

HAPPY WITH *Nature*

Author Dershie McDevitt has named the highest point of her home the Cuckoo's Nest. It's from there she writes her cozy mysteries and looks out to survey 13 acres that she and her husband call home.

TEXT BY LINDA WRIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM BATHIE





“Everyone loves when you’re sitting on the porch; it is like being in a tree house.”

—LINDA CONSTABLE



In 2008, Dershie and Larry McDevitt decided to take on a major renovation of the home they had purchased 15 years earlier. The house sits in a valley near Asheville, North Carolina, and Dershie exclaims, “It’s truly a fun house on a very busy piece of property with its 25 or so wild turkeys and four or five deer in the yard.” The couple substantially changed the footprint of the house during the renovation and that partially explains why the house is so funky looking, but Dershie admits it started out being a little funky.

One of the reasons the couple’s interior designer Linda Constable so enjoyed the project was Dershie’s love for a good hunt. She and Linda could sniff out the perfect, one-of-a-kind items for the home. And the room that profited most from their detecting know-how is the screened porch. “The new wicker couch looks old, but was finished with a weathered stain to instantly mellow it,” Linda says. Instead of one long dining table, two square tables were commissioned allowing more flexibility in arranging the porch for entertaining. Finds such as the red chair and the stack of school chairs added to the rustic ambience of the space. Linda shares, “Everyone loves when you’re sitting on this porch; it is like being in a tree house.”



Originally bare wood, the chest was painted in a distressed style while the top was finished with a wood stain. Two glass pendants spotlight the piece and add a warm glow to the room. With just enough room for a couple of barstools to sit opposite the drawers this piece became the perfect size island for the space.



The frieze above the fireplace is an old family piece given to Dershie's grandparents. Friends had brought the piece back from Italy as a wedding gift. It depicts children with grapes representing the Biblical passage, John 15:5. "I am the vine; you are the branches."

During the renovation, they gutted the original kitchen. The room now opens to the living room on one side and to the dining room on the other, making it easy to move between the two. In the center of the kitchen, a chest, purchased unfinished, is used as an island. Linda had decorative painter Lyna Farkas paint the sides of the chest and the old pie safe, now used for storage. Concrete countertops are etched with favorite sayings, making them special, and glass-front cabinets help keep the room light and airy.

The stained wood ceiling in the kitchen angles as it extends into the living room where it is painted white. The room's white ceiling reflects the natural light and brightens the area. This comfortable room replaces the porch as the gathering spot for the couple as the seasons get cooler.

Once finished with the renovation, Linda proclaims the McDevitts' home is comfortable, whimsical, and happy with nature, and of course, Dershie and Larry are in complete agreement.

FROM THE CUCKOO'S NEST

Dershie McDevitt studied nursing at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, but later in life she decided to return to school and take the liberal arts courses she felt she missed. Her writing teacher assigned her to write a novel as her graduate school master thesis, and that's when she says the real writing began.

The couple was living in this house and she designated the room at the highest point to be her writing area, aptly named, the Cuckoo's Nest.

Dershie was soon invited to join the oldest writing group in North Carolina. "We meet every two weeks and the group has probably produced close to 50 or 60 books and stories. We all write very different things, some fine literature, and biographies," she says. "Mine are clearly 'cozies.'"

She explains, "I wanted to write something I like to read—that's a cozy, a little romance, and murder but without the gore." Dershie is currently working on a sequel to her first book, *Just Holler Bloody Murder*.

