



A formal stone fireplace is the focal point in Sharon and Steve Bryant's living room. The polished surface of this mosaic backsplash (right) adds a sleek touch to the traditional room, while the curved balcony above softens the vertical space.

GETTING IT RIGHT

In building their new house, the Bryants relied on life experiences. They already knew what didn't work, and they reveled at the chance to get everything just right. With help from professionals, and a fabulous site on the lake, they got an even better house than they had envisioned. Text: Katie McElveen. Photography: Jay Vaughan. Architects: Catalyst Architects. Interior Design: Pulliam-Morris. Builder: McGuinn Construction. Cabinets: James Bouleware. Faux painting: Charles Stevens. Landscaping: Grimball-Cotterill and Associates.

After more than half a dozen renovations, tweaks and updates to the 1960s one-level ranch they'd lived in for more than 20 years, Steve and Sharon Bryant of Columbia decided that if they were going to get the house they wanted, they were going to have to start from scratch.

The trouble was that most of the new homes they'd seen lacked the character that makes older homes so special. "We basically wanted a new-old house," explains



Sharon, Executive Vice President with First Citizens Bank. "New in its ability to accommodate our lifestyle, but old in that warm, comfortable old-house kind of way." To help the design team at Catalyst Architects in Lexington with the task before them, the couple made a list of elements they wanted the house to possess.

At the top of the list was to position the dining room in the center of the



house. "I'd seen that at a friend's house and loved it," recalls Sharon. Second, since the lot overlooked a lake rimmed by a golden marsh, the house needed to take full advantage of the view. "It was important to us to bring the outside in as much as we could, not only through great views and outdoor living spaces but through the use of stone and other natural materials," she continues. "We also knew right from the start that we wanted something more like a mountain house than a colonial. That's more our style."

Armed with the Bryants' vision, architects Wayne Rogers and Heather Stallworth got to work. One look at the Gregg Park home, and it's clear that they succeeded in all areas. The exterior, which artfully mixes a natural stone foundation with brown brick and a wide, welcoming front porch, is at once elegant and understated. "We borrowed design elements from several styles," notes Stallworth. "The sweeping roof line and massive columns have a Tudor feel, while the Craftsman-influenced



stacked stone makes it harmonious with its surroundings."

Inside, the eye is drawn immediately through the dining room to the view of the lake. "We were so excited about the way the dining room turned out," says Heather. "It's a beautiful focal point with an incredible backdrop." The dining room has four entry points—front, back, and both sides—which makes it the true center of the house. A large covered porch complete with an outdoor kitchen spans the rear, which further accents the serene setting.

Beyond the dazzling placement of the dining

room, the overall layout of the house is ingenious. Of particular interest is the L-shaped master suite. Located on one end of the house, its private balcony shares a stone fireplace with the porch, which wraps around the living room side of the house. Anchored at the other end by an intimate den that serves as a cozy nook for Steve and Sharon, the bedroom is private, yet not totally removed from the rest of the house. In

As seen from the front door, an archway leads from the foyer to the dining room, framing the view of the lake beyond. Intricate tile accents the entry. Located in the center of the house, the Bryant's dining room is open to the kitchen, foyer and living room. An elegant table setting, unique floral arrangements, and hand-painted wallpaper add considerable panache to the room.

addition to a nice library, the den accommodates Steve's computer. He is the CEO of SYSTEMTEC, Inc., which provides information technology services throughout the Carolinas.

As in most homes, the kitchen is a favorite gathering place for the whole family. Both Sharon and Steve like to cook, and they love to entertain. The spacious, well designed kitchen, with its granite-topped island and state-of-the-art appliances, is a joy to work in, Sharon says. Windows sparkle over the breakfast table that overlooks the lake.

The children have their own space too. A game room, well away from the "adult" section of the house—but still close to the kitchen—is a perfect spot for daughter Paige and son Peyton (when he's home from college) to entertain friends. Upstairs, Paige and Peyton's bedrooms each open onto a Jack and Jill bathroom. Paige has her own study room as well, where she can work on her computer and watch television. "I just don't like the idea of a television in the bedroom," says Sharon. "This was a good compromise."

A full basement, complete with a TV room for the boys and freezer space for the loot from Steve's hunting expedi-

tions, rounds out the space.

Pam Plowden, ASID, the Pulliam-Morris designer who pulled the look of the house together, worked closely with Rogers and Stallworth to ensure that the design and the architecture complimented each other. "With so many organic touches like stone, exposed beams, copper gutters and bronze lanterns, you need the house to look like it's been around a while. That's where the details like period antiques, hand-crafted finishes, intricate tile work and leaded glass come in," Pam explains. But while the designer carefully nurtured the home's Old World patina, she wasn't stuck in the past. "Surprises like a few pieces of contemporary art, interesting light fixtures and unexpected textures and colors give a home terrific flair and really make a difference."

The Bryants' living room is a great example. With its two-story ceiling and a massive stone fireplace, the room could have been a cold, cavernous space. Instead, it glows with warmth, thanks in part to the exposed wood beams that frame the ceiling, a warm palette of saturated neutrals and soft, sumptuous fabrics. In wonderful contrast, the back-

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A stacked stone fireplace makes this cozy perch comfortable all year round (facing page, top). The stone echoes the home's foundation, and the porch is a favorite gathering spot for family and friends. With its lakefront balcony and soft tones of blue and green, the master bedroom (facing page, bottom) is a soothing retreat for the couple.



splash behind the room's wet bar is a mosaic of dime-sized domed metal disks, each polished to a brilliant luster.

"That touch of shine gives the room pizzazz," notes Pam. Lovely details abound in the dining room as well, where the abstract oil by Columbia painter Steven Chesley adds a dash of drama to the Old World style panels created by artist Charles Stevens.

Since Sharon and Steve agree that they'll never move from this house, a good part of their planning went into making it as livable as possible, both now and into the future. A case in point is the tall storage area on the second floor "I'd spent 21 years crawling on my hands and knees every year to get the Christmas decorations out of storage and I was determined never to have to do that again," laughs Sharon. The couple has also made allowances for their later years with a closet that will easily convert to an elevator shaft. And to ensure that the family can gather around the fire even after Steve and Sharon can't carry loads of wood up the stairs, each fireplace is also outfitted with gas.

Now that the family has been in the house for a year, they've been delighted to discover that they actually got it right. Sharon credits life experience. "I'm so glad we had lived a while before having the opportunity to build a home from the ground up," she says. "We knew exactly what we wanted going into this project, and what we didn't want or need. In the end, we've gotten a house that's perfect." ♣



A well-designed kitchen—complete with professional stovetop, unique tile, wine cooler, granite countertops and double ovens—makes cooking for family and friends a pleasure. An informal breakfast table overlooks the lake.