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A large, two-story house with a swimming pool and patio furniture. The house has a light-colored, textured exterior and a dark roof. A large bay window is prominent on the second floor. The pool is in the foreground, and there is a patio with lounge chairs and a dining table. The sky is clear and blue.

Intimate SPACES

BY ANU VARMA

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID SCHILLING



Jackie Cherry had been living in a Chicago suburb with her family for a while when she heard about a new neighborhood being built nearby. Although she was tempted to have a look, she hesitated. It was not that she hadn't decided to put down roots here. She definitely had. The Cherry family had recently relocated from Connecticut, where they had enjoyed estate living with the added benefit of accessibility to New York City. "We always knew New York," she states. "But we never knew we'd start this love affair with Chicago, too."

Jackie was dealing with a baby with colic at the time and was understandably reluctant to begin the building process. She decided to go have a look at this new project anyway, only to lose her heart to plans for an old-country English Tudor home on a lovely piece of property with large trees and a winding street. In the past, Jackie had done many types of exteriors and interiors, from Nantucket to French provincial, but in this home she found a new challenge that she couldn't resist.

The back of the house is an ideal place for entertaining, with the free-form pool and timbered pergola and a fireplace for chilly nights.

"I asked if I could research and customize, and they (the builder and architect) said yes," Jackie recalls. So began the collaboration where elegance and Old World architecture were seamlessly integrated with modern American luxury.

"We were looking to create a European country atmosphere," explains Rocco DeFilippis, owner of Legacy Custom Homes, the home's builder. Rocco and architect Michael Breseman of Michael E. Breseman Architects were inspired by the classical houses of Europe which they studied on their trips abroad. Having already created takes on French and Italian homes, they chose to build the English Tudor with timbers, concrete block-backed stucco, and stone—to add warmth through organic materials.

"Jackie came in and gave her own touches, and she made it sing," notes Rocco. "She has a great sense of how to finish a home."

Michael explains that he went for the English country vernacular, with two-story gables and a human-scaled front entrance. His goal throughout the design process was to maintain the lofty, elegant spaces of the house, but to soften them with the intimate spaces and touches that a family with young children would need to feel at home. The master bedroom, as an example, has a vaulted ceiling but it is tempered with dark wood ceiling panels and exposed beams that make the space seem less cavernous. Similarly, the foyer has a more individual scale. Upon entry, one walks under the main stairway into a reception area with a beamed ceiling and cozy sitting area next to a personally-scaled fireplace. "I like to design from smaller, more intimate spaces to larger ones," instructs Michael. "The larger ones are not dramatic unless you have the transition."

Integrating an English theme with American necessities is a by-product of having the architect work on the entire house instead of just the shell. Most American

families cannot imagine doing without the standard open-plan kitchen/family room/breakfast nook space. In the Cherry home, this was included, but within the space each area was clearly delineated. "It gives a sense of volume without overpowering," Michael explains. The breakfast room is in a turret with a vaulted ceiling, but it is constructed in such a way and with such warm materials that the feeling is one of coziness, not that of sitting in a vast space. "We encourage our clients to be involved in the process," notes Michael. "It's their home, a reflection of their tastes and sensibilities. It creates better design, a stronger identity of the family."

While the construction was underway, Jackie researched the home's period origins, contributing ideas and sourcing materials and interior elements, such as walnut wainscoting, doors, and pine ceilings to match. To add charm and whimsy, Jackie selected pewter tile accents to embellish her pool bath. These ornaments—insects and turtles among them—were crafted by Lorelei Dinou to perch on the oyster slate walls as if they just flew in. Draperies from Finishing Touches and chandeliers—such as the antique rock-crystal chandelier in the master bedroom and the hand-forged wrought iron one in the breakfast nook—were chosen by Jackie to reinforce the overall design statement. Although much of the furniture was custom made by Artisan Furniture and Roche Bobois, some pieces are family ones. The master bedroom suite and the dining room mirror belonged to Jackie's grandmother.

The distinctive blend of stately elegance and familial comfort extends to the outside with lush gardens. "We took the house and architecture and emulated that in the gardens," says Jill Burson, project director for Mariani Landscape. "It's a combination of French formality with the looseness and color of English gardens." The front of the home presents a more formal visage with

French boxwoods, while the sides feature lawn expanses for the children, ages 12, 9 and 4, and the family dog. The back yard has a pastoral English garden feel with bursts of color and a more casual plan with flowing curves defining the planting areas. The centerpiece is a 20 x 40 foot free-form swimming pool with elements such as rocks that appear to float on the water, a grotto and bench under a waterfall, and an attached spa. This area is both a child's paradise and a perfect spot for active family living. "Jackie's got a great eye for design," states Jill. "She was wonderful to work with. She took her natural interior design skills and came right out to the garden."

Making large spaces more intimate and family-friendly, whether indoors or out, is a challenge that Jackie and her dedicated team of builders, architects, and landscapers accepted and mastered to make this house feel more like home. "It was really fun to pull together," concludes Jackie. **CHG**