

# Charm and Character

By Ann Cipperly

**N**estled among towering hardwoods at the end of a long driveway, the house Carolyn Bruce Reid grew up in is filled with wonderful childhood memories. “I think the memories are especially sweet,” says Carolyn, “because I grew up in a time when people weren’t so busy. I was allowed the chance to be just a kid. I played outside all day every day in the summer.”

Carolyn and her husband, Chuck, also lived in the house with her mother, Bette Bruce, when they came back to Auburn for graduate school. “Those two years added more wonderful memories, especially having that time with Mom. I think this house means as much to Chuck as it does to me.”

Built in 1954 by the late Dr. Jim and Bette Bruce, the house is unique with 12-inch thick rock walls and a stone carport and sidewalk along with other elements providing character. A small rock house had been built on the property for the stone mason to live in while the house was being built.

The Reids wanted to update the house and make it livable without compromising its original character.

Photos by FlipFlopFoto.com





They hired Meagan Murphree and Crystal Lashley of L & M Interior Design to head the project. “When we do renovations,” says Murphree, “we design and oversee the construction since we have our contractors’ license, and we can furnish it.”

The home has been the family gathering place for years with Easter egg hunts held on the lawn. Since the Reids wanted a place to sit in front, the carport was converted into a porch. A cushioned swing bed crafted from a door and porch columns provide comfortable seating. A new cedar ceiling was installed along with cedar and brick columns.

The front entrance was enhanced to be more inviting by closing off one of the doors.

“When we were creating new spaces from the old spaces,” says Lashley, “we were trying not to add too much onto the house to give them the rooms they wanted. We didn’t want to be able to tell the old from the new when we were finished.”

The front door opens to the foyer where the ceiling was raised and covered with reclaimed wood, while a planter was removed to construct a wall.

To the right of the foyer, the original rock fireplace creates a stunning centerpiece for the cozy study. On the fireplace, a watercolor of the original house is mounted onto small planks from the original kitchen cabinets. An entrance to the kitchen was closed to create





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an office space with barn-style doors to hide the working area.

Sliding barn doors replaced interior doors, and hardwood floors were installed throughout. The enhancements echo a rustic chic look with blended neutral colors.

The new dining room has a coffer ceiling for a timeless look, while a rustic chandelier over the round table provides soft lighting.

The original kitchen is now the pantry. A spacious, handsome new kitchen was constructed, featuring a 12-foot quartzite island with upholstered stools. Behind the seating, a wet bar with an ice maker and glassware are convenient for entertaining.

To bring in light, a wall of windows was added in front of the farm sink that overlooks a wooded setting and a cascading fountain created with a grist-mill stone found on the property.

Over the stove, a striking dark wood hood was designed by Murphree and Lashley. Handmade subway tiles in soft grey provide the backsplash. Reclaimed brick pavers form the flooring, adding texture and character.

The original living room was redesigned for comfort with a stone fireplace flanked by built-in wooden cabinets. The ceiling was raised, and reclaimed wooden beams added for an



aged look. Windows were converted to glass doors for easy access to the covered porch.

Down the hall, a recreation room was transformed into a home theater with two rows of recliner chairs and a popcorn machine. Remotes are programmed for lights to be lowered.

Two laundry rooms are located at opposite sides of the house for convenience. Two bedrooms and two baths are beyond the original laundry room.

Another laundry room was added on the other side of the house where two original bedrooms are located, including the master with a spacious bath converted from a bedroom. A soaking tub features a custom channel tub filler providing a soothing sound. Walls are accented with slate and glass mosaic tile, while a spacious shower has assorted sprays for a home spa experience.

The master bedroom has rock walls on one side, which required the curtains to be mounted from the ceiling. Lighting is provided by an Italian-style wood and metal chandelier sparkling with crystal beading. A small adjoining room with a coffee bar provides access to the porch for savoring morning brew in a relaxed setting.

Since the house did not contain a powder room for guests, the designers turned a closet

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into an elegant space with the sink in an antique chest.

On one side of the house, a new covered porch offers serene outdoor living, showcasing a wood-burning fireplace with a reclaimed-beam forming the mantel. A wrought-iron chandelier over the seating area provides soft light at dusk.

A grilling area and storage cabinet concealing a small refrigerator provide ease for outdoor dining.

The porch overlooks the renovated pool, which was reworked to become a saltwater pool with a hot tub. An old pool house was torn down to reveal splendid views, while another building was removed to provide a putting green.

"We reconfigured the house," says Murphree, "and only added on the kitchen, porch and garage. It took about two years from beginning to finish. We designed the floor plans, selected the materials and as we were renovating, we chose the furniture."

"Crystal and Meagan kept that goal a priority during the entire design process," says Carolyn. "The greatest compliments we have received are from my siblings and others who were familiar with the house before the renovation. They have told us that they love the changes. It is inviting, comfortable and fits our family, but it still feels like Mom's house.

"That's exactly what we hoped for," adds Carolyn. "I think Mom would be thrilled to see it now."

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