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Meet the couple, and the dream, that stole the show at the 2012 Parade of Homes.

BY JOY OVERBECK



Photos Courtesy Pinnacle Homes

Recalls Martha, "One day we were having coffee, and my husband asked where I would like to spend more time—now, and in retirement." Without hesitation, she said Colorado. "That's always been the boys' favorite place," she says, "and we love it here, too."

The Texas couple—we'll call them Chris and Martha—had taken their three sons vacationing in Colorado every summer and winter from the time they were little boys. Happy family memories revolved around exploring the Mountain West: hiking, camping, and skiing, mostly in the Breckenridge area. But with the couple's high-powered careers in Dallas, their family getaway time was often limited.

That conversation resulted in a decision to relocate and eventually led to their 2003 purchase of a golf course lot in Breckenridge Highlands. Ultimately, they would christen a spectacular new mountain residence that recently won a shelf-full of accolades from Summit County's 2012 Parade of Homes: best overall in its category, best builder concept and workmanship,

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A bronze statue with a waterfall that does double duty as a humidifier serves as the focal point of the home's soaring entryway.

best exterior design and elevation, best kitchen, best interior finishes, and best master suite, plus the Realtor's Choice Award for best overall of the twenty entries.

Chris and Martha are delighted about what they say is well-deserved recognition for the talented team that shaped their ideas into reality, but they're even happier about how their

Colorado home fulfills their original vision. "We bought the property on this ridge because of the spectacular views—you can see the whole Ten Mile Range, the slopes of Breckenridge, and over to Quandary Peak, then in the other direction looking toward Lake Dillon," Chris says. "So we asked the architects to showcase those views in every room as much as possible."

Another challenge for principal architect Michael Houx and project manager Jarrett Buxkemper of BHH Partners was to provide amply sized, inviting spaces for large family gatherings while also designing the plan in such a way that the couple's children—now adults with families of their own—would each have their own bedroom-and-bath "privacy zone" within the home. "Although this is a 5,500-square-foot home, it was also important to them that there be a coziness inside that wouldn't be expected of a home this size," Buxkemper says.

Finally, to accommodate and be close to their elderly parents, the owners needed the master suite and guest suite to share the same floor, located off of the main living area on the second floor.



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(With seniors—and their own retirement—in mind, they made sure the home would include an elevator.) The scheme that ultimately evolved from their discussions achieved all of the owners' requirements in three living levels, each with its own distinctive design theme.

Martha, who admits that she sometimes has a difficult time visualizing how floor plans will translate from the page, says she was “very impressed” when interior designers Maria Markel and Kristin Lipari of Markel Design Group came to their first meeting with a myriad of creative ideas and even sketches of what the concepts would look like. She was so impressed that the Frisco firm ultimately landed the job.

Markel, an accomplished illustrator, explains that detailed sketches of the various aspects of a home's interior really help clients to “see” the finished project. “They wanted the home to feel very warm and inviting but also elegant, so I'd say the theme was mountain elegance,” she says. Martha had accumulated a thick dossier of favorite photographs from magazines and home tours that she shared with Markel, easing the decision-making for all.



A coffee nook with fireplace and overstuffed chairs is a favorite cozy space.

Markel added her own creative spin to a small “coffee nook” off of the kitchen that became one of the couple's favorite comfy places. Two overstuffed chairs face a handsome stone fireplace, which transitions to a stone wall with inset cabinetry concealing a flat-panel television—Markel's idea. “We loved that she came up with that, because it gives us extra storage space plus a handy place to put the coffee maker,” says Martha. “And it's just great-looking.”

The home's rich palette of blues, reds, and golds—Martha's preferred colors are jewel tones—lend the home a regal ambience. Other sumptuous details abound, such as the silk trellis-patterned curtains that frame the soaring views from the great room, and a stately brass candelabra in the adjacent dining room. Considering its dramatic impact, you'd never know that the home's interior scheme almost came as an afterthought. Between the complications of orchestrating a move to Colorado and finding and transitioning into new jobs—she as a health care executive and he in commercial real estate—the couple had put off choosing an interior designer until the foundation had actually been poured.

“We encourage people to get an interior designer on board as soon as possible so we can coordinate our architectural designs with their plans,” Houx explains. So while Chris and Martha's

timing could have presented problems, the architect adds, “It turned out very well, though we had to make a few adjustments to bring those ideas in.” The minor tweaking included enlarging the coffee nook, reworking the kitchen, and repositioning the pantry behind a big, red antiques barn door on rollers.

Because the owners wanted the home’s foyer to set a distinctively gracious tone for the rest of the home, it too received intense design attention. With the entryway occupying a compact area below the main floor, the owners were worried that the space might feel claustrophobic. “We wanted the entry to be its own distinct space,” Chris says, “and Maria opened it up so that visitors could see into the incredible view—which invited them to come upstairs.”

Still, that grand entrance lacked a focal point. For that, the couple turned to Breckenridge Fine Art, the source of many artworks in the home, where they purchased Rapture, a bronze of a nude couple entwined in an embrace by renowned Oregon sculptor Martin Eichinger. The Markel team pulled it all together, designing a stunning grotto with a sheet of water streaming down a large mirror set into the stone wall behind the statue. Aesthetics aside, the cascade-like Humidifall serves to keep the home’s air from getting too dry at the high altitude.



Left to right: The master suite offers sweeping mountain views; fabric wall coverings give bathrooms a Victorian feel; a covered patio serves as a transition from outdoors to indoors.

That foyer serves as a taste of the many wonderfully livable spaces to come, says Martha, noting that when all three sons first visited, “they kept walking around trying to decide which bedroom suite each would choose.” It was an understandable dilemma, since each boasts its own unique features. The third level, for example, has a comfortable lofted sitting area overlooking the great room below. The mood here is more playful and contemporary, with an outsize zebra painting in the bedroom whimsically echoed by the bed’s red-and-black-striped comforter.

When someone in the main-level guest suite wants to relax, with the touch of a button what appears to be a framed aspen painting rises into the wall, and a television appears—technology compliments of a California company appropriately called VisionArt Galleries. The couple’s 2-year-old grandson will probably want to claim this bedroom, since it also has a secret door leading to a closet space under the eaves that the family calls “the bear cave,” a hidey-hole filled with giant stuffed bears, toys, a little bookcase, and a mini-futon where a kid can grab a nap.



The lower floor is all about fun, with a billiards room, a luxuriously appointed bar, and couches oriented around a wall-size TV. Two bedrooms flank the play spaces. A bunkroom with six built-in beds—reserved for future grandkids—includes a wall cubby wired for kid-oriented high-tech entertainment gizmos. The other bedroom opens onto an expansive stone deck overlooking the golf course and offering sweeping mountain views. Guests staying here can pop out for a midnight soak in the hot tub or lounge around the fire pit and watch the sun set behind the mountains, accompanied by background music from a burbling stone-and-log waterfall.

The waterfall and its pond almost didn't make it. When they were planning their Colorado home from Texas, the couple had envisioned a meandering stream, but no such water feature existed near their Breck Highlands lot. "We were having lunch outside here about six weeks before completion, and it was so lovely that I realized we would be spending a lot of time out on this patio," Martha recalls. "So I told my husband I'd really like that waterfall. He called the builder right away and said, 'It's back in!'"

And just like that, a wish they had forgotten came true.

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