



# Room with a View

A Hoover couple transformed a narrow cliff-side lot and built their dream home.

By Mary Ellen Stancill    Photography by Beau Gustafson



Several years ago, Jo Ann and Ray Davis decided it was time to build a garden home. Empty nesters and avid golfers, their plan was to buy a lot and build a home along the Legacy Course at Greystone Golf and Country Club. But as Jo Ann recalls, "The plan got a little big for the lot, so we thought let's just look up on the Crest [at Greystone]." While a backyard along the fairway would have been nice, the Davises are now thrilled with their home's breathtaking views from their perch atop a foothill of the Appalachian Mountains. The golf course is still close by, but the Davises enjoy plenty of space—both indoors and out—to entertain a constant flow of family and friends.

Because they'd built several homes over the years, Ray was able to quickly assemble a team of experts for the project including: Home Designer David Smelcer, Builder Steve Bryant, Interior Designer Celia McGarity, Landscape Architect Doug Travis and Interior Designer Brenda Neal. But before construction could begin, workers spent two and a half months preparing the lot, pounding out rock to create enough space for the backyard where a ravine had previously existed. "When Ray first said he was putting a pool in the backyard, I thought,



there's no way," says Designer Brenda Neal with a laugh. Now, an outdoor kitchen, putting green, swimming pool and waterfall grace the outdoor area.

Although selecting the experts was easy, building a large home on the side of a cliff took time—two solid years to be exact. During that time, Jo Ann and Ray enjoyed planning and searching for the added details that make their home truly exceptional. While looking for antique doors at Southern Accents in Cullman, they stumbled upon their antique white pine flooring. The doors to Ray's study originally graced the entry to a New York City brownstone, now stained and refinished by local artisan Stephen Ardovino to match the newly-built surround. The grand staircase incorporates century old newel posts from Amsterdam and the massive front doors are made from a single European oak that must fall before craftsman will plane it for use and ship it across the ocean to the United States.

For the interior of the home Ray says, "I wanted it to be open ... but at the





same time, I wanted it to be comfortable. And, I wanted to be able to see from the front door to the back." To strike this balance, the living room features a soaring 23-foot ceiling with three massive windows that frame the valley below. The formal dining room and a bar area are also incorporated into this space. The private, less formal spaces are found on either end of the home, with guest rooms and a playroom for the grandchildren upstairs. On one end, a master suite provides a cozy place for Ray and Jo Ann to retreat. The luxurious master bathroom features a spa tub (a favorite of the grandchildren) and a shower overlooking a small, community pond which Ray stocks with fish (also for the grandchildren and others). On the other end, the kitchen, keeping room and breakfast room are where Ray and Jo Ann spend a good deal of their time.

Jo Ann enlisted Neal, owner of Trends and Traditions in Oneonta, to help furnish and decorate the home. When the project began, Jo Ann showed Neal a picture of a mantel in a *Southern Living* Christmas book. The single image helped Brenda select the warm colors, mix of furnishings and accessories that make the large home both inviting and interesting. Of the completed home Jo Ann says, "It's very functional. It's a long way from the bedroom to the kitchen but we live mostly on either end. The center is for when we have family [visit] or parties."

And speaking of parties, when the house was finally completed Ray and Jo Ann decided to throw a party to celebrate their new home along with Ray's 60th birthday. Tents and tables went up in the front and backyards and a dance floor was laid, complete with Ray and Jo Ann's initials inscribed in the center. Two bands played and Jo Ann and Ray greeted 600 guests at the front door. "It was our biggest party ever, including our children's weddings," says Jo Ann. But while this party was a once-in-a-lifetime event, Jo Ann, Ray, their family and friends will surely enjoy the house for many years to come. 📍

## Resources:

Home Designer: David Smelcer; Builder: Steve Bryant, Francis A. Bryant & Sons; Interior Designer (finishes and fixtures): Celia McGarity, CBM Design; Landscape Architect: Doug Travis, Liberty Environmental; Interior Designer: Brenda Neal, Trends and Traditions, bneal@oteico.net; Specialty painting and faux finishes: Stephen Ardovino; Reclaimed materials: Southern Accents Architectural Antiques; Cabinets: Robert Shirley Cabinets

