

Homeowner Dershie McDevitt stands before the high bed in the Cuckoo's Nest, her private sanctuary for writing...and the grandchildren's favorite sleepover room.

birds' nests to lay their eggs.

Some even mimic the color of the host bird's eggs to ensure a nurturing environment. And considering the word "cuckoo" is often used for someone or something a little out of the ordinary, you get an idea of the philosophy of life in the McDevitt household and why they call their house "The Cuckoo's Nest."

Built in the '70s by two artists on Brittain Mountain in the Reems Creek area of Weaverville, the house hardly conformed to any style or architectural discipline. They built it with a passive solar objective, using steep rooflines and a greenhouse in the lower level to act as a collecting unit. The original owners integrated lots of found objects, such as old windows gleaned from churches, and ended with a mishmash of quirky and interesting features—like a room poking through the middle of the roofline, resembling an eccentric little bird house.

The house itself was small, but Dershie and Larry McDevitt loved it and everything it represented. And besides, the view was to die for. When they decided to expand the footprint 15 years later, they were determined not to sully the character of the house.

"We wanted to honor nature as well as the spirit of the people who built the house," says Dershie. "But we were terrified to do

by Monica Jones . photos by Matt Rose

anything to it because it was so funky and we were scared of making any addition look like a prosthesis. But it needed work and we needed more room."

Laurie Miller of Glazer Architecture helped the McDevitts bring their ideas to fruition. They wanted a larger kitchen, more storage and a dining room at one end of the house with a master bathroom and walk-in closet at the other.

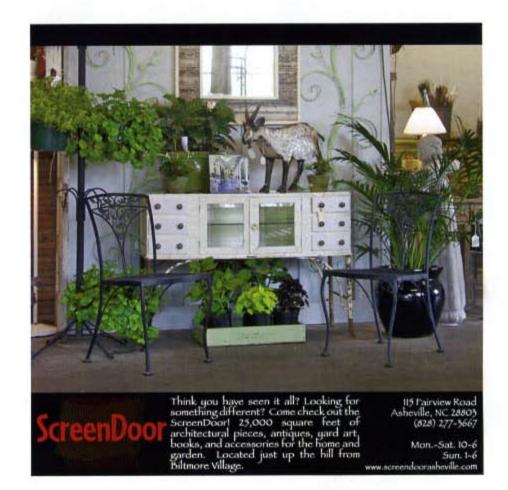
"The master bath and closet additions were the most necessary and perhaps the most challenging part of the project," says Laurie. "A few feet beyond the end of the house, the grade went rapidly uphill, which required me to fit the fairly extensive addition into a rather small space."

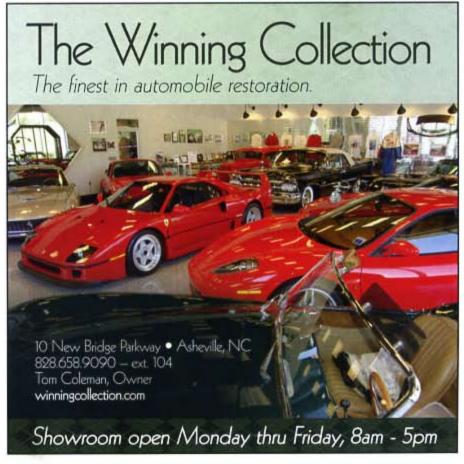
The space below what is now the dining room was a guest bedroom and workout room with a single-slope roof. To keep the spirit of the original architecture, Miller repeated the roof angle above the dining room, and the rooms below were "decapitated," according to Larry, to accommodate the floor above.

"Then, the challenge became to get the existing roof to work with the new roof," says Miller. "The McDevitts' courage prevailed and they let me blow the roof off their kitchen, moving it up to the height of the new, adjacent dining room roof. That gave us the opportunity to feature the beautiful view with the butterfly roof over the new screen porch. Dershie says the screen porch space truly defines the house."

"Laurie helped us make some great decisions," says Dershie. "She was very creative and philosophically in agreement with what we were doing, which was very important to us."

The McDevitts lived in the house during the renovation, something that most people try to avoid. But it does have its advantages. Like the day the McDevitts awoke to see the builders putting in support beams for the deck steps and they realized the perfect view from their bed would be blocked. Needless to say, the plans were reworked and the steps now lead off the







Enlarging the kitchen and adding a dining room meant raising the roofline. The weight of the hanging cupboard between kitchen and dining room is borne by rafters in the ceiling and reinforced with galvanized steel pipes and strategically placed steel plates. The distressed cabinets are by West End Cabinets.

other end of the deck.

"The view was sacred," says Miller. To accommodate the view from the house, the deck was built on different levels offering wide steps for sitting and lounging. The handrail was attached to the lower level, so the view of the mountains from the living room is uninterrupted.

There was some reconfiguring inside the house to suit their lifestyle—moving doors to improve privacy and flow, updating old bathrooms and adding central heat and air—but working with contractors Bass and Royster, the McDevitts managed to retain the quirkiness and originality of the home. Recycled objects were used where possible, like the impressive front door from England with its stained glass and leaded panels and old chests that accommodate modern sinks.

Flooring in the workout room is

made from recycled tires, and sustainable building materials like HardiPlank siding and Ipe decking will keep maintenance to a minimum. All the home's downspouts empty into a huge cistern under the lower deck, feeding the pond at the front of the house and collecting water for the vegetable garden and outdoor plantings. Both the cistern and landscaping were designed and installed by Lee Skelton of Mountainscapes.



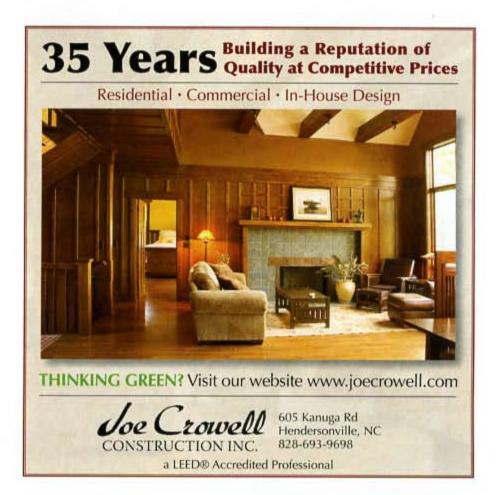
Some other things were sacrosanct, too, like the funky old bathtub on the small deck off the master bedroom and the shuttered bedroom window that opens over the enclosed stairwell to allow heat to rise naturally from below.

And, of course, that little room poking through the roof, which inspired the home's name-that magical retreat built by the original owners for their daughter. Accessed only by a steep ladder, you pop up into a small whimsical room with a high bed reminiscent of The Princess and the Pea. Tiny windows are reclaimed from the old Weaverville Library, a painted elf lurks in the corner of the closet and a carved-wood possum climbs up the trompe l'oeil tree that grows through the floor and splays its branches up the wall and across the ceiling.

"This is where I write," says Dershie, who is currently working on a

novel. "The murals and artwork are done by Joel Cole and we have more pieces of his throughout the house. The grandchildren fight over who sleeps in this room and they're happy knowing the Elf in the closet will watch over them."

The most modern part of the house is the new master bath, according to Dershie. But even here, amidst the modern soaking tub and walk-in shower (with a special hose nozzle to bathe the dogs), there are touches of warmth and tranquility, like the antique dressing table and stool, the heated towel rails reminiscent of an English country









home and cozy heated bamboo floors. The
walk-in closet off the bathroom is one of
Larry's favorite additions. He designed
multi-hinged mirrors at the junction of
the his-and-hers portions of the closet to
allow 360-degree scrutiny.

Living in a small space, the

McDevitts understand the importance

and antique-style hardware in
kitchen addition reflects the w
originality of the home. Jerem
Mandala Design constructed
countertops, etching the McD
favorite sayings into the count
a combination of walnut on th

Living in a small space, the McDevitts understand the importance of dual-purpose rooms, and the dining room addition accommodates two desks at one end for the home office, with plenty of space left over for entertaining. Suspended cabinets above the undercounter wine bar at the other end of the room were a challenge for the architects and contractors, but with galvanized steel pipes and steel plates attached to rafters in the roof, they'll hold the weight of four grown men.

The distressed-wood cabinetry

and antique-style hardware in the kitchen addition reflects the warmth and originality of the home. Jeremy French of Mandala Design constructed the concrete countertops, etching the McDevitts' favorite sayings into the counters. With a combination of walnut on the island/breakfast bar and copper topping the coffee station, the new kitchen has an eclectic quality that makes it feel like it's always been there.

"If you see the house as you come up the road," says Dershie, "it looks like some crazed child has built a Dr. Seuss edifice. When I moved out here I thought 'I don't want to have to do anything properly anymore. I just want to relax and give myself permission to play.' It's just a fun house. That's why we called it "The Cuckoo's Nest.""

TOP: Recycled stained-glass windows above an alcove sink in the Cuckoo's Nest offer a view across the rooftops. BOTTOM: The most modern part of the house is the new master bath with soaking tub, pebbled tile accents and walk-in shower (with a special shower nozzle to bathe the dogs). Radiantheat bamboo floor and heated towel rails make the room especially cozy.