

Vacationing at Home

This family doesn't have to leave home to find special features

Written by Barbara Hertenstein Jacobitti

Photography by Alise O'Brien



The large front window allows light into the entry and stair and is a major feature of the front of the house

When they pictured their new house, this couple imagined something like vacation houses they'd seen: contemporary with an airy, open plan.

"Our first house was a more traditional one that we tried to make contemporary," says the wife. "For this house we wanted true contemporary, but soft and warm, not harsh." She pictured the natural materials of a Colorado-style house, though not quite so rugged, and a bit of California aesthetic as well.

The result is just their style, one that fits their family, their love of entertaining and the St Louis weather. And how did they get what they wanted?

"Collaboration," says the husband. "I really want to stress how important collaboration was. We wanted everyone working together from the outset. It was a terrific team."

The team included interior designer Julie Abner and architect David Pape, who met with the couple every week throughout the planning and construction of the house.

"They put a lot of trust in Dave and myself," Abner says. "And the biggest compliment to me is when they said they got exactly what they wanted."

It was a long process, but not all at the drawing board. "We had fun going to Chicago looking for furniture and sitting in different chairs – sort of a Goldilocks kind of thing," Abner jokes.

One bit of luck was finding a large, empty lot in a spacious Ladue neighborhood where the original house had been torn down.

"It was all overgrown; you could barely see to the back of the lot," the husband says. The diamond shaped-lot provided an opportunity to place the house at an interesting angle.



The family decided to position the fireplace against the end wall to preserve the view of the yard. Sofas by A. Rudin and maple Berman Rosetti lounge chairs surround a bamboo-topped cocktail table.



Rather than center the house, they decided to move the house forward to allow for a patio, gazebo, pool and large back lawn.

"We wanted the outdoor space to be integrated with the house," the wife says. "We really wanted an outdoor living room." The area they call the gazebo, which is attached to the house, fills the bill, with comfortable seating and wide openings that offer views of the pool, patio and yard. And when those pesky Midwest bugs appear, retractable screens come down to keep them out.

"We use this space even when we're having dinner inside; we often sit out here first," she says.

The gazebo is just off the kitchen, a high-ceilinged, open space with large windows over the sink that slide up to open to the patio. "That was Dave's idea in case we wanted to pass food out that way," says the wife.

Pape also had to come up with a way to create a roof over the grill without making the kitchen too dark in the daytime.

"It was a bit challenging, so I opened the gable above to let light into the kitchen," Pape says.

The kitchen's high, coffered ceiling helps control the noise level, Pape says. "It breaks up the sound so you can talk whether you're next to each other or across the room." He also added foam padding on top of the tall kitchen cabinets to absorb sound.

Both the husband and wife like to cook. "He's the grill master and does a lot of week-night meals. I usually do the cooking when we entertain," she says.

The kitchen opens to the great room, which features 22-foot walls topped by a ceiling of walnut beams. Three large windows that look out onto the back lawn. At 12 feet high, the center window uses the largest piece of glass available, Pape says.

"I love walking in and seeing that view," the wife says.

On one side of the generous entry is the dining room, on the other, an eye-catching stairway that leads to the second floor bedrooms.

Abner sketched the railing, an idea she gleaned from several sources and her imagination. "I love it. It's such a sculptural piece. For some of these things I twisted his arm now and then," she says of Pape with a smile.

The dining room seats up to 12 and with tables added in the entry, up to 20. "We love to entertain with brunches and dinners and we have most of the holidays here," the wife says.

The butler's pantry between the dining room and kitchen provides plenty of storage space and a long, granite-topped bar with easy access to both rooms. It can be closed on the dining room side with pocket doors. And storage was key. "I wanted a place for everything and I got it," says the wife.



Walker Zanger tile creates a textured backsplash behind the stove. Countertops are Bianco Antico granite. The large center island includes a small prep sink.

The wall treatment in the powder room is by The Design Deli. The walnut vanity cabinet is topped by a vessel sink of travertine from Stone Forest.





The master bedroom offers a serene retreat and a view of the back yard.



The stone floor, shower wall tile and the glass tile by Walker Zanger provide texture and subtle color in the master bath.



On the more practical side of the house, behind the kitchen, are desks for the family's middle school children and a wide counter to gather all the clutter that comes into a house and too often gets dropped in the kitchen.

"And this is the CEO's headquarters," jokes the wife about her office. The children's desk is a counter open to the back entry so the parents can see what they are doing, and the children are away from the television. Near the back door are cabinets for coats, boots and the like, so the clutter is behind closed doors.

A right turn takes you to the area the family calls the cabana, which holds a changing room, powder room, and a kitchenette and leads to the patio and pool. Slate floors mean there are no worries about dripping bathing suits.

A left turn takes you down the back stair to the spacious lower-level family room that holds a ping pong table, games and a television.

"We wanted a place where the kids and their friends wanted to be," says the husband. It's also a great spill-over space for parties. A semi-finished area is set aside for art and science projects and storage. On the other side of the lower level is a large, mirrored exercise room.

Storage was included in the plan for the master suite on the main floor as well, with large, walk-in closets. The quiet bedroom features windows that look out onto the back lawn. Nearby is the husband's office and study.

The master bath features a large shower, a corner tub for soaking, and his and hers vanities.

"I really wanted a spa-type bathroom, the kind you might find on vacation," the wife says – another example of those vacation amenities that the family finds right at home. **17**

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