

EnduraDeck



EnduraDeck featured in the Charlotte Observer "At Home" section

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From cabin to 'castle'

3-story tower is just one of the regal touches on this Lake Norman home

By Katherine Forney ~ Special to the Observer

Ken and Pat Hawn enjoy roaming in their motor home. They spent January and February on an odyssey to the tip of Baja in Mexico. But they really love coming home to Lake Norman.

Peek inside their new house -- actually, their new "old" house -- and you'll understand.

Pat's father, Lawrence Stell, built what was a simple lakeside cottage in the early 1970s as his retirement home. As a Presbyterian minister he was rich in spirit but needed to be a little frugal in his spending, Pat says, so he hired the most affordable builder he could find.

While it was a perfectly serviceable house over the years, serious maintenance issues developed. ("It was falling down," says Pat.) And its stained-wood siding and many sliding doors were not 21st-century chic. So, when Pat and Ken inherited the house, they decided it needed a serious upgrade.

Serious, indeed. The simple cottage morphed into a soaring contemporary showplace. **It earned top honors in the Entire House \$500,000-\$1 million category in a remodeling contest sponsored last fall by the National Association of the Remodeling Industry.**

A contemporary design appealed to Pat. "I love feeling like I'm out in nature," she says. "That's my attraction to contemporary (design). It feels like I'm living outside."

The project was designed and built by Tom Pruitt of Thomas Pruitt Builders. While he had designed only traditional houses before, he was eager to work on a contemporary plan.

"I talk with my clients about what they like, how they live, how they entertain, how they eat, whether one gets up before the other in the mornings," he said. "I design the house around the function, then I make the form follow that."

The Hawns wanted to stay as closely within the original footprint as they could, so Pruitt used most of the original framing with lots of reinforcements to accommodate his bold new concept. The basement, which contains two bedrooms and a large sitting area, and the masonry fireplace and chimney are original to the house.

It's sided with cement-based shakes that look like wood. A curved copper roof over the front door, suspended by cables from the upper story, hints at surprises inside.

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Ken Hawn had a special request that offered lots design challenges, Pruitt says. "Ken told me, 'Tom, I know it sounds weird, but I've always wanted a tower,' "

Pruitt asked himself, "Tower? Like in a castle?" but finally saw Ken's vision. The result is an angular loft, three stories up, with a panoramic view of the lake and a perfect platform for a telescope.

The top loft, a center level that functions as an office and the main floor all share the same vertical expanse of glass, with tremendous views of the cove. The spaces are linked by a sculpture-like spiral staircase fabricated by Michael Stanford. Because the glass wall's exposure is toward the north, the expanse of glass doesn't overheat the house as it would facing south or west.

Inside, steel reinforcement allows wide-open spaces. "There's a clear span inside of 42 feet from the main floor to the top of the loft," Pruitt says.

Ken's loft in the tower is suspended from the roof on one side by a steel support and is attached to a wall on the other side, creating a free-floating sensation.

The second-floor space is furnished as an office for Pat, a biofeedback therapist with an office in Dilworth, and Ken, who retired as a manufacturer's representative. It's home to a sentimental piece, a table built of cherry that Pat's dad received as payment for a debt during the Depression. That is, he received an unfinished log -- not the table -- as payment.

The Hawns haven't allowed the contemporary design to limit their furniture choices. A traditional sideboard, which Pat's thrifty mom bought for a song and refinished, is right at home with the neutral, clean-lined sofas. Pat's niece, Kelly Meline of Elysium Design in Greenville, S.C., laughed when she saw Pat's color choices: tans, beiges, creams. Meline supplied two cherry-red contemporary chairs for a punch of color.

Two of the Hawns' children provided artwork. Josh Hawn, who now lives in England, brought a feather headdress back from Cameroon; it now hangs over the fireplace. Amy Hawn, who taught in Venezuela, returned with a painting that introduced purple into the Hawns' bedroom. "I didn't think I liked purple," says Pat, "but it works."

The master bedroom ceiling soars higher than 24 feet, and from the chunky brushed-aluminum bed the Hawns have a full view of the lake and even a high window that offers a morning sky view. The bedroom is compact and clutter-free, with a large walk-in closet. French doors open onto a screened porch.

The Hawns aren't fans of curtains, and wouldn't want to waste their magnificent views, so their windows are uncovered. Even in the master bathroom, so the bather can admire not only the glass tiles in the walk-in shower but also the ever-changing play of light on the lake. (Pat and Ken have checked, of course, to be sure that they're not in the public spotlight while in the bathroom. Especially in summer, when leaves are on the trees, a passer-by can't see in. And there aren't really any passers-by.)

The Hawns and Pruitt chose a wide-open plan for the public spaces, with two sitting areas and kitchen separated only by a built-in granite countertop-eating table.

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