

WISCONSIN COUPLE FINDS PEACE AND TRANQUILITY  
ON MARYLAND'S EASTERN SHORE



# On the Wye

BY KELLI ROSEN  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANNE GUMMERSON

This breathtaking six-acre lot nestled along a peninsula on the Wye River provides the perfect backdrop for this stretched-out 4,500-square-foot cottage.



Drawn out along an idyllic shoreline, this home is accented with native plantings selected for their ability to withstand harsh coastal conditions.

**K**eith and Debbi Patten have always been fond of Maryland—Debbi has family in Annapolis, and Keith, who is originally from California, graduated from the Naval Academy. Interested in waterfront living, the pair decided that once Keith retired from his position as president of Logistics Health Inc. in La Crosse, Wisconsin, they would begin searching for property in Queenstown, a small town on the Eastern Shore. In 2003, the couple purchased a breathtaking six-acre lot nestled along a

peninsula on the Wye River, along with an existing home Keith Patten hoped to remodel.

"When we first bought the property, I was hoping we could just add a second story, but that was just not meant to be," he laughs. Turns out, very little of the former 1970's-style home remains, mainly some foundation walls and a bit of the first-floor footprint. "I promised Debbi the home she always wanted, and at the end of the day, this was the home she wanted."

To transform the small, outdated digs into a place the Pattens wanted to call





The hand-forged staircase sets the tone of the house with a design of natural elements that can be seen throughout the home.

**RIGHT:** A long approach to the home terminates at a circular driveway that grants access to both front door and garage.

**BELOW:** Craftsman Billy Moore made this custom staircase with hand-forged wrought-iron railing with sea grass, dragonflies, catfish, mice and butterflies.



home, Keith and Debbi assembled a dream team of sorts from the very beginning of the project. "Debbi instantly liked Bob's work," says Patten, of Robert Hammond, principal at Hammond Wilson Architects in Annapolis, Maryland. "She wanted a home that looked like his style." Other team members included builder Bert Anderson of Annapolis-based Pyramid Builders; interior designer Stephen N. O'Brien of Easton, Maryland; and landscape architect Steve McHale of Upper Marlboro, Maryland-based McHale Landscape Design.

Assembling the team is one thing; empowering the members to make wise decisions is quite another. Fortunately for this crew, the Pattens did both. "The homeowners cemented who they wanted, and then got behind us and gave us the platform to do our best," says Anderson. "They allowed us to be creative and to use our knowledge and experience in such a way that the project ultimately benefited."

According to Hammond, who considers the new 4,500-square-foot home a rambling cottage, he integrated both traditional forms like a central hall, curved staircase, and crown molding along with exterior details based on traditional architecture. His goal was to create a home with presence from both the street and water, but one that was not overwhelming. "I wanted it to have an appropriate scale to the neighborhood," he says. "It is a larger home but it's broken down into elements, a series of smaller buildings, and the large overhangs and gables help to keep the profile low by disguising the second floor."

Although the exterior design of the structure is traditional by Eastern Shore standards, the layout is anything but conventional—something the homeowners surely appreciate. All of the main living





To complement the equestrian theme great room, designer Stephen O'Brian chose rugged upholstered pieces, including a pair of burgundy leather English rolled-arm lounge chairs and ottomans, and a camel and burgundy tweed chenille sofa.

space as well as the master suite, complete with its own foyer, sitting area and dressing room, is positioned on the first floor. Three additional bedrooms, along with Debbi's quilting room, are upstairs. Keith's climate-controlled wine cellar is in the basement. "I took advantage of the opportunity to stretch the home along the property," Hammond says, and adds that this linear design allows for spectacular views from virtually anywhere in the home.

The Patterns also wanted the spaces to flow. "We really wanted an open floor plan because our kids live nearby and they are here all the time with their friends," says Patten, "plus we love to entertain and always have lots of guests in the home."

That's perhaps why Hammond centrally located the kitchen—the heart of many homes, but especially apropos at the Patten residence—to serve various rooms, including the dining room, butler's pantry, screened porch, and great room. But it was kitchen designer Brad Creer, of Bethesda-based Bradford Design, who transformed the practical area into an aesthetically pleasing one.

"I really wanted the cabinetry to look like furniture, or found pieces, rather than manufactured cabinets," says Creer, who designed each piece himself and had them custom made by Quality Custom Cabinetry in New Holland, Pennsylvania. He chose cherry cabinets and then painted them with an antique-white rub. To warm the space and to give it a "less clinical" look, he opted for darker wood tones throughout the room, such as the arched hood design. He is especially pleased with the fully integrated Sub-Zero refrigerator armoire. "It is now a beautiful focal point rather than something to hide."

To further give the appearance of furniture, Creer painted the toe-boards black. "This really makes the feet pop," he



Designed by Bradford Design, the kitchen is an inviting hearth room with furniture-like cabinetry and a large custom island. The selective use of complementary finishes, coupled with a refrigerator armoire and island with matching finish, are the foremost distinguishing features of this kitchen.

says. For a decorative touch, he incorporated glass fronts into many of the cabinets and double-stacked them to break up the vertical look, an especially wise choice, considering the 10-foot ceilings. Lighting, too, played a key role in the kitchen's design. Greer selected pendant lights that echo the contour of the island's curve, and installed lots of recessed lighting, especially around workstations, all on dimmers to allow for a more intimate setting while guests are visiting.

#### FROM HOUSE TO HOME

When it came to the home's overall interior design, designer O'Brien honored the homeowners' requests and took his cues from items they already owned. "The whole house is comfortable," he says. "Keith and Debbi wanted it to be dog-friendly and kid-friendly, and I don't think there is an area where you can't just put your feet up and watch a ballgame. This is understated luxury but with rich elements; however, there is nothing here that would put you off."

Debbi is also a former equestrian so the couple has collected various related pieces throughout the years, such as the horse sculpture and prints in the great room. To complement the theme, O'Brien chose ruggedly upholstered pieces for the room, including the pair of burgundy leather English rolled-arm lounge chairs and ottomans, and the camel and burgundy tweed chenille sofa.

As for the dining room, O'Brien immediately suggested a large circular table, not only because the room itself is almost perfectly square but also because the Pattens enjoy great conversation with guests over dinner. "This just seemed like the ideal place for roundtable discussions," O'Brien says. He selected a mahogany table from Henredon along with neoclassical-transitional chairs upholstered in a soft aqua damask.



The focal point of the dining room is a large circular mahogany table from Herndon along with the neoclassical-transitional chairs upholstered in a soft aqua green damask.

A custom-made hutch is the perfect complement to an adjacent bar area that allows the homeowners to entertain large groups of visitors with ease.

and accented the room with family-heirloom artwork Keith inherited from his mother.

O'Brien relied on his color palette to infuse a nature-inspired feeling throughout the home, opting for hues resembling the sky and water, as well as the native grasses, rather than the more traditional darker earth tones. Both Keith and Debbi Patten expressed an interest in honoring the region around them. In fact, one of the couple's favorite aspects of the design is the kitchen's bluish-green tile backsplash mural of a heron and native grasses over the range, which Debbi and O'Brien discovered at Architectural Ceramics in Rockville, Maryland. "It was really important to us,



**OPPOSITE TOP:** Designer Stephen O'Brien designed valances in his master suite to mask the remote-controlled shades installed for sun protection.

**OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** The spacious master bath features a focal-point claw-foot tub, plenty of natural light, and a large, luxury walk-in shower.

especially Debbi, to emphasize our location," says Patten. It was also the homeowners' idea to incorporate an Eastern Shore motif, complete with marsh plants, frogs and dragonflies, into the foyer's winding staircase railing, which was ultimately created by custom wrought iron artist Billy Moore of Westminster, Maryland-based Thor's Hammer and Forge.

Ceiling treatments throughout the Patten home also add warmth and interest on that oft-forgotten fifth wall. "I really like to make every ceiling special," says Hammond. In the master retreat, a dramatic two-story cathedral ceiling "makes the room its own place," he says. O'Brien chose a light palladium blue hue to accent the coffered ceiling in the great room, while the kitchen's tray ceiling further delineates the space.

Noticably absent throughout much of the home are window treatments. O'Brien purposefully wanted nothing on the windows except for the molding, which, he says, is the perfect frame for the gorgeous water views. He did, however, design valances in the master suite to mask the remote-controlled shades installed for sun protection.

#### EXTERIOR CONSIDERATIONS

Living so close to the water does present some challenges, especially potentially dangerous wind and rain. Therefore, Hammond opted for double-glazed windows throughout the home, as well as a combination of fiberglass and copper roofing materials, and cedar shingles for the gables above the eaves. "These are especially durable for waterfront properties," he says. Hammond also incorporated deep exterior overhangs as architectural elements that provide sun protection to the home's interior.

There was also an existing boat-








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When the homeowners began plans for their dream home, a quilting room was high on the list of priorities.

house on the property, which Hammond renovated as well. "We did not change the footprint but we updated the exterior and changed the roof lines to tie it into the architecture of the main house," he says.

Even the surrounding landscape was designed with the main home in mind. "It is intended to complement the architecture of the home rather than compete with it," says landscape architect Steve McHale of McHale Landscape Design. "We also wanted to create a strong connection to the water." That's why he planted very few shrubs, bushes and trees around the perimeter. "We did not want anything to block the views," he says.

For the look of a true Eastern Shore home, McHale selected mostly native plants and grasses, such as paricum, river birch and inkberry. "They can withstand the winter winds," he says, "plus they are low maintenance and hardy."

Although the previous home had a pool, the new layout required its location to be moved; now it is positioned in front of the detached garage and pool house. "We did not want objectionable views of a pool with a cover on it from the home during the winter months," McHale explains, and points out that its current placement allows for more expansive views during the summer. He also chose carnation rose flagstone for the pool's surround because although it is genuine

flagstone, its tan, earthy color does not absorb heat like the more traditional varieties—so it's more pleasing to walk on with bare feet. The pergola, nestled in a niche of flowering knockout roses, not only architecturally anchors that end of the home but it also defines the ideal outdoor spot for entertaining.

So for this winning team, it seems they didn't just get a hit—they knocked it clear into the stands. The Patters could not be more pleased with the finished product. "I think the team did an incredible job," says Patten. "They took what the lot had to offer and turned it into something peaceful and very comfortable. If you had asked me, 'What do you expect?' I could not have put this house into words. We are both so happy here." ♦

*Kelli Rosen is a frequent contributor to ChesapeakeHome.*

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