

TRADING SPACES

BY LINDA H. LAMB » PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAY BROWNE

A Columbia couple surrenders to the simplicity of downsized living

When Bill and Sally McWilliams decided it was time to downsize from their large family home in Heathwood, their three grown sons were not crazy about the idea. Then again, Bill and Sally pointed out, the kids usually weren't around anymore when the pool needed cleaning or the vast yard needed mowing.

So the couple plunged into a planning and building project for the next phase of their lives – a scaled-down but still luxurious home on Lakeview Circle off Trenholm Road. Though it's an “empty nest,” it is full of memories, because they're still surrounded by cherished objects from a lifetime of travel and collecting.



"I think about every 15 years, your needs change," Sally McWilliams said, reflecting on family transitions.

"When your children are little, you need a certain kind of house. When you have teenagers, you need something different."

"We don't have a basketball goal here." What the McWilliams's have is an elegant new 3-bedroom, 3.5-bath house in a cluster of zero-lot-line homes. That means one side of each house is a windowless wall set right on the property line. The idea is to maximize use of the lot, minimize upkeep chores and retain a good measure of privacy.

Facing the windowless wall of their next-door neighbor, the entrance to the McWilliams home features a long porch paved in Pennsylvania bluestone. Comfy swivel chairs face a low, bubbling fountain and arched trellises planted with Confederate jasmine. It's a perfect place to grill or just enjoy a glass of wine in the evening.

The bluestone continues into the entryway, where you can't miss the painting that inspired the home's color scheme.

Bill and Sally bought the painting, a mostly abstract, minimalist still life, on one of their trips to France. Set by the artist in a rustic frame, it glows with warm shades of blue and cream.

"Bill showed it to me and said those were the colors they wanted in the house," said designer Karen Menge, ASID, a part-owner of Pulliam-Morris Interiors. "They wanted it to be lighter and brighter than their other house."

Any design project has challenges, but one thing Menge never had to worry about was what to put on the walls here.

"They love to collect art, and it was important to them," she said.



"When your children are little, you need a certain kind of house. When you have teenagers, you need something different." – Sally McWilliams

Indeed, everywhere you look in the McWilliams home, you see art and memories. There are family portraits, landscapes, seascapes, and colorful contemporary paintings, including some works by the McWilliams' son Andrew. Each has a story, whether it was purchased in Columbia or on a trip to France, New Orleans, Maine or Santa Fe, Anchoring the living room is "Coming Home," a striking painting of an egret in flight by Betsy Havens. That one was purchased in a Pawleys Island shop.

Sally McWilliams credits a team of professionals with helping to create a scaled-down space that still felt elegant and homey. The team included architect Tim Hance, builder Dwight Williams and landscape architect Elizabeth Rice.

The living room is a good example of the effort to honor the couple's traditions while tweaking their traditional tastes. Most of the furnishings came from their Heathwood home, where hues of brown, rust and blue dominated. But new fabrics make this room lighter and

brighter. For example, cozy, rust-colored chairs were reupholstered in a buttery yellow and gray toile print. A wall unit displays cherished blue and white china collected over 31 years of marriage.

An heirloom table behind the new sofa doubles as a spot where Sally can sit with her laptop or address mail. (Double-duty pieces are important when you're downsizing, Menge said.) Painted beams and beadboard add interest to a cream-colored ceiling. And four sets of tall French doors – custom made by Southern Custom Doors of Lugoff – beautifully frame the porch and fountain.

The dining room and kitchen posed a challenge because they're along the home's windowless wall. Menge created a warm, burnished glow in the dining room by using padded panels of fabric with a rich, golden pattern. The long, traditional table remains, but with chairs reupholstered to reflect the new, lighter color scheme. The kitchen is brightened by sleek white cabinetry, cheery blue and white

tiles, and lighting enhanced with Sun Tube skylights.

"My kitchen is much smaller," said Sally, who had to give up a set of china and some small appliances.

"Basically, I'm real happy with the way things are," she said.

In the master bedroom, the McWilliams's opted to forgo their massive rice bed for a less-dominating traditional model. Their bright floral spread was replaced with a beige one with subtle blue trim – again, carrying through the colors of that first painting. There are ample his-and-hers closets on the way to the luxurious master bath, which features a heated floor and a large marble shower.

Upstairs are two more bedrooms and a walk-in attic for storage. And the McWilliams' toddler grandson has his own crib in a cozy space that originally was slated to be a large closet. Bill McWilliams has curtailed his dermatology practice somewhat, and enjoys more golf now that mowing the grass only takes five minutes. Sally keeps busy with family, church and volunteer work, glad that they're still close to their old neighborhood. "All our friends are here," she said.

Menge said the McWilliams home is an example of the right way to downsize.

"You have to scale back," she said. "But you still want the things around you that you love."

Blue Moon: (clockwise from far left) Dark woods prevail in the master bedroom but are balanced by soft colors. The neutral kitchen comes alive with the patterned blue wall tile. A shady porch offers respite from the midday sun.



New Digs: The McWilliams' newly built home with a stucco and brick facade and intricately laid tile in the driveway for a modern look.

The Marketplace on Meeting

Furniture, Interiors, Lighting, Jewelry
"Unique Affordable Finds"



550 Meeting St., W. Columbia, SC
Mon-Sat 10-5:30 ~ Sun 1-30-5:30

803-794-1000



DOWNSIZING TIPS

Advice from Sally McWilliams and designer Karen Menge:

» Face it: You'll have to toss out and give away some of your stuff. You might be surprised at the serenity you feel when your life is less cluttered.

» Think hard about what you really need and the things you really use. Does it make sense to have a whirlpool tub, for example, when you almost never get into it?

» Aim for a lower-maintenance lifestyle. Lawn care is a breeze when all you have to do is spread an occasional fresh layer of pine straw.

» Are you hoping this will be your last house? Think ahead to your senior years and include features such as wide doorways and wheelchair-accessible design.

» Do save and use cherished art and objects that make a place feel like home. Keep the things that mean the most to you. ■



Light and Bright: (top) Patterned panels adorn the dining room walls for a warm and cozy setting. (left) The master bath is bright and cheery. (right) A cozy sitting area in the Pennsylvania bluestone tiled foyer.

the frame shop
Custom Picture Framing

Custom Framing ~ Local Artists' Works
Unusual & Beautiful Art Objects



www.TheFrameShopSC.com

3100 Rosewood Drive
Columbia, SC 29205

803-256-1601