets hot to the touch. "It uses a magnetic field that only responds to metal," Danesh explains.

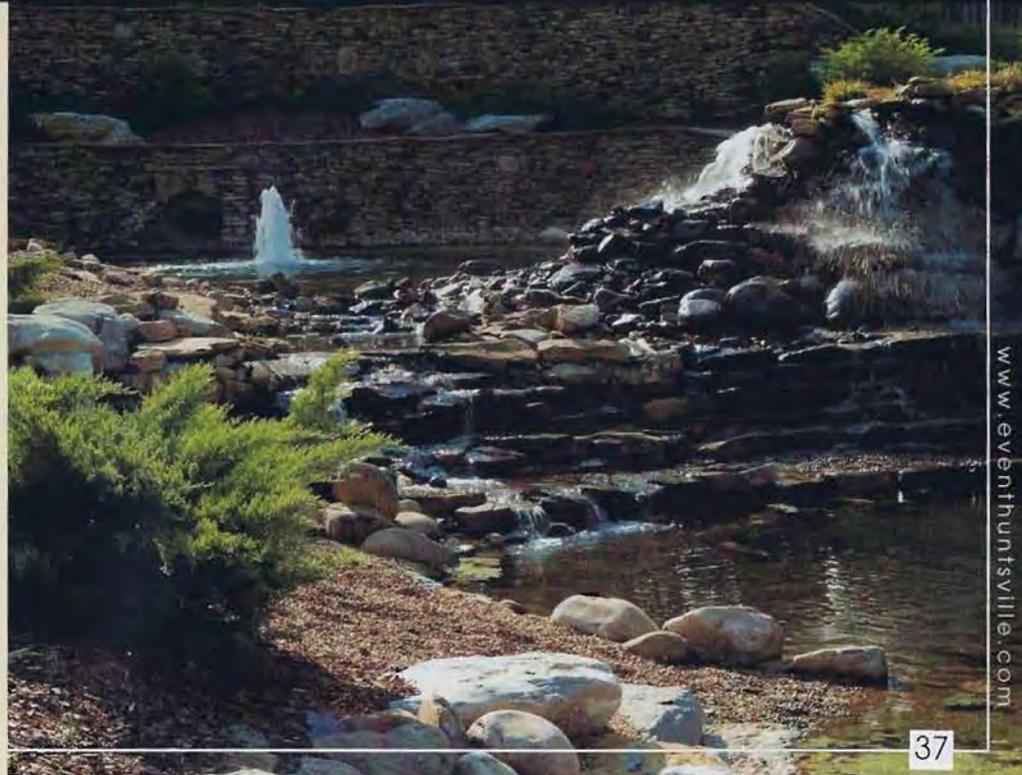




Upstairs is a mother-in-law's suite with an elevator and gas-burning fireplace overlooking the backyard and flagstone patio. Jack and Jill bathrooms separate two additional bedrooms and a home theatre and media room with chaise seating and a mini kitchenette with full wet-bar facilities make for a self-contained suite on the second floor.

The downstairs master suite has a sitting area with bay windows overlooking the patio and his and her walk-in closets complete with modular organizing systems. The master bath, like the rest of the baths and the laundry room, features Versailles flooring tiles cut in varying sizes and the shower is built of all natural tumbled marble with massage, hand-held, and an overhead rain showerhead.

Spring Haven looks much like a romantic castle sitting against a backdrop of rustic woodland and forest that is simply splendid! ■





Twickenham Charm with an Artistic Twist

517 EUSTIS

Written by: Kimberly Ballard
Photos by: Chuck Mitchell

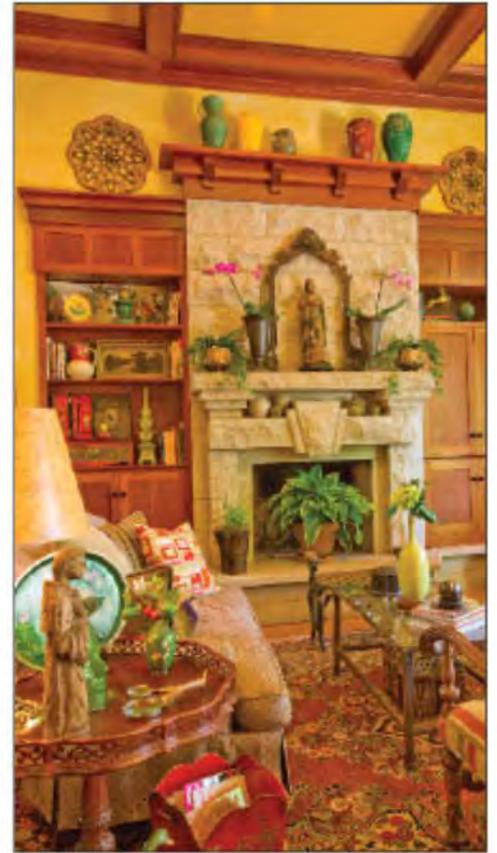


Huntsville's historical districts boast eclectic architecture, with Southern antebellum homes, Victorian Italianates, and Federal-style estate homes standing side-by-side. Along Eustis Avenue, American bungalows line the neighborhood. Adapted in 1696 from India's *bungalos* by English sailors of the East India Company, the traditional bungalow style is represented by houses which feature a wide covered porch, a low-slung roof and wide eaves, and dormered windows. Designed for efficiency with the living space on the ground floor, the style exemplifies simple living, but its adaptability begs an artist's touch. Raymond and Allyson Kirkpatrick own the Baugh bungalow at 517 Eustis, built in 1913.

Set amidst 200-year-old pecan trees and draped with Jackson vines, the Kirkpatrick bungalow is an ambitious transformation of a historic home into a medley of sophistication, comfort, nostalgia, and charm. "They say renovating these old houses is a money pit, and there is truth to that sentiment if you are not committed to the cause," Allyson Kirkpatrick says. "There was nothing standard, even for the early twentieth century, about this house."

Visitors enter through a breezy covered veranda, where they are welcomed by Bandit, the Kirkpatricks' black Labrador retriever. With the front door thrown open, the veranda feels like an extension of the living room with heirlooms, artifacts, and whimsical touches. Stepping inside, visitors are beckoned by the inviting view of a huge room with a gigantic fireplace at the back of the house, and numerous *objets d'art* along the way. Allyson, an antiques dealer by profession, is always "on the hunt" for pieces, finding treasure in abandoned attics, estate sales, or even in items left over from a demolition. "Everything in this house is always in motion," she says. "Antiques do not have to be old; sometimes they are just used. It isn't about their age, it's about their character."

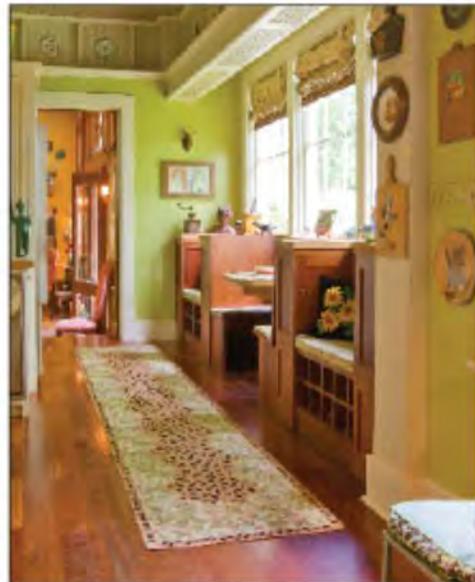
To the right of the living room is a cheerful dining room where a mirrored *trumeau* graces the wall. In the living room, an authentic Japanese screen fits beautifully among the hand-painted cabinets, curios, and oil paintings from different periods. The coffered ceilings are high and airy, and the windows, treated with textured fabric balloon shades, claim the light as their own.

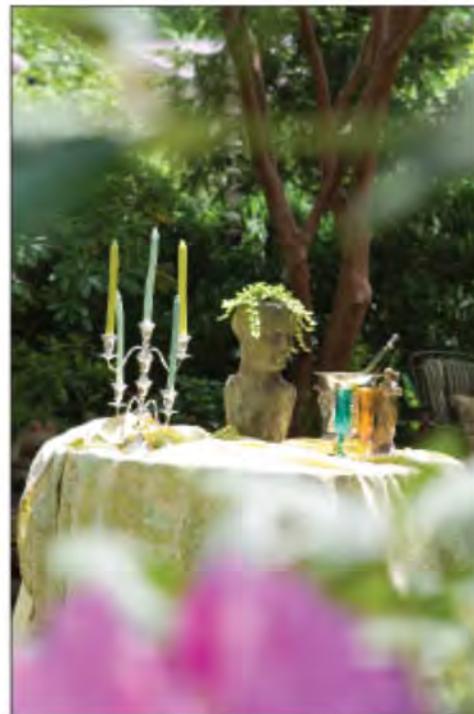
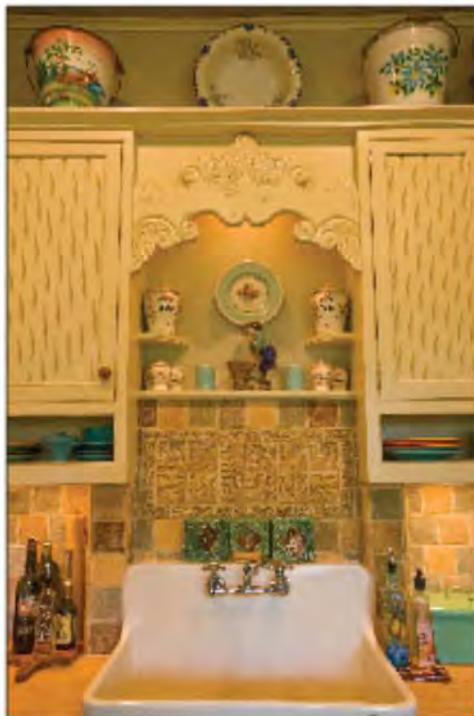


Passing from room to room, the bungalow lacks hallways and corridors. Allyson explains, "It is part of the bungalow style to have sliding doors pocketed away between the rooms. You can easily make the room larger by sliding back a door, or close off a room for privacy by sliding the door shut."

Off the living room stands the library, a warmly decorated room with the cozy feel of a family den. In front of the loveseat sits a weathered travel trunk, a family heirloom from the World War II era. Off the library is one of the bungalow's six bathrooms, where modern style mixes with original fixtures.

Across the middle of the house is a unique kitchen. "For structural reasons, we had to maintain a support wall, so we designed the kitchen two-sided with one side for clean-up and the other side for cooking," Allyson says. The kitchen features butcher-block countertops, two sinks, two stoves, and a breakfast nook designed by Jane Bice. Built-in seating and a booth *à la* country diner overlook the backyard, while a larger eating bar opens to the center of the house. Adjacent to the eating bar are a music room and new great room, while a stairway leads upstairs to the half-storied master bedroom.





Having arrived at the back of the original structure, visitors stand in the archway of the bungalow's newest addition, a grand yet livable room whose features bring to mind the Ahwahnee Lodge at Yosemite National Park. Allyson had a vision for how she wanted the add-on to look, but considered many ideas to get it just right. "I found the perfect working concept in a picture of the Ahwahnee's main hall," Allyson said. A massive fireplace built from limestone quarried in Oneonta graces the high back wall, and secreted off to the left is a small office. A stairway leads upstairs to a separate bedroom. Curving up the stairs are two disparate windows. Allyson says, "I knew I could find a place for them where their lack of symmetry would work, and here it is."

The new great room flows out onto the back patio, an area that must have made famous the traditional afternoon tea, expertly landscaped with many shrubs and bloomers. Viewing the home from the patio, it is hard to tell where old ends and new begins.

Allyson and her business partner Kathy DeHollander are experts at turning a design challenge into a masterpiece of artisanship, style and originality. In addition to their joint venture with Bella Designs Home Décor & Property Staging, they have an antiques booth at Railroad Station Antique Mall. Meanwhile, Allyson continues to pursue her passion for home décor. ■



Dazzling & Bejeweled on Churchill Drive

Written by Kimberly Ballard

Photos by Chuck Mitchell

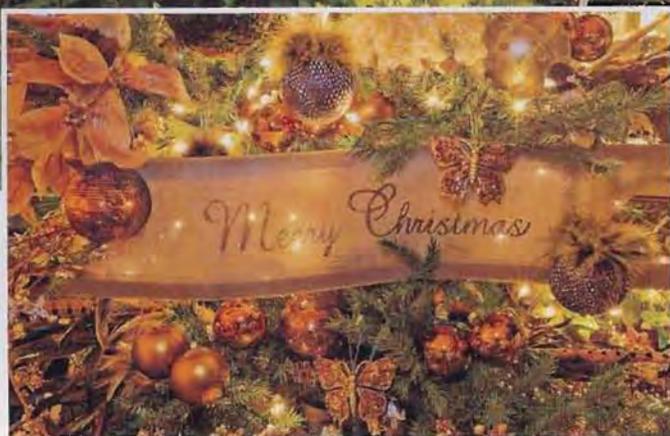
Formerly known as the “Taco Bell house” at 2700 Churchill Drive, the house looks nothing like the fast-food chain stores. The nickname merely differentiated its distinctive Spanish adobe architecture from the typical Southern federal-style homes more indigenous to Huntsville. An eccentric former Miss Guatemala built the house in 1974 with its arched doorways, high stucco walls, lofty ceilings, and Spanish tile floors. At the time, the house was decorated in a minimalist style.

Years later, Stephanie married its new owner, Steven Hogan. “He was a bachelor when we met, and the house needed a warm woman’s touch,” Stephanie recalls. The newlyweds set about remodeling, and the

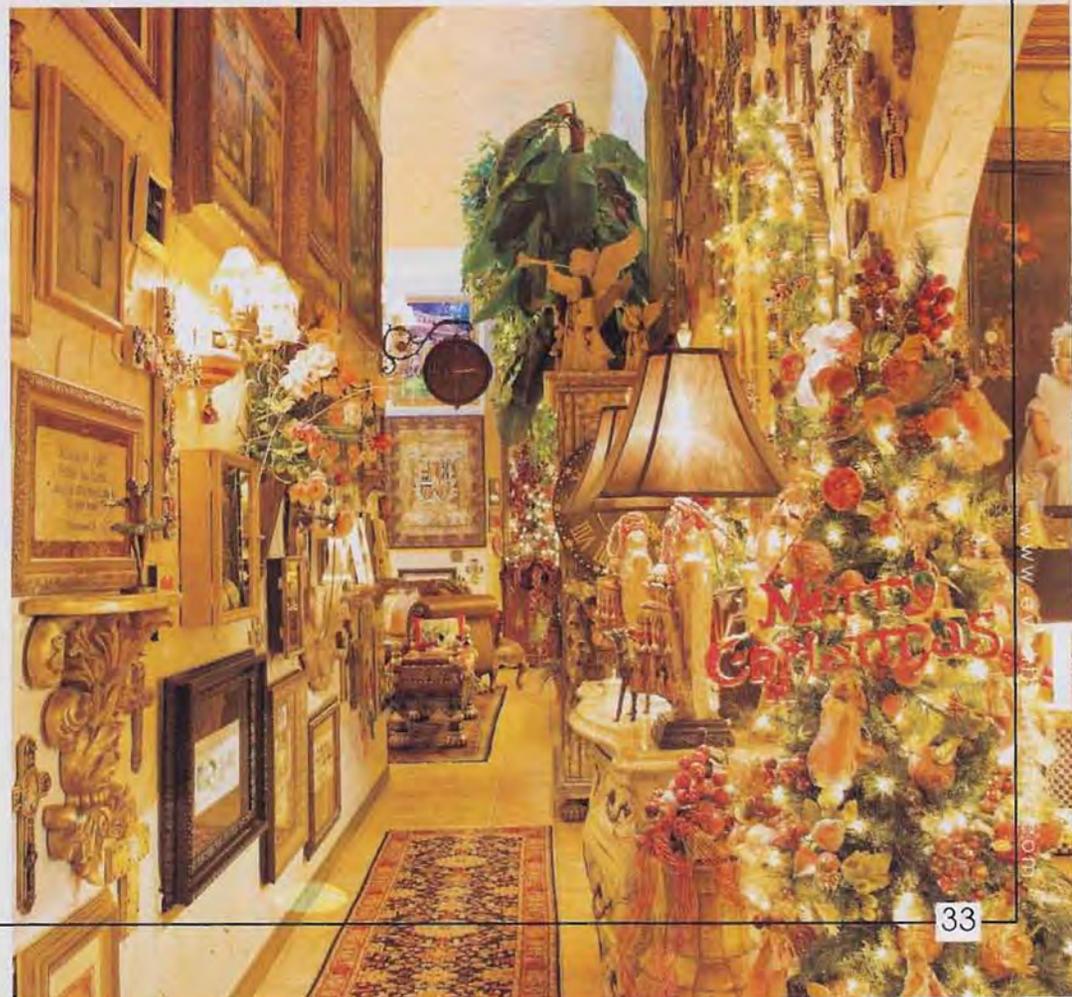
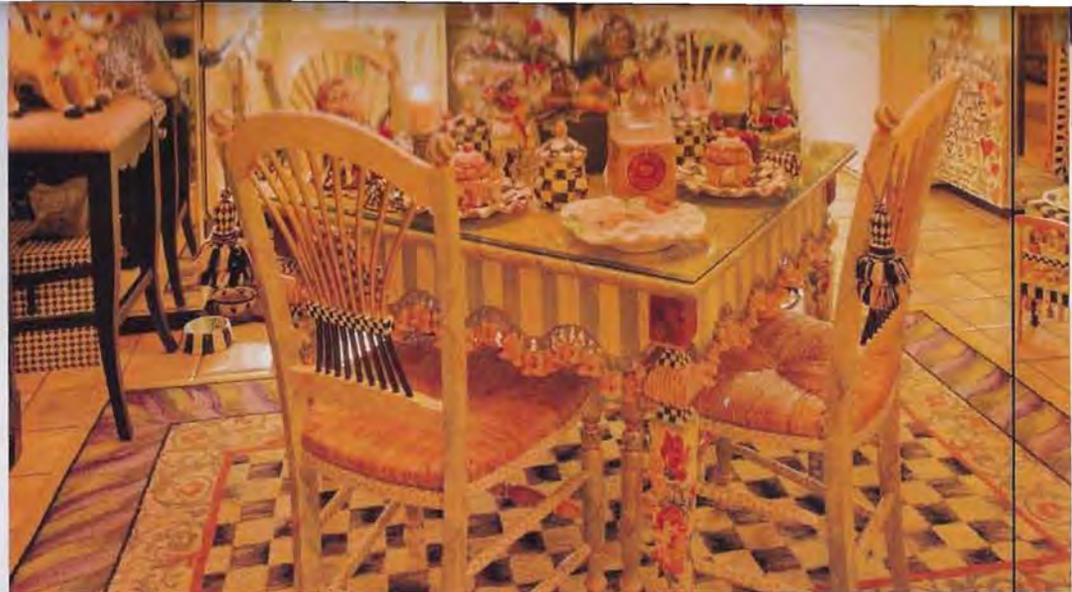
result is a sprawling 6,000-square-foot home with four bedrooms and four baths, a media room, an art studio, a game room, an office-style study, a sunroom, comfortable living and dining rooms, and a “keeping room” off the kitchen.

When Steve was tragically killed in a plane crash in 2005, Stephanie kept the house as a perpetual work in progress. “I tried to decorate in a less busy style with more symmetry, you know, like the Pottery Barn with its clean lines – but the eclectic artist in me won’t allow it. I believe our lives have the most meaning when we pay attention to the details.”

Indeed, details abound in this bejeweled home. The young widow found a way to capture and immortalize every aspect of her life with husband Steve and their 5-year-old daughter, Sophia, as well as her loves for dancing, musical theatre, beauty pageantry, family and philosophy. Her more recent experiences as a contender on TV’s *The Bachelor* are also reflected. Stephanie captures memories by displaying them for the world to see in the form of photographs, handmade crafts, or what may look like worthless trifles. “Around here, when it breaks, we superglue it back together. It’s the memory of the thing that is priceless, and not the monetary value.”



A circular drive delivers guests to the massive front door inlaid with leaded glass. A meditation room with verdigris table and chairs sits among the shade trees in front. An anteroom provides a place to hang up a coat before entering the main house. Stephanie's passion for crucifixes shows throughout the home, but the strong wall along the entry hall is teeming with them. Many of these are handmade with discarded jewelry, trinkets, and mementos.



HAVEN



A warm and inviting study lies off the foyer, and the “safari room,” dressed in exotic animal prints that call to mind Stephanie’s desire to go on an African safari, provides a relaxing den atmosphere with plush pillows and cozy furnishings. A formal living room and dining room accommodate family get-togethers, and this holiday season, Stephanie has over twenty Christmas trees of varying styles throughout the house, including one in the shape of a reindeer.

Company naturally migrates towards the keeping room, an informal area off the kitchen where historically, women could keep an eye on children at play while preparing meals. Today it is a richly decorated sitting room snuggled up to an elaborately ornamented fireplace and mantel, overflowing with gold garland and holiday decorations. Standing in its midst are sculptures of the Three Wise Men, bringing peace for the Yuletide. A cut glass mosaic



created by Stephanie adorns the grate and reads, "Wise men shall seek Him."

Paintings in baroque frames, more profuse than a museum gallery, adorn every inch of wall space while greenery and baubles spill over from decorative urns onto every tabletop. The keeping room opens onto a large, festive kitchen and breakfast room with spacious natural stone countertops, hand-painted cookware and colorful dishes. Everywhere are Stephanie's handmade creations. Hand-painted tables, desks, dressers and chests find a place in every room and along the hallways.

A massive carved four-poster canopy bed draped with ornaments dominates the master bedroom, and the master bathroom is a romantic *tour de force* with a long marble vanity with double sinks, a shower built of pure natural stone so water naturally glides off its surface, and a heated floor.



A converted balcony, now a glassed-in sunroom overlooking the backyard, glistens in the sunlight. Here are Stephanie's Carole Forêt photographs of Sophia just weeks old. An outdoor spiral stair leads up to the third floor lookout facing west over the city. The backyard has a swimming pool and hot tub perched on a raised dais, Sophia's fancy new tree house, a cabana room for outdoor living, and a wishing well crowned with a gigantic statue of the Graces.

An unused nursery awaits and one door down is a fairytale guestroom. Sophia's room, once two tiny rooms at the back of the house, is now one big fanciful room with two twin beds. Downstairs features the Soda Pop Art Studio and Ice Cream's Game Room. Floor lighting guides you through corded red velvet curtains into the Cupeake Cinema (media room). All of these are named by Sophia after her three Boston terriers: "Soda Pop," "Cupeake," and "Ice Cream."