



## KEOWEE MANORHOUSE

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*Architect*

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*Capitalizing on the peninsular lot with 180-degree views of Lake Keowee, natural materials, indigenous landscaping, and various decks and terraces make this view as pleasing to look at as to look from.*

In each life, the time comes to kick back a bit and enjoy what we've built over the decades. For many people, finding the perfect spot to build takes months, if not years. For Bob and Carrol Black, however, a providential read-through of the Wall Street Journal led the couple to their home site on Lake Keowee, SC.

Then began the couple's search for an architect who would share their vision of the perfect haven by the lake. Unreserved commitment to quality, creativity, and collaboration were crucial for the right

designer. Still living in Philadelphia, Bob and Carrol scheduled nine interviews with potential architects. On the seventh one, Neal-Prince & Partners proved to be the Blacks' brass ring; they canceled the last two interviews, confident that they'd found their perfect match.

"We've built five houses before this one," Bob said by way of explanation that for their year-round retirement home, they knew exactly what they wanted. "The best decision we made was going with Neal-Prince, who recommended Carol Hamilton and Malcolm Morgan. All were dedicated

to quality," affirms Bob. "No one took shortcuts and they communicated with each other exceptionally well."

"It's funny," Bob and Carrol laugh, "most people downsize when they retire. We did the opposite; we upsized!" With three children and eight grandkids, space to entertain guests was a paramount consideration. Next were comfort and a desire to bring their love of the outdoors inside. In designing the house, they wanted to capitalize on the peninsular lot with its 180-degree views and 470 feet of shoreline. The resulting 13,000 square feet under roof accomplished all goals.



*On a path from the master bedroom's private deck, stairs were formed of large natural granite stone, designed to blend in with the natural environment. Mid-house, an internal stair tower spans three floors.*

Informal and impressive, the home is built on a native fieldstone base and foundation. Fieldstone, with its handsome color, similar to tree bark, is also used for retaining walls on-site. "We wanted to use earthy materials

to help the house look at peace with its surroundings," states architect Robin Prince of Neal-Prince & Partners. The Hardi siding and all cedar trim enhance the natural appearance and are low maintenance.

The comfortable, established feeling welcomes guests at the gate, which is stainless steel, sandblasted and covered with Ipe, a Brazilian hardwood that weathers to pleasing silver gray. The



*Guests enter the foyer of Italian tile, which is under a bridge that connects the two wings of the house. The bridge ceiling is paneled in maple to match the four supporting columns. Beyond, high windows with views of the lake lend a contemporary feeling to the great room.*

striking circle design in the gate is echoed by the gentle curve over the portico, semi-circular dormers and circular windows of the house. Repeated throughout the home, the circle theme is

inspired by French and Italian villas and complemented by arts and crafts accents. Mullion panes forming a cross within a circle design accomplish this unique look.

"The house was designed to flow in the manner we like to live. The floor plan highlights where we spend most of our time and the way in which we like to entertain," explains Carrol. Each living space opens to



*The large 18' x 26' custom geometric wool rug accents the random-length oak peg floor. Tongue-and-groove Douglas fir with extensive beams beautifies the ceiling. The interior décor blends a comforting mix of woods and fabrics that create a relaxed, easy living.*



*The great room was designed to have two main seating areas around the fireplace and by the windows. Large comfortable pieces are moveable for ease and flexibility when entertaining. The cherry wet bar was custom designed as a cabinet within a cabinet with double-hinged exterior doors and display lighting throughout.*

decks or terraces for enjoyment of sunrises and sunsets, the lake, and golf course.

The main level's entrance foyer features Italian tile flooring. Four maple columns that are illuminated by Italian glass sconces add drama. "The front door is solid

mahogany, crafted entirely by hand in the Amish tradition," pointed out Ron Mack from Morgan-Keefe Builders. From the foyer, two maple columns frame the view of the interior. Visitors look into the great room and beyond through the floor-to-ceiling windows to the lake.

Interior designer Carol Hamilton, on the project from day one, was critical in fine-tuning the key elements of the house, from decorating to lighting to cabinetry. "We took into account the European, country, sophisticated, comfortable and large-scale components of the house.



Guest suites provide the luxurious feel of a European inn. In this room, guests awake in a black-painted Tuscan bed with custom bedding. The cathedral ceiling sitting area offers views of the lake.

closely with the team for two years from their office in Charlotte — three hours away. “It was amazing what we were able to accomplish,” says Donlon. “We installed Rutt cabinetry throughout the entire house. Keeping with the overall

plan of the house, we designed for simple elegance, with enough detail for interest, for function and aesthetics. The style was between traditional and contemporary. I call it ‘transitional.’”

Two basic looks were used in the house. A tawny finish on maple with subtle grey highlights constituted cabinetry in the kitchen, master bedroom, closet and bathrooms. The other was ginger finish on cherry with onyx detail. “The Blacks



In the master suite, the country French bed with custom upholstery and bedding sits under a maple tongue-and-groove recessed ceiling with indirect lighting. A fireplace, sitting area with beautiful views of the lake, and private deck with a hot tub make this suite the exclusive retreat of the Blacks.

wanted the depth and beauty of cherry, but without the reds,” comments Donlon. “This finish gave it sophistication.” This was used in the cabinetry and wet bars in the great room and game room and throughout the entire library.

Using natural tones in the great room, interior designer Carol Hamilton worked with the Blacks to achieve the





*The dining area combines simple interior lines with the beauty of the natural world outside. A blend of fieldstone, slate and limestone, the fireplace sheds a warm light on the distressed oak table with pecan finish by Guy Chaddock.*

Natural colors such as taupe, green, khaki, and brick reds, with black accessories, suited the setting. Tailored furniture of leather and chenille upholstery add warmth and comfort."

Smiles Carrol, "Considering the grandkids like to visit often, one prerequisite for all the furniture in the house was that it had to be comfortable and to wear very well."

With two wings, the house was built with special areas for both the guests and the homeowners. "We live in the kitchen, great room, and master bedroom—they're the rooms we use the most," Carrol says. Designed for easy living, the main level of the house also includes a screened porch, kitchen, laundry room, garage, and formal powder room.

"The master suite is our haven," shares Carrol. Stained maple tongue-and-groove paneling

wraps the walls around the fireplace at the foot of the bed. Lighting is recessed and indirect. Custom Rutt cabinets are built in, and the dimensions of the walk-in closet are a generous 24' by 12'. The private deck, facing west for sunsets, features a sunken hot tub.

Guest comfort was also important. "We wanted our guests to feel at home, so we made sure they have direct access to the downstairs in addition to their own way to the outdoors,"



*Kitchen cabinets, designed by Donlon & Merrell and crafted by Rutt, are maple with a taupe finish and grey accents. Two islands providing an eating bar for the grandchildren and extensive space for food preparation make this room the hub of the house. Here, eight people have room to work without getting in each other's way.*

states Bob. Located on the upper level of the home, the guest wing offers four guest rooms with adjoining bathrooms.

Explains Carrol, "We wanted each of the four guest rooms to be unique and also self-contained—offering any convenience our guests might need." All guest rooms include a private enclave for relaxing, piped-in stereo access to the sound system of the house, separate access to the satellite receiver for television, indirect lighting, walk-in closets, and king beds, except one with twin beds for the kids.

Across the maple bridge suspended over

one end of the great room sits the library wing of the upper level. The spacious combination library and office holds stunning views of the lake from two different angles. Cherry bookshelves cover three walls, and built-in cabinets contain all of Bob's office equipment. Above both glass doors, which open onto small balconies, curved arches frame circular windows.

The sizeable great room offers spectacular views through its large windows and versatility of living space. "It's a place where we can have cocktails with guests, or put our feet up," confides Carrol. "We

wanted it to be homey, spacious, yet comfortable." Adjoining is the screened porch floored in Italian tile. "In the evenings, we open the doors for a refreshing breeze from the lake," says Carrol. Fine custom cabinets of cherry, by Rutt, form the wet bar and contain the entertainment system.

"We had seen Rutt cabinetry in a showroom," explains Bob, "and knew immediately that it was exemplary craftsmanship. At that moment, we decided that we would have nothing but Rutt for our home." Susan Donlon of Donlon & Merrell Designs worked



*Warm and lively, the game room provides entertainment and comfort for all. The custom bar features cherry cabinetry, moldings, tray ceiling and a soffit that follows the curve of the bar itself.*

sophisticated ease of European country. A massive fieldstone fireplace dominates the room and combines with the warm colors and tailored furniture for a comfortable gathering spot.

Blending three textures of stone—Tennessee fieldstone, slate on the hearth, and a limestone mantle—the dramatic fireplace connects the great room to the dining area. Dining by firelight is a romantic experience enhanced by lighting under the mantle, in the cabinets, and copper micro-spots overhead shining

down on the table. “With just the touch of a button, the Lutron computerized control system for interior and exterior lights enables us to adjust all lighting in the house,” Carrol describes.

Fourteen to sixteen guests can sit comfortably at the custom dining table. Art surrounds the dinner guests. “All of the art in the house is original. We collected for over two years,” says designer Hamilton. “We selected pieces to harmonize with the outdoors and the stonework of this home.”

With so many guests to entertain, it’s no surprise that the kitchen is the hub of the house. “It has a superb work area with all granite surfaces,” affirms Carrol. “And the eating bar for the grandkids was a must!” The wide prep island includes a sink and allows people to work simultaneously on both sides. Rutt maple cabinets designed by Susan Donlon hold all the equipment a cook could need. Appliances feature a Subzero fridge and freezer, six-burner Dacor stove, double ovens, warming drawer, wine cooler, and the convenience of a pot filler, an arm



*The dedicated theater provides tiered seating for eight in comfortable leather chairs for viewing movies on the 110” screen. Extensive measures were taken in building this room to handle the top-of-the-line sound system.*

above the burners of the stove that fills pots with water.

“The breakfast room is for us—our personal niche where we like to eat,” says Bob. Sliding doors lead to the deck where Bob keeps his barbeque.

At the rear of the home on the lower level there is an outdoor shower as well as a laundry room by the door that comes in from the lake. Says Carrol, “The kids can just throw their suits and towels straight in the laundry without bringing them into

the house.” There is also an exercise room, game room, bar, home theater and storage room.

Who can have eight grandkids and not have a game room? “The lower level is where we play,” smiles Bob. A game table for checkers or chess, a billiards table, and cards are amusements in the game room. The formal Rutt-crafted walk-behind cherry bar with granite top surfaces contains a subzero 240 bottle wine cooler, dishwasher, microwave, fridge and cherry cabinet for glassware.

In front of the bar, the cherry soffit curves to follow the radius of the bar. A recessed ceiling with perimeter built-in lighting and micro-spots complete the room. When the kids are bored with board games, the home theater is adjacent.

In the dedicated theater room, movies and shows play across the 110” screen from the Runco digital projector, and it’s all controlled through the Creston control system. “The grandkids love it,” Bob says proudly. “I can play high-definition satellite TV, DVD, and VCR. Donlon



*Bob's indulgence in the library—the kidney-shaped, mahogany, leather-top desk—took seven men to lift. A place to work and read, the library houses office equipment, books and Bob's personal treasures. The ceiling peaks at the center of the room. Two large windows frame lake views.*

designed the whole wall with cabinetry to fit specifications of the Stuart screen." All mechanisms and working parts are behind the cabinet wall. Tiered seating provides viewing comfort for eight in leather chairs with ottomans. The eight-speaker sound

system plays off walls that are acoustically studded in two layers of sheetrock and covered with sound-absorbing fabric. "We took extra precautions to control the acoustics," states Danny Carpenter of Morgan-Keefe Builders.

A European manor house with French and Italian influences, Bob and Carrol's home offers a unique resort-like feel. Robin Prince commented, "It's an open house but with a cozy feel—contemporary and warm. We



wanted a casual yet formal look while still maintaining the proportion of a manor house."

With almost 9,700 heated square feet, creating the relaxed elegance of the house was no easy feat. "We were truly blessed to work with the Blacks," says Malcolm Morgan, Morgan-Keefe Builders. "They were available on-site to communicate as each layer of the project unfolded. This is extremely beneficial in a project such as this—a nearly 13,000 square foot house (with porches, decks, and garage) on a more or less one-acre site."

"One of the challenges to building in an area like this is that you don't have the conveniences of the large-city areas," explains Prince. "Morgan-Keefe, the

contractor, did a remarkable job. They delivered the highest quality."

"This was by far the best team we've ever had," asserts Bob. About a three-year project overall, the house took 21

months to build and one year to design.

"I keep scaring Bob," laughs Carrol. "We had such a delightful experience building this home that I'm ready to do another!"

#### KEOWEE MANORHOUSE

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