





# Living in the View

By Joanne M. Anderson

Photos by Laura's Focus Photography

"We could have built our house forward for a bigger view," states Steve Bodtke of his six-year-old, 2-story, contemporary, lodge-like home. "We wanted the privacy of being off the road and close enough to the creek to hear it. We feel like we live 'in the view.'"

Steve started coming to Blacksburg in the early 1980s to visit his girl friend, Martha. After graduating from Longwood College, he landed a teaching job in Roanoke, married the girl friend and moved to Blacksburg. "We bought our first house in Christiansburg for \$39,000, in part because we were able to get a fair interest rate – at the time – of 11.75 percent." Not long after, they rented that house and lived for eight years at a storage facility where Martha was resident manager.

"That worked well for us, with twin babies and me starting a home improvement business," states Steve, adding that it was like living in a fish bowl. Once his real estate career started taking shape, the couple moved from there, but it wasn't until 2002 that they built this dream house just a couple miles from downtown Blacksburg.

"We didn't plan to build as early as 2002, but with interest rates much more favorable than 11.75 percent and wood being removed from one of my development projects (Coal Bank Ridge with partner, Bill Ellenbogen), it made good sense to move forward."

Steve and Martha perused all the usual home plans books and Web sites, finding several features they liked, but not all in one plan. "Aspiring architect friend Brian Maslyk helped us create the floor plan we wanted, and Jason Boyle of Green Valley Builders took the plan from concept to reality," explains Steve.

"We broke ground in November of 2002 on a day when the drought that gripped the area for months ended with rainy day after rainy day. It rarely stopped raining during the entire construction process. In spite of weather, challenges and changes along the way, Jason got the house done on time and on budget. We moved in on a June day in 2003," says Steve.

The Bodtkes' main objective of creating a house that exudes a lodge-like, rustic feel was achieved in every way. What used to be geographically-specific to the Adirondacks – rustic, wood, stone, massive front porches – has spread throughout the country. "Rustic without roughing it is the easiest way to define the style," says Jon Prime, co-owner of the Adirondack Store in Lake Placid, N.Y. So while Steve didn't mention Adirondack as an inspiration, it is very similar in that the "great camps of the Gilded Age" (as they were called) in the Adirondack Mountains were made from local timber and stone in a rustic contemporary (for the time) style.



A visitor to the house has a choice right inside the front door: look ahead across random width, random length, random species hardwood floors to the great room and a floor to ceiling stone fireplace (wood-burning, with an energy efficient insert), and the woods beyond or turn around and gaze back at the valley and mountain view framed by the forest.

The more formal dining area (which isn't really formal at all in the traditional sense) has a huge wood buffet along one wall, obviously an antique oak counter. Open the top left drawer, and you'll see that it came out of the Bank of Eggleston, 1921-24. The dining table is very "green". It's made from mango wood, which is never harvested until a tree stops producing fruit. The walls really are green - a mossy hue called river rock. Other interior walls are suede, and both paints have a lightly textured appearance.

The kitchen is a unique blend of ordinary cabinets and tile embellished with other common items, like baskets, shelves and tiles applied on top of other tiles for a unique look. "Martha picked out all the colors," Steve explains. "And she created all these little features in the kitchen, combining a regular cupboard, for example, with small shelves on either

side and little pull-out baskets on each shelf - three familiar things assembled in a distinctive fashion. She's very clever."

The daily dining table is a high wood item (from Big Lots, Steve pointed out) that affords a wooded view on three sides of this wood and glass room that juts out of the back of the house. The hot tub on the patio had been turned off for the winter, and wood fencing that Steve built zigzags out back among towering trees.

The original plan upstairs called for three bedrooms and a bath. Seeing one large, octagonal room as wasted space, the ever practical Steve and Martha enclosed much of it for storage and made a small loft spot that could double for an overnight guest. Each of the two bedrooms has its own bathroom. The master bedroom on the main floor has a stackable washer and dryer in "her" walk-in closet - he has a separate closet. The laundry component is to accommodate dirty clothes should they ever have to live on one floor.

The lower level has another bedroom and bathroom, along with a generous playroom, 2-car garage and Steve's office. "The office was like an afterthought, but more an in-process thought," Steve explains. "As they were excavating for



this lower level, I saw it would be above ground. Jason took this interruption to the construction to add walls, insulation and a window for my office all in stride, and here I am with my own outside entrance and view of the woods.”

The little office is very pleasant, if a bit crammed with files and books, a cat curled up in a basket on a shelf, a 130-pound Newfoundland (or two) taking up half the floor space (or more).

What the Bodtkes envisioned as a comfortable, open, inviting home is far from in appearance only. As Steve

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points out, “We take in stray cats and an occasional stray student,” referring to a Virginia Tech student currently living in his son’s former downstairs bedroom. There are eight cats in residence, curled up in all sorts of curious spots throughout

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Pets and people enjoy one another’s company and everyone who comes over, too. “One of the best things we did was put in two kitchen sinks,” Steve says, referring to folks gathering in the kitchen and often near or at a sink. His casual style really comes through when he says “If you can’t relax and put your feet up on anything we own, we’ve done something wrong.”

Well, let the record show that they’ve done everything right in designing a rustic, contemporary home that embraces cheerful, warm hospitality in abundance.