

(HOME STYLE)



Inviting In... the Outdoors

BY CHELLE ELLIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANA FINIMORE AND ASHLEY ELLIS

Inviting the outdoors into your home can prove difficult. Mother Nature is a hard act to follow and man's efforts pale in comparison to her limitless palette of beauty.

Mike and Terri Massey of Senatobia have nonetheless taken on this task.

Two manmade lakes stocked with crappie, bream and bass flank the winding path to their lodge-style house, setting the stage for what's to come.

The Masseys were careful in their selection of building materials, choosing a blend harmonious with the outside scenery. Stained and scored concrete floors, poured counters and a large stone fireplace serving both the living room inside and the patio outside mirror the surrounding land. Outside, a natural rock fountain and downspouts fashioned from rusty logging chains provide a mesmerizing flow of water, reminding of simpler, earthier times.

"My husband jokes that the chains hold the house down in high winds," Terri Massey says with a laugh. "There are French drains beneath them covered with

rock so when the rain flows through the gutter it trickles down the chain."

The Masseys had a lot of help in building their house but Rick Bankston probably stands out the most. Known as "Hippie Rick" to his friends, Bankston served as carpenter and contributed the idea of knotty cedar ceilings to the home.

Sadly, Bankston was diagnosed with cancer and died suddenly before seeing the project to fruition.

"Rick was very humble, very sweet and we miss him," Terri Massey fondly relates.

Mike Massey's brother, Steven Henry Massey, who also died of cancer, initially helped in developing the nearly 500 acres into farmland, a hunting camp and the two lakes, one of which is named Lake Henry in his honor.

A memorial for Steve Massey was placed at the point where he had planned to build his own home. A meditation garden overlooking Lake Henry is home to a large stone sandblasted with a verse from the book of Genesis: "Surely the Lord is in this place."

"Steve had strong spiritual beliefs and felt closest to God in nature," Terri Massey remembers.

The brothers dreamed of building the lakes and their homes here.

"Mike is very gifted in developing raw land and sculpting it into a site for a home," Massey explains. "Early, he could see it in his mind but I couldn't imagine it. We started a floor plan and got a rough idea of the downstairs and the rest worked its way from there."

The Masseys knew they wanted it to be natural with lots of glass, wood and stone. Building designer Mike Robinson created the most detailed plans for the Masseys and they claim there is nothing they would change.

"This is unusual, in our opinion. We would guess most people have regrets about something after they've built a home," Masseys explains.

The couple moved in nearly two years ago but they are far from finished; even with two years of planning and three years to build, the home is still at least five years from completion.

The upstairs portion of the home is finished but not detailed in the manner that Massey meticulously plans every feature. She points to an upstairs ledge overlooking the living room: "My husband was threatening to put a full mounted elk up there."

Independent designer Shirley Young and The Loft Home Collection in Senatobia played key roles in furnishing and decorating. A longtime friend, Young assisted in choosing paint colors, tile, light

Stained and scored concrete floors and poured concrete countertops add to the natural tone that the Masseys wanted for their home.





(Above, right) The bar adjacent to the dining area was created by Casey Lipe, owner of Blueswood Art in Batesville. Crafted out of red oak, the wood was salvaged from a barn in Independence.

fixtures, blinds and furniture. The Loft's style of décor – from animal hide upholstered furniture to massive tables and lodge-style rugs – seems to be a custom fit for the Massey flair.

Downstairs is a different story. The main bathroom showcases a tornado bowl pottery sink thrown by Merigold potter Lee McCarty. Concrete countertops, inset with rocks from Massey's hometown, sit adjacent to a large bar of red oak salvaged from an old barn in Independence.

Casey Lipe, owner of Blueswood Art in Batesville, created the bar. Lipe's specialty is making furniture of wood from old barns and sharecropper homes.

The bar comes complete with a story that blues legend Robert Johnson was shot in the barn where the wood hung. Massey points to a hole in the wood of the bar and says it may be the bullet hole.

Massey's father, M. John, collected river rocks from her hometown in the suburbs of Kansas City, Missouri.

He sent the rocks to Massey and her sister in California to use in their countertops. These stones not only bring childhood memories home to her here in Mississippi but also suggest a "touchstone" element to the design.

A large barn under construction on the side of the property will eventually have a living area with a kitchen and bedrooms. Adding a roofed structure to the existing concrete pier on one of the lakes is also a possibility in the future.

"We sit on the back porch every night. We are outdoors a lot and we fish and ride horses quite a bit," Massey explains.

The Masseys enjoy the peace and quiet. From the driveway they can't see or hear any trace of a main highway.

"It's not as isolated as it seems," Massey declares. "I didn't know how I'd feel about living out here but now I love this place." ♦