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CHESAPEAKE

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An expansive, eco-friendly manse
hugging the shores of Norman's Creek

PLUS

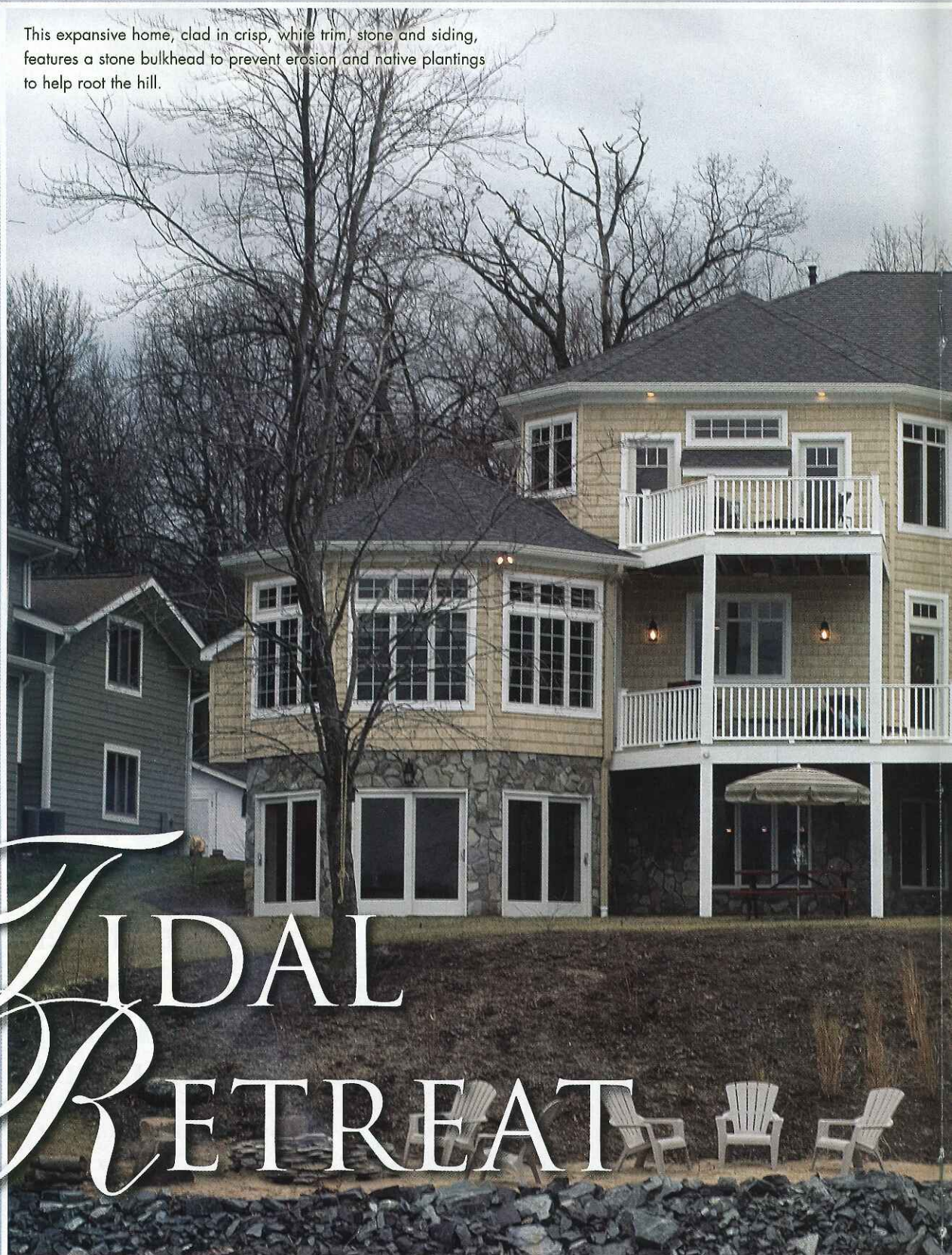
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This expansive home, clad in crisp, white trim, stone and siding, features a stone bulkhead to prevent erosion and native plantings to help root the hill.



TIDAL RETREAT

Like a phoenix from the ashes, Robert and Theresa Reilley's home arose from a rickety 1950s shore shack overlooking Norman's Creek, a tranquil estuary near Baltimore's Middle River. The couple had lived across from the shack, often gazing

at it while sipping cocktails on their own dock. With design wheels spinning, they spent seven years dreaming of building a home in its place.

Three years ago, Theresa shared the idea with a friend and discovered

that her friend's father, Baltimore business magnate Norman W. Lauenstein, was the owner of her dream property. Together, the two persuaded Lauenstein to part with the double lot, though it had been



A Norman's Creek couple reinvents a 'shore shack' with warmth, comfort and touches of grandeur

Written by KIMBERLY TAYLOR

Photography by CHRISTINE HUNT

part of a 300-acre parcel owned by his family for years.

Soon afterward, they hired John Skarda of Shoreline Construction, Inc., which specializes in green construction and custom-built waterfront properties,

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to demolish the shack and build a new abode showing no vestiges of its modest past. Completed in September 2007 and constructed with a variety of materials designed to encourage energy conservation and minimize maintenance, the 7,000-

square-foot home is an elegant waterfront contemporary. The homeowners say it's ideal for private contemplation and casual entertaining, a place where friends often take them up on "an open invitation to drop in."



An 80-inch, round, Amish-built table of mahogany centers the sunken dining room, which is artfully framed by a granite "serving butler" and river views.

RIGHT A distressed Amish cabinetry isle stands up to abuse in this kid-friendly abode. Giant corbels anchor the granite island and lend a touch of glamorous "bling."

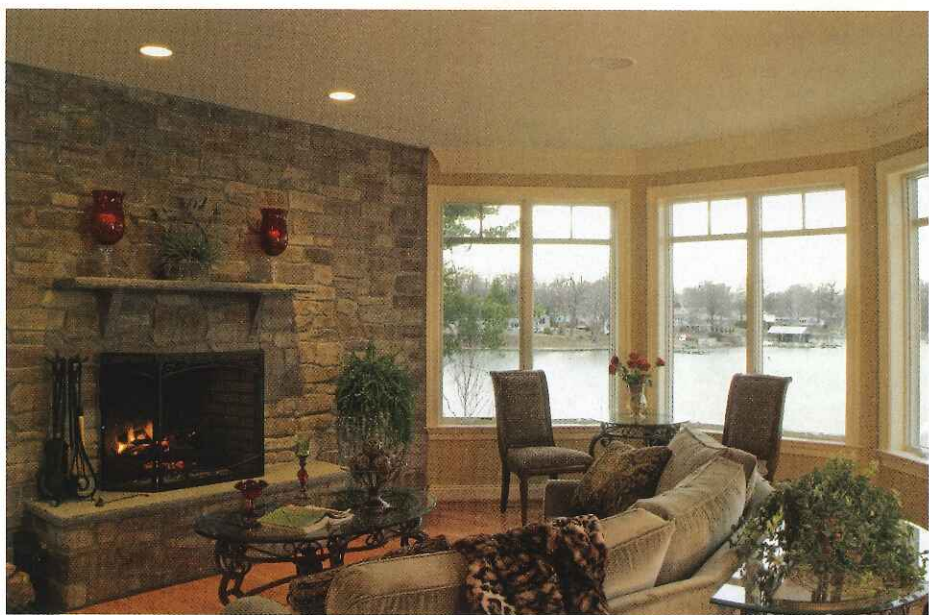


With dramatic elements like tray and barrel ceilings and a dome inset, the stylish abode has window walls on the road and water-facing sides that flood the interior with natural light. The result is a structure designed to "soothe the senses," says architect Paul Paré of Paul Paré

Associates, Inc., a design, drafting and engineering firm in Northern Baltimore county. The Reilleys turned to Paré to design their digs because he seemed to understand their vision of a coastal residence with distinct flair. He puts it this way: "When you come into a house,

you want to be tantalized. You want to wonder, 'What's behind the next corner? What's going on?'"

Theresa's clarity of vision made his task much easier, he says. "I knew I wanted beachy," she explains. "I didn't want that big, grand look." For instance, instead



A fireplace wall, designed by Athena Stone, echoes the natural stone inset in the water-facing façade.

BELOW Dramatic stone facing lends a traditional feel to this otherwise contemporary home.

of a majestic central stair, a leitmotif common to manses similar in scale, she envisioned a staircase that was inviting but situated off to the side. "I wanted the water to be the focal point, not the stairs," Theresa says, so Paré curved the stairs and added a window seat on the landing "for daydreaming."

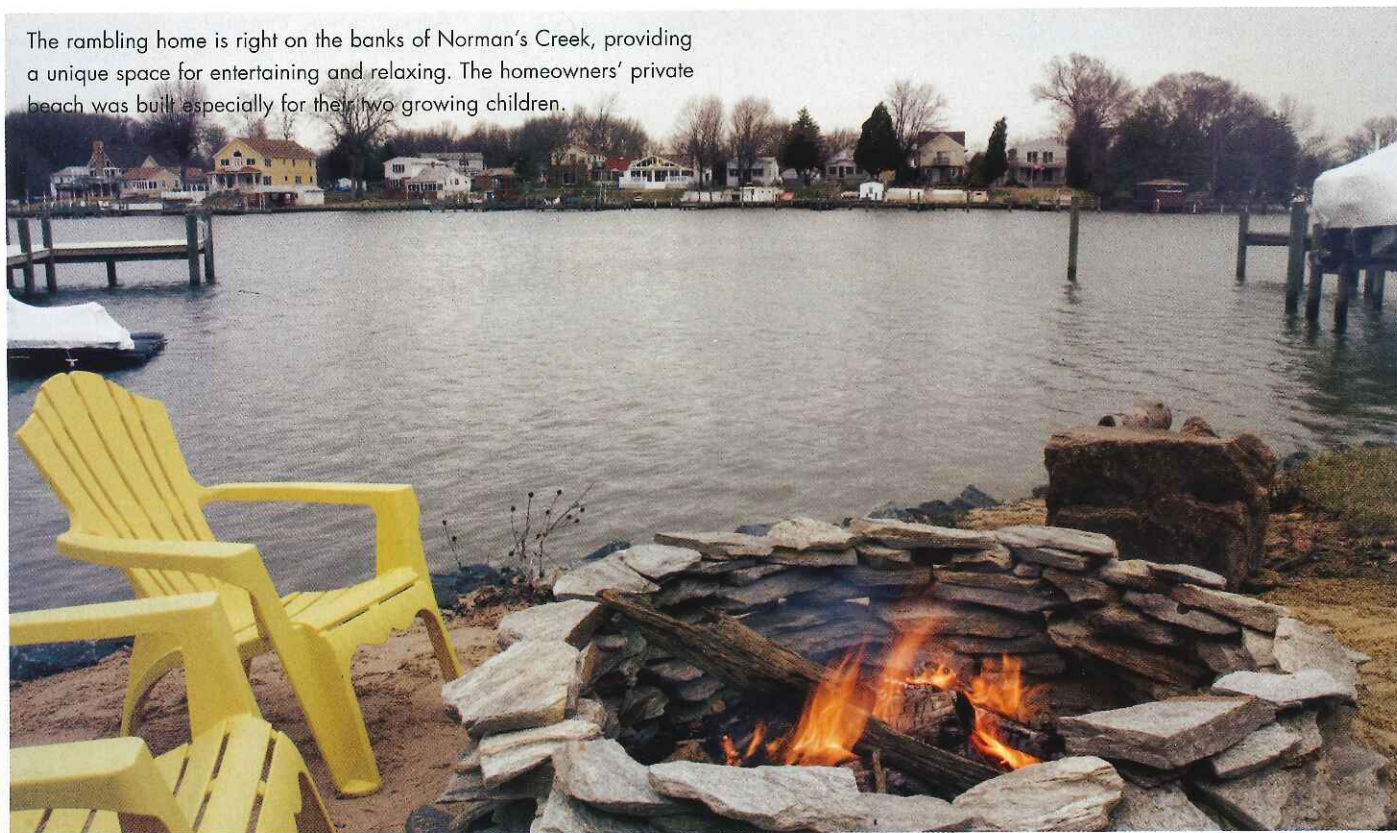
Other "must haves" included a second-story foyer with railings overlooking both sides and a circular dome ceiling, or "dropdown cutout," the couple had seen in another abode.

Rather than opening into the typical great room or kitchen, the first-floor foyer leads to the family's true center: the dining room. Defined by arches and pillars, the spacious rectangle impresses with a bank of floor-to-ceiling windows facing the water. To define the space, create privacy and shield after-dinner messes from guests, Paré made the whole zone sunken and erected a granite serving butler topped by an arch. For a touch of dazzling romance, Theresa added a mammoth crystal chandelier found at Baltimore-based Dorman's Lighting and Design. "I wanted to add a little bling to every room," she notes.

Because the home is often the site of large family gatherings, Theresa also custom-ordered an 80-inch round table of hand-planed, distressed mahogany from an Amish cabinetmaker. "I wanted



The rambling home is right on the banks of Norman's Creek, providing a unique space for entertaining and relaxing. The homeowners' private beach was built especially for their two growing children.



that beat-up look," she says. "I wanted to be able to use it." And the kitchen island is the same way — if the kids want to kick the cabinets, they can.

Theresa admits that the kitchen was the hardest room in the house to style. She considered cherry cabinets but rejected the implied formality of their dark wood, opting instead for light cream, Amish-built cabinetry accented by matching "roping" around the refrigerator. For contrast, she went with red walls and a granite center island adorned with a statuesque range hood. The requisite bling appears in the island's oversized, curving corbels.

An equally functional yet striking space, the living room is full of Theresa's favorite colors: green, gold and red. Framed by blonde walls with French vanilla trim, the light green couch is brightened by red decorative accents, including ruby hurricane glasses on the fireplace wall. In the original plan, a narrow column of natural rock flanked each side of the fireplace, but Theresa nixed the columns and went with a wall composed of chocolate gray Thinstone mined from a Pennsylvania quarry and designed with the help of Athena Stone Company. A dramatic exterior façade also wears the Thinstone, its alluring earth and sea tones mirroring the natural setting and the water's many moods.

Skarda was concerned that although the Reilley's northwest exposure afforded one of the best vistas on the river, it also placed them directly in the path of winter storms. To combat Mother Nature, he built windows encased by steel beams and columns. Exterior decking is made of Procell, a maintenance-

free composite that should withstand the dangerous freeze-thaw cycle typical to the area, and the exterior is wrapped in Tyvek, a membrane that seals the house from the elements. The entire home is also heated and cooled geothermally.

The water's shifting beauty can be observed from almost every room in the house, including the master suite. Its curving "radius" wall was designed to give the room flow and a soft feel, Skarda explains. The bed is situated to take advantage of water views, and a Juliet balcony adjoining the suite was enlarged from the original plan to accommodate private soirees — martinis are often mixed from a small, convenient wetbar and sipped at sunset. Should one tire of contemplating nature from the balcony, Theresa says, the master bath is an ideal substitute. With Botticino stone tile and a marble tub deck framed by pillars and arches, she calls the décor "Roman and kind of romantic."

Outdoors, easy living is the theme with multiple decks and a small, private beach built especially for the Reilleys' two growing children, who often land on the beach after sledding down the deck stairs that, when covered by snow, become "a perfect natural luge," Theresa says.

Here on the beach, the family is frequently found toasting their toes in front of a firepit built from stone remnants from the house. The setting is ideal for reflecting privately on their good fortune and cooking out with the kids and friends whose presence is as constant as the tides. "I love to build bonfires," she says. "We all sit out here. Friends know they're always welcome. They come by car or by boat and tie up at the dock. They just drop in." ■