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Our Hobbies & Our Ho



*Heape's home (above), family room (left),  
photos by Chris Johnson*

**T**HE PROVERBIAL EXPRESSION “a man’s home is his castle” connotes the principle of individual ownership and privacy and is afforded in the United States Constitution. The reference to “castle” implies that the owners are the rulers of their own domain. In fact, the Fourth Amendment of our Constitution protects these rulers (our citizens) against “unreasonable searches and seizures.” While doing research for this story, it is apparent exactly how important that privacy is for many individuals. After breaking through the barriers of some, it is also apparent that you never know what there is or who might be living right next door.

Although it is true that some are more private than others, one thing is the same: people tend to have homes that reflect their hobbies, professions, or passions. Many of the individuals were delighted to share their homes and their hobbies. Some needed a little coercing but once invited in, a visitor could tell that they too had a home that reflected their interests and lifestyles.

#### **CUSTOM BUILDING**

Most people build their homes to fit their needs and desires and then furnish them after they are complete. Mary Alice Heape of Dallas chose to build her home a little differently.

**Homes** By Wendy Crooks

Mary Alice and her husband Scott have been married more than 27 years and had collected quite a few furnishings during that time. Unfortunately, it was difficult to find a home design capable of accommodating all of the items they cherished, so she and her husband decided to custom design and build a home in Dallas. Mary Alice is the president of The Etcetera Collection, a New York based women's clothing company, so making decisions quickly comes natural to her.

Three of the rooms had to be designed specifically to accommodate either rugs or furniture. The first of these rooms was the beautiful dining room that is positioned off the foyer. The room had to be large enough to fit the great English table and 17<sup>th</sup> Century buffet. The room seats 14 comfortably. The pale blue Persian rug was also a piece that served as inspiration for the décor. The family room also had to be sized to perfection for Mrs. Heape's enormous area rug, which nearly covers the entire room. It is a Persian Meshad that is over 150 years old.

With the help of interior designer Vicki Crew, Mrs. Heape was able to turn her house into a fabulously comfortable yet beautifully decorated home.

Throughout the home there is a Belgian influence. Paintings, tapestries, and furniture from Belgium have been collected as a reminder and tribute to Mrs. Heape's heritage. A personal favorite was the adorable collection of little chairs, tables, and a cradle that were placed throughout the home. One small table was even set with silver items that

belonged to Mrs. Heape's three grown sons when they were babies.

The home also uses three antique doors as beautiful, yet functional accents. One of the old wooden doors coincidentally has Mr. Heape's initials carved in a prominent



*Tuttle's home handball court*

*photo by Chris Johnson*

position. The heavy door came from an old church and the initials actually are biblical in nature but it certainly does lend itself to the custom home aspect even more. One of the old doors is the cover for the home's elevator. Although it is very chic, Mrs. Heape admitted they don't use the elevator much. "We mostly use it to move heavy pieces up and down, like luggage and Christmas decorations, but we were planning for the future and getting older when we included that feature."

The back staircase is decorated with old

barometers that have been collected over the years. Mr. Heape is a geologist and the founder and president of H&S Production Inc, an oil and gas company.

It is obvious that Mrs. Heape surrounds herself with things that remind her of the people she loves. As an example, an old piano bench cover she had in her previous home was a brown needlepoint piece. "Even though it didn't match anything that I had at the time, I couldn't bear to throw it out. It seemed like such a waste to throw out what someone worked so hard on, so I tucked it away for years. When we were picking out things for the new house, I asked Vicki if she could use it anywhere," said Mrs. Heape. Vicki Crew turned it into a gorgeous pillow that now sits prominently on the bed in the master suite.

#### A HANDBALL HOBBY

Mike Tuttle is an individual who does a lot of his playing close to home – real close! His passion for handball got a lot closer to home

about ten years ago when he and his wife built their home on a rolling hill in Frisco. "My wife, Stephanie, actually had the idea. 'Build it and they will come,' she said." So they did. They built a full-sized handball court in the basement right off of the master bedroom. "I did more research on that room than any other part of the house!" said Mr. Tuttle.

Mr. Tuttle said his wife was right. Over the years, many have certainly come to play. The Tuttles are also members of Bent Tree Bible Fellowship and the kids from



Moore's sauna shower

photo by Chris Johnson

the church love to play at their house. There have been plenty of times over the years that the court has been used into the wee hours of the morning. Since the court is right off the master bedroom, these are the nights that Mrs. Tuttle sleeps in the guest room. From the sound of it, Mrs. Tuttle doesn't seem to mind too much, since so many are enjoying the court.

#### A NEED TO BREATHE

Dr. John Moore is an ear, nose, and throat specialist who practices in Plano. He became an ENT because as a child, he suffered tremendously from allergies. He spent the majority of his life trying to find the cure for allergies. After shots and surgery, he finally realized that he could only minimize the effects of allergies with

medicine but the biggest key is to give the nose what it likes – steam. “If we could all live in a steam room, we wouldn't have allergies.”

When he built his home in Dallas, Dr. Moore took his need for steam to a higher level. He added a full steam room fully equipped with a commercial steam unit. Now he can literally live in a steam room! Every day for about 10 – 20 minutes, he can lie down in the steam room, stretch, exercise, and BREATHE!

#### WILD ABOUT THEIR HOME

One couple interviewed lived in Dallas but moved to Plano about five years ago. Their intentions were to downsize because they were becoming empty nesters with their son getting married.

Their hobby ultimately prevented them from doing that. They both love to hunt and fish and have many trophy quality animals displayed throughout their home. From the formal living room to the family room, the walls and floors are covered with treasures from past excursions. With more than 70 different species displayed in their home, it is no wonder they couldn't downsize!

The attorney and his wife have traveled all over the United States, Alaska, Canada, and Central America and most of the animals have been collected in the last 15 years. The animals range from birds and fish to much larger animals, including a zebra, bobcat, and a brown bear. They have a musk ox from the Arctic Circle and a kudu from Zimbabwe and, each animal holds a very specific memory.

Taxidermy, done well, is a true art form. A good artist can even make the animal show expression.

On a tour of the home, a visitor feels like they are in a wildlife museum, surrounded by the natural beauty and grace of each of the animals. Taxidermy, done well, is a true art form. Each animal can be displayed in many different ways and the taxidermist needs to know how the owner wants his trophy to be portrayed. A good artist can even make the animal show expression. When asked about the cost involved in such a hobby, the homeowner stated simply “Well over \$100,000 has been spent between hunts and taxidermy.”

The couples' hobby has led them to different parts of the world and helped them make many life long friends. They are avid supporters of the Dallas Safari Club whose goal is to preserve hunters' rights, promote outdoor education, and conserve wildlife. The Dallas Safari Club has worldwide membership and publishes a quarterly magazine called, “Game Trails.” The club also hosts an annual convention with more than 700 exhibitors from around the world. In keeping with its mission to promote education, the Dallas Safari Club

has started a youth education program that they call "S-A-F-E-T-Y" (an acronym for Shooting Archery Field Excellency Trials for Youth) that is designed to train and inspire young people to improve their outdoor skills. Instruction on first aid and safety are key elements to the program. A number of middle schools in the outlying areas of Dallas have adopted this program for their middle school students.

Cutting horses involve a herd of calves, some fancy footwork by a horse & the ability of the rider to separate one calf from the group.

There is so much to learn about the sport with one of the benefits being able to admire these regal animals. These homeowners have literally gone wild with their hobby and their home!

#### HORSING AROUND

In 2001, Plano resident, Reagan Lancaster retired from a computer software business as president of field operations only to start another company in 2002. He is now a venture capitalist and founder, CEO of Sourcetap, Inc, an enterprise software company headquartered in Dallas.

While Reagan and Lisa Lancaster's primary residence is in Plano, they also have a home on 130 acres in Pilot Point where they "horse around." Mr. Lancaster originally bought the ranch to pursue calf roping. After a horse fell on his knee causing him to require reconstructive knee surgery, he turned his attention to his daughter, Kyle, and her interest in horses. She quickly began learning the art of cutting horses. Cutting horses involve a herd of calves, some fancy footwork by a horse and the ability of the rider to separate one calf from the group. Kyle, with her desire for success in the world of cutting horses, seems to be in good company. According to the National Cutting Horse Association, cutting is one of the fastest growing sports and offers tremendous excitement and drama for horse, rider, and spectators alike.



*Trophy's of a local hunter*

*photos by Wendy Crooks*

The Lancaster's Pilot Point ranch encompasses not only the 130 acres of grazing land, but a 4,000 square foot home, a herd of 120-130 Black Angus cattle, several dogs, a few miniature horses, quarter horses, high performance cutting horses and an indoor horse arena. The arena is 150 x 300 feet and is used for practice work. According to Mrs. Lancaster, Kyle is currently working with a trainer who lives in Palmer, Texas, so they frequently travel to Palmer for work as well. Now the Lancaster's arena is being considered as a location to host competitions. What started out as a hobby is rapidly galloping towards another great business venture for Reagan Lancaster.

#### GADGETS GALORE

Some men spend a lot of money on golf or guns. Others admit to spending considerable amounts of money on gadgets and electronics. This man's passion for the high tech stems from his computer background, as he is an e-commerce executive for a company in Dallas. "It started when we had our first home and our first child. We had a pool





Lancaster's arena (above) and stables (below)

photos by Chris Johnson

and my wife was extremely afraid of a possible drowning. I put a few different components together and developed a system, which allowed the house to 'talk.' When a door or window would open, the computer generated voice would tell us which one it was," he shared. He admitted that this security feature was just the beginning. "Now our house tells our kids 'Happy Birthday' and has special buttons we can push when we want them to turn the television down or go to bed. We even have a very modern dinner bell, which, with a push of a button, makes a gong sound and says, 'Dinner is ready.' It can even remind me several days in advance that our wedding anniversary is coming!

After adding the talking feature, this computer guru added other features, which would allow him to dial into the home either by phone or computer and make changes to the house remotely. He also added features that would automate the pool. Although it was an old pool, it





Lancaster's ranch

photo by Chris Johnson

had modern conveniences such as adding water automatically when the level dropped too low.

The home, nearly 7,000 square feet, was specifically designed to fit the needs and desires of the water enthusiast.

Now two houses, three additional children, and a lot of components later, the current house has become extremely automated. He confessed, "It's true that I had to spend a lot on these components to make them all work together the way that I want them to. I always find new and improved gadgets to make the house do more. My wife doesn't always agree with the purchases but, unlike some of my friends who golf, this hobby really does keep me close to home. I think that

makes her tolerate it more." Although you really can't put a price on your family's security, this home automation fan would be a lot better off if he could just set the house to self-clean...automatically.

#### LIVING ON THE LAKE

As a custom builder, Larry Stone gets to build homes that suit his needs and those of his family, move into them and then sell them when he's ready. He has a fabulous new home he has recently completed. It is situated on a beautiful lot with a spectacular view of Lake Lewisville. The home, nearly 7,000 square feet, was specifically designed to fit the needs and desires of the water enthusiast. With the exception of maybe two rooms, the entire home has a breathtaking view of the lake, the zero edge pool, or both. It is truly an extraordinary home.

Since baking is more than a hobby for many, one cannot help but be wowed by the kitchen. It is truly a chef or a baker's dream. It has the most beautiful appliances and the layout makes it a very workable kitchen. Extra attention was also paid to detail in the cabinetry. The built-in spice

racks are conveniently located right next to the stovetop and just a turnabout from the island.

Water and baking are great but if that doesn't "float your boat" or "ice your cake," this home is certainly fully equipped to satisfy the needs of the entertainment enthusiast. A great upstairs game room is perfect for the kids and downstairs, below the main floor; an unbelievable area was designed specifically for adult fun. (Okay, kids could possibly be allowed as well.) The downstairs game room includes a refrigerator and wet bar, an exercise room, and a fantastic media room complete with a fine projection television. All of this and you can walk outside from the basement since the home is located on a hill.

It is a spectacular home just waiting to see what hobbyist moves in!

#### KEEPING BEES

Most people see a bee and they get frightened and run. Zachary Fuchs, 15, sees a bee, or even hundreds, and gets animated. Zachary Fuchs, who is the son of George and Diane Fuchs of Frisco, is a sophomore at Centennial High School.

Diane Fuchs was originally the one interested in beekeeping. She became involved in the Collin Community Hobby Beekeepers Association through a friend who had a daughter who was crowned the American Honey Queen. It was through her participation that Mrs. Fuchs realized Zachary was a likely candidate to get involved in the hobby of beekeeping.

Zachary reported his bees made 60 lbs. of honey the first year. With visions of early retirement in his head, he invested in two more hives.

Two years ago Zachary was one of five who were chosen by the Collin County Hobby Beekeepers Association to participate in their Youth Scholarship Program. The scholarship was designed to educate and instill an appreciation for the art of beekeeping.

As part of the scholarship, Zachary was assigned a mentor for a year and given five three-hour classes that trained him in beekeeping. He was also given all of the equipment necessary to begin keeping his own bees. He was given the kit to make the bee house, beekeeper's veil, gloves, smoker, and even his starter bees.

George Fuchs' hobby of gardening made him think about bees in a different light. He noticed one year that his plants weren't thriving as they once were. He quickly began to notice that the bees weren't as prevalent as they once were and realized the lack of bees could be part of the problem. He knew his plants would benefit from having the bees around and therefore did not object to his son setting up his beehives in the back yard.

Zachary reported that his bees made 60 pounds of honey the first year. His mom laughed and said, "I think it was beginner's luck." With visions of early retirement in his head, Zachary invested in two more hives. Unfortunately his hives only produced half of the honey it did the year before.

To imagine the enormity of each hive, it is important to know that one honeybee only produces one twelfth of a teaspoon of honey in its entire life. But, give the bees a little credit; they do a lot of work in their short lives. A bee only lives, at the most, four months. The bees are generally most active in April and the honey can be taken in late June or early July. Zachary said that he generally checks on his hives about once a month, which is what is recommended. He checks them to make sure they are free from disease and mites.

Despite the fluctuating honey production, Zachary continues to press on with his beekeeping and plans to keep bees for many years to come.

No matter what our passions and hobbies are, our homes tend to reflect who we are and what we hold close to our hearts. From the health and safety of our children to memories made with our families and friends, our homes are our castles no matter how big or small they are.

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*Wendy Crooks is a freelance writer living in Plano.*

*Zachary Fuchs (above),  
Gadgetman's latest project (below)  
photos provided Wendy Crooks*

