

TWO WOW! INTERIORS • 101 NEIGHBORHOOD GIFTS • ONE VERY ELEGANT MENU

STYLE

SMART LIVING IN BALTIMORE

Drawn to the Lights

Hampton, the Chanukah House and Holidays Past

December
2001 \$4.95

www.baltimorestyle.com



BEST Laid Plans

Dormer windows, an overscaled mantel and a pair of giant terra cotta urns are well scaled for the high-ceilinged living room. Traditional furniture, softly colored silk upholstery and artfully displayed paintings make the room "very salon," according to designer Jay Jenkins.



BY CATHERINE v.o. HOFFBERGER
PHOTOGRAPHED BY ERIK KVALSVIK



Little was left to chance when a custom builder and his wife created their ideal family home.

Above, six antique landscapes frame a custom mirror from Carvers' Guild, which hangs above a reproduction Irish console. Nice touch: the spiral shape of the topiary reflects the detail of the antique clock, one of many in a collection gathered by Janet's grandfather.




In the foyer, an inherited Empire chest is surrounded by a pair of antique chairs covered in a bold Italian stripe and a painting by local artist Nancy Jenkins (Jay's aunt).

THE TERM "DREAM HOME" is one of those phrases that can lose effect with overuse. But for builder Richard Livingston and his wife, Janet, a sprawling French-country style home on a quiet cul-de-sac in Green Spring Valley is just that, and a professional showcase, too.

It was while affiliated with Chateau Builders, for whom he built fast-track developments such as Craddock Estates in Owings Mills, that Livingston built his first custom home, on Springlake Way in Homeland. The last house to be built in that city neighborhood, it was a center hall colonial "based on the Craddock Estates model home," says Livingston, who was its first occupant. "But I expanded the design and building quality with the best materials, to fit the neighborhood."

After that first taste of custom building, Livingston "became fascinated with bigger, more interesting houses." He developed The Enclave, a high-end neighborhood of custom homes on Old Court Road, making a name for himself in the custom build world. Soon after, he established his own company under the name Richstone Custom Homes.

When he and Janet decided to build a new home for themselves and their



The house would be a showplace for the builder's talents.

A faux-parchment style finish in "greige" by the Valley Craftsmen provides a soft background in the dining room, where an ornate tray ceiling, also painted by the Valley Craftsmen, caps the formality. Contrasting silk upholstery from Koplavitch & Zimmer covers reproduction Louis XVI-style chairs by William Switzer, which are pulled up to a reproduction Empire-style table from Lewis Mittman Inc. The painting, found by Jenkins and the Livingstons together in High Point, N.C., was framed locally at Partners Art & Frames. The rug is from Alex Cooper Oriental Rugs.



A pair of antique clocks stand with contemporary vases before an Agam painting in the family room. "Family and history are very important to the Livingstons, and it was my job to bring the beautiful symbols of their heritage into a comfortable new environment," says Jenkins.

Salvaged products give the house a sense of history.



school-aged children, he was ready to pull out all the stops to show what his company could do. And she, a philanthropist who hosts many events at home for The Associated: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, began making her own wish list of what the perfect house should offer.

"The list started out as notes on paper, and eventually grew into a huge, official document," says Janet, 45. They started searching for a lot on which to build and found it on a snowy November day in 1996—a three-acre wooded parcel off Park Heights Avenue.

The official wish list became a building plan,

with all of the family's desires spelled out, room by room. There would be a first-floor master suite, lots of formal space for entertaining, and plenty of bedrooms to accommodate Livingston's family on visits from his native New York. Other rooms would include a large eat-in kitchen, a family room, an office for Janet on the first floor, a mudroom and laundry area off the kitchen, a screened porch and a finished basement. And, while a formal aesthetic would prevail in the design and decoration, particularly in the front of the house, there also would be a free-flowing, easy-living feel from room to room.

Finally, the house would be a showplace for

Old mixes with new in the family room, where overscaled furniture—a pair of deep sofas covered in gros-point velvet and a large, contemporary ottoman—stand beside more traditional furniture. Richard's family tree hangs between two bookcases that house miniature rooms made by his grandmother.

The coffered ceiling, painted off-white with a blue background and stained wood moldings, is balanced by the multi-colored carpeting by Stark.

Formality meets practicality in the eat-in kitchen. A large island, topped with granite from Hilgartner Natural Stone, makes a fun gathering spot for informal entertaining, and the room is dressed up with cherry cabinets, French chairs and cotton fabrics from Nobilis. The glass portion of the cabinets, by Stuart Kitchens, reveals Royal Copenhagen china, from the Livingstons' collection of blue and white. The lighting fixture is a family piece, constructed of antique pieces from the same pattern.





Above, in the master bathroom, green marble tops a two-sided island vanity and is the choice for floor tiles, too. Wolff Woodworking installed the painted vanity between linen closets with mirrored doors. "Janet likes drama," designer Jenkins says of the luxurious décor.



the builder's talents, with architectural embellishments throughout and an office for Richstone above the attached garage.

The couple's meticulous planning began with the hiring of architect Jay Brown and interior designer Jay Jenkins. "I believe in the team approach, where you combine the skills and knowledge of each specialist," says Livingston. "The architect and interior designer craft the ideas of what needs to be done, and the builder implements the plan. I'm excellent at general contracting, but it was valuable for us to get the more artistic input and the flow and balance offered by Jay and Jay."

After studying the Livingstons' needs, architect Brown determined that what they were looking for was a rambling house in the French-country style. "They needed lots of living space, and a country house can provide that," he says, "and look like it has been built and added to over a number of years." Brown's vision fit within the family's budget. "We always loved the

look of a stone house, but a house this size entirely constructed from stone would simply be too price prohibitive," explains Livingston, 44. "We chose stone for the main section of the house, but used brick accents and wood siding on the extended sections."

His new home also afforded the builder the opportunity to experiment with new technology. The off-white trim outlining the roofline is constructed of a PVC-Permatrim, which doesn't swell and shrink from season to season, and needs a fresh coat of paint only every 10 years or so.

Salvaged products give the house a sense of history—stone reclaimed from old Pennsylvania barns makes up the majority of the exterior, and chestnut wood beams, also from old barns, became flooring. "You really have to like the look of old wood, and we do," says Livingston. "There are nicks and wormholes throughout the floorboards."

Jay Jenkins helped establish the archi-



Above, a cheerful reading spot: A Christopher Norman striped silk dresses the windows and a Schumacher fabric drapes the round table between two upholstered chairs. The carpeting is from Floors Etc.

tectural needs of the interior, including room dimensions and ceiling styles. "This was going to be a place for Richard to meet with clients, and I really wanted it to be a showplace for him," says Jenkins. He designed a vaulted, cathedral ceiling for the formal living room, a painted tray ceiling for the dining room, a barrel ceiling for the foyer between, and a coffered ceiling for the family room.

Landscape architect Eric Friedman was brought in to do a tree survey and determine the best position for the house on the lot. Space would be allotted for a climbing structure for the kids and a swimming pool in the back, and Livingston's mother's collection of outdoor sculpture would be positioned throughout the property.

The building was under way, with only one change in the orig-

inal plan—no first-floor office off the master bedroom. "The house was just getting too big," says Janet, who happily settled for an office in the basement, instead, between the children's playroom and the exercise room.

Jenkins suggested a few clever spaces for the mix: the front hall powder room would be a two-room affair, with a beautifully colorful washroom opening into a water closet, providing extra privacy when the house is full of guests; and the first-floor master bedroom would open to the front hall through a vestibule, also for privacy's sake.

Jenkins would also design spaces for the Livingstons' collections of family heirlooms, including a pair of miniature rooms built by Livingston's grandmother. Showcased in lighted shelves behind glass in the family room, the exquisite miniatures are part of a collection of eight; four of which are at the Art Institute of Chicago. A four-piece set of beaded, needlepoint *(continued on page 110)*

Sunny upholstery by Old World Weavers dresses the headboard of a hand-painted, four-poster bed from Julia Gray Ltd., which is flanked by a pair of Empire demi-lune tables from Janet's family. The porcelain lamp is one of a pair that Jones Lighting Specialists made from antique vases.

The
master
suite is
swathed
in yellow
and white
fabrics.



Best Laid Plans

(continued from page 82)

samplers, handed down through the family, are handsomely hung in the front hall off the master suite, and inherited oil paintings hang in the living room.

The formal interior design choices include silk brocade upholstery, gilded frames and dramatic faux finishes in the dining room and living room. The master suite is swathed in beautiful yellow fabrics and cream upholstery, and lit by antique lamps and a gleaming crystal chandelier.

But the home also manages to be practical and child-friendly where it needs to be. The mudroom area is comprised of three spaces off a slim hallway coming in from the garage: a tidy powder room; a cubby space for coats, backpacks and such; and a utility room. The latter holds laundry facilities plus a second refrigerator, freezer and oven that handle the overflow when the couple entertains.

The Livingstons were generous in sizing the rooms. The children's bedrooms on the second floor are both big enough for homework desks and play areas (yet refreshingly void of TVs and computers). On the same floor are two guest rooms often filled with visiting friends and relatives.

The first room dimensions considered were for Janet's closet, which is, well, enormous, and there is endless storage space in the basement. There is even an arts and crafts room with a vinyl tile floor off the basement playroom, perfect for fun, but messy, school projects.

Perhaps the most thoughtful aspect of the design is the trio of closets, stacked one above the other in the basement, foyer and second-floor hallway. They are of identical size—the exact dimensions required for an elevator shaft. “In case we or anyone in our family gets too old to climb the stairs or needs a wheelchair, we’ll be ready,” Janet says. “We plan on living here for a very long time.” □

RESOURCES

Architect Jay Brown, Levin / Brown Associates, 410-581-0104

Interior design Jay Jenkins, Alexander Baer Associates, 410-727-4100

Landscape architect Eric Friedman, Friedman Associates, 410-828-7777

Builder Richstone Custom Homes, 410-581-9809