



GREAT Escape

Dallas couple retires to new Hill Country home

Story by Amanda Flatten
Photography by Ken Vaughan

Tuesday Aug 18, 2009

[Mefford Home Photo Gallery](#)

houseandhomeonline.com

Several years ago as retirement was approaching, Mc Kinney couple Pete and Lyn Mefford decided to start looking for land away from the city. “We began looking for some acreage for a retirement home, and we found a spot that overlooks Lake Buchanan and has a view of the Hill Country,” says Lyn, a former educator.

The perfect property turned out to be 25 acres on a working ranch called Wolf Creek Ranch outside the small town of Burnet, about an hour northwest of Austin. After Pete retired from his position at EDS, the couple started making building plans with an architect, a builder and Dallas designer Joyce Schiska of Joyce Schiska Designs. The Meffords had previously worked with Schiska, who redesigned their McKinney home when they first got married. Schiska turned out to be instrumental in the building process of their new home, helping to select everything from materials and finishes to putting the final touches on the interior décor.

MAKING THE MOST OF SPACE

The Mefford’s new 3,500-square-foot home sits on a bluff overlooking Lake Buchanan. “It has the most beautiful outdoors I’ve ever seen, truly,” Schiska says.

The couple had several goals in mind for their new build. “Our McKinney home had around 4,700 square feet and was pretty traditional,” Lyn says. “We downsized a bit when we retired, and we were looking for something a little more transitional.”

They wanted a one-story, handicap accessible house. They also wanted to incorporate some of the principles in Sarah Susanka’s book “The Not So Big House,” such as fully inhabiting their home without all the clutter. “They wanted a home where every space makes sense and that is comfortable and inviting for their family,” Schiska says.

The home has two bedrooms and two bathrooms as well as a great room and functional kitchen. The master suite includes an exercise nook, an office

and large walk-in closets. There is also a “bunk house” behind the garage that is another full suite for out-of-town guests. “It was designed to be very durable for the grandkids,” Lyn says. “It has stained concrete floors and a kitchenette. It also serves as a dressing room space for the pool.”

CREATIVE SPACES

Throughout the home, natural yet functional finishes were used: mesquite wood on the doors and door frames, rustic cherry floors, birch cabinetry, and honed travertine for the entry, bathroom and kitchen floors.

The entryway, with Spanish oak double doors, beamed ceilings and travertine floors, has a gallery feel, featuring the couple’s artwork. The entrance to the master suite is quite unique: a mesquite door surrounded by a limestone wall. “We wanted the home to have a Hill Country look, so we used limestone on the exterior of the house and also brought it indoors,” Lyn says.

The master suite has a wonderful view of the lake and a screened-in porch for easy access to the outdoor areas. “People want their privacy, but they want their family around too, so this is a house that offers both very well,” Schiska says. “They enjoy the fact that they can go into the large master suite space and it’s quiet and private.”

Highlights in the spacious master bath are the barrel-vaulted ceiling covered in rustic cherry, travertine flooring, slate on the floor and walls of the walk-in shower, birch cabinets and double sinks.

Not to be outdone by the master, the guest bath packs a lot of punch. Raised birch cabinets on an angle create an open look. Thick leuder stone (a form of limestone) with an irregular cut forms the countertop and backsplash. Limestone also was used on the floor and shower surfaces.

Multiple types of wood warm up the large great room and open dining room. Stained pine covers the 14-foot high ceiling; birch cabinetry encloses the TV and houses photos and art. Cherry flooring grounds the room. A real showpiece in this space is the custom mesquite bar with iron work along the sides and top, created by metal sculptor Larry Whiteley. “In this room, we used a lot of different woods, but Joyce did a great job of making it all work together with the complementary stains and finishes,” Lyn says.

“It’s really a conglomeration of different materials that you pull together and make work as a whole,” Schiska says. “It’s a lovely room with a view to die for.”

Just off the great room is a wine room. “We are wine lovers, and it has become more of a hobby than it was in our old home because we didn’t have the storage space,” Lyn adds.

The kitchen proved to be an interesting challenge. “I went from a really large kitchen, and I wanted to downsize without losing functionality and storage space,” Lyn recalls. Every inch of the island has usable storage. Also, in an effort to create a clean, sleek look, electrical outlets were hidden out of view under the cabinets. Finishes in this room include Tropical Brown granite counters, birch cabinets and limestone brick walls.

The outdoor spaces are really the star of the home. The exterior is limestone with a metal roof. “The metal roof is energy efficient and it’s a forever kind of thing,” Lyn says. “One of our goals was for the home to be as

low-maintenance as possible.”

Native plants used throughout the landscape also are easy to maintain. “We are on a well water system, so water conservation is something we think about,” Lyn says.

“They wanted an outdoor space they could be in as much as they are in their indoor space,” Schiska says. That goal was achieved with the screened-in porch off the couple’s bedroom, as well as a large covered porch off the great room.

RETIRED LIVING

Forever Ranch — the name of the couple’s 25-acre property — is just what Pete and Lyn had in mind for their perfect retirement home. “The house has a timelessness that is not going to get old,” Schiska says.

“We use every part of the house,” says Lyn. “We love every day here, and retirement is really fun. We travel quite a bit, so being able to come home to this space is really great.”

resources

Interior Design

Joyce Schiska, Allied Member ASID

Joyce Schiska Designs

972.484.2336

www.designingdallas.com

Contractor

Shawn Solsberry

Classic Constructors Inc.

830.798.1818

www.classicconstructors.com

Architect

Peter Pfeiffer, AIA

Barley & Pfeiffer Architects

512.476.8580

www.barleypfeiffer.com

Metal Art

Larry Whiteley

Metalworks

972.438.6882

www.metalworksdfw.com

Faux Finisher

Celia Albertson

972.880.5866

Landscape

Kathryn Gregory

Lantana Lawn & Landscape

214.476.7558

houseandhomeonline.com

[Mefford Home Photo Gallery](#)

Copyright 2008 by MBH, Inc./Dallas/Fort Worth House & Home Magazine. All rights reserved.