

worth the wait

They wanted land for their family of 10, and not gated-community land, either. They searched. And searched. Years later, when they finally found the spot, a 5-acre property in the shadow of Pinnacle Mountain outside Little Rock, there was already a home on it—a home that didn't work. But why let a little thing like that stop you when you've got Herron Horton Architects on your side?

By Katie Bridges | Photography by Chad Mellon





It
wasn't

hard to
picture
it.

Standing on the asphalt circle drive looking west toward Pinnacle Mountain, looking beyond the property's sprawling 5 acres, its baseball field and rolling hills, they could imagine their eight kids running amok, riding horses, playing ball. They could see it all, everything this place had the potential to be, with one notable exception: the 5,000-square-foot home that loomed behind them, its red bricks and Greek Revival-columned front porch seemed very ... permanent.

It was a fine house, to be sure. It was a sturdy, well-loved family home with a pool out back, a three-car garage and all the trappings a traditional home should have: crown moldings, built-ins, hardwood floors. And Lord knows the family had been looking for awhile—for three years, give or take, as they'd bounced around

Little Rock, in and out of rental properties, their family of 10 crammed in and cramped up as they dreamt of what could be. They had two options, really: 1) find a place and just settle in already, making the most of it, or 2) seize the day—*carpe diem!*—and stop at nothing until the house was just right, provided they'd found *the spot*.

It sure seemed like this was *the spot*. So they turned to their architects, Jennifer Herron and Jeff Horton of Little Rock's Herron-Horton Architects, who were standing there beside them, mouths agape over the view and the trees and the tranquility. Could they *carpe* this place?

YES, Jennifer and Jeff remember saying. *Get it. We'll work with the house. Just get it!*

After all, they'd been along for the ride. It'd been years since their client had knocked on the

► "What if the whole wall was windows?" the homeowner asked, and it made sense to architects Jennifer Herron and Jeff Horton, who'd been confusing themselves with possible window configurations. If they want light, give them light, they thought, and it worked—sunlight pours in through the kitchen, imbuing the rest of the space with a glowy warmth. The kitchen's three islands break up the wide room, and give plenty of surface space for this busy family of 10 to prepare a meal, have an afternoon snack or just catch up on the day.





◀ "When in doubt, go with white" was a guiding design principle on this project. Designer Eric Ford chose a Poggenpohl kitchen system with a laminate finish for its durability and minimalist style. Glazed Ann Sacks tiles add texture and visual interest.

▲ Since the main living space is essentially one large room—you'll find the kitchen there, as well as dining and seating areas—Eric used furnishings to create "rooms" within. Two Restoration Hardware tables, crowned by Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams chandeliers, combine to create room for 12; a grouping of four wingbacks from Cobblestone & Vine makes for a good conversation spot; and on the far end, oversized sofas and a woodburning fireplace create a cozy TV-watching nook.



◀ Since the home's original second floor was removed in the renovation, a new wing containing the master suite, home office, two children's rooms, a bathroom and a laundry room was added to the west side of the existing structure. Windows in the master frame the Pinnacle Mountain views, and a side door makes for easy access to the covered patio and pool area. Light pours in through the master bath windows, where Ann Sacks tile, Spinneybeck leather pulls and Restoration Hardware sconces add interest to the white-on-white palette.



door of their downtown Little Rock office-slash-residence, saying, *Wow, we really love the look of this place—how simple, modern this is. Do you think you could do this for us?* Jennifer and Jeff had schlepped out to various properties with them, properties so unremarkable that now, years later, they have a hard time remembering—*Garrison Road, right? And that yellow house?*—so they knew this place was different. They also knew that the home, with its choppy layout, dark rooms and low ceilings was a far cry away from what the client wanted: a place that was light, uncluttered, and tall—very tall.

But they knew they could do something about it.

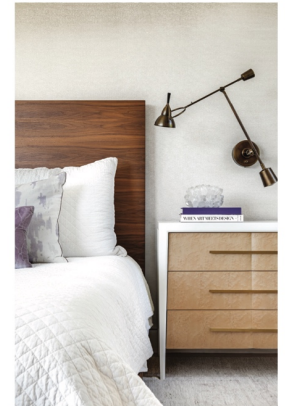
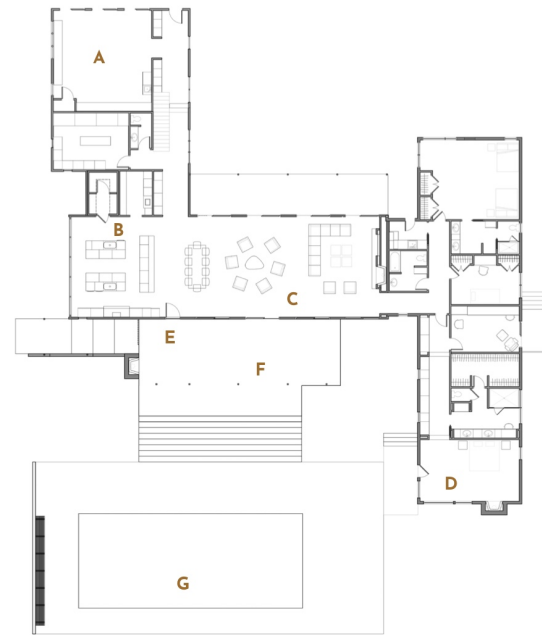
"It was a very typical house," Jeff says, thinking back on that initial walk-through, "with windows for the 'look,' rather than for the function. I remember one of the biggest windows was in the master bedroom closet, you know, just because it needed to be on that front wall."

"And the front of the house had the view," Jennifer pipes in.

"The back of the house, where the pool was, was where you'd hang out, but it didn't have that view. And the client just felt a lot of heaviness walking through. She just kept saying, *This feels heavy.*"

With that in mind, they decided on a few radical things: They'd "flip" the house, bringing the hangout spaces to the front to capitalize on the views, and they'd eliminate the second story, taking the ceilings high and the windows wide. To make up for losing that square footage, they'd add on a wing, and they'd build a separate garage with a guest apartment above it. The original bones of the house—"good, solid bones," according to Jennifer and Jeff—would remain. You'd just never know it.

Walk through the space now, and you'll find that holds true. Entering through the immense glass door, peering up at the trusses and back toward the wall of glass that encloses the main living space, you'd never guess that the "bones" of the cathedral-like room you're standing in had once held

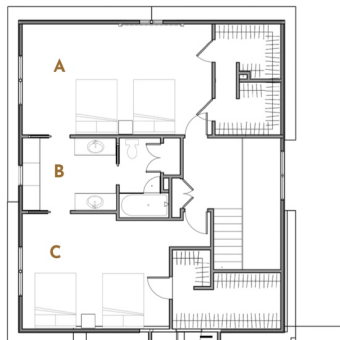


KEY

- A: School Room
- B: Kitchen & Dining Area
- C: Living Area
- D: Master Suite
- E: Front Entry
- F: Patio
- G: Pool



▲ Upstairs, the pitch of the roof was reworked and dormers were added to give more space to the duo of bedrooms and jack-and-jill bath shared by the family's eldest daughters.



KEY

- A: Bedroom
- B: Bathroom
- C: Bedroom

▲ What was once the home's garage was converted into a school room for the family, which, like the rest of the home, is filled with light and white. A painting by the home's architect Jeff Horton hangs over the built-in bookshelves.

something so decidedly un-cathedral-like. The three descriptors that come to mind? Light (it's everywhere), uncluttered (there aren't any walls to speak of) and tall (what is that, a 19-foot ceiling?). It's as if Jennifer and Jeff—with the help of interior designer Eric Ford—allowed that old house to take a deep breath, to expand its ribs, fill itself with light and air and room and purpose.

Everything has a purpose now—nothing is done just for the “look” (though, it's fair to say, everything “looks” as if it were). Because when you've got a house that needs to be able to hold 10 people and the people who go along with those people, you've got different needs than, say, the folks who constructed that red-brick home. You *need* a walk-in cooler. You *need* three islands in your kitchen. You *need* a room for home-schooling your brood. You *need* a dining table that's three times the size of most.

But more than anything, you need a place that was worth the wait—one that lives as you do, that allows *you* to exhale. To *carpe diem*. ♦

Get it, the architects remember saying about the existing property. *We'll work with the house. Just get it!*

▼ Here's where things got tricky: The architects essentially "flipped" the house, filling in an existing pool in the back and pouring a new one that could take advantage of the property's views. The entry, then, posed a problem: How do you bring someone in what would traditionally be viewed as the "back" door? To solve this, Jennifer and Jeff sloped the pitch of the patio's roof up toward the view, and brought the entry's roof down to guide visitors to the steel-wrapped "front" door.



RESOURCES

ARCHITECTS: Herron Horton Architects

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Eric Ford, Table Setters, Inc.

BUILDER: Julian Builders

LANDSCAPE: Stafford Fine Gardening

POOL: Brooks Pools

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Engineering Consultants, Inc.

STEEL PIVOT FRONT DOOR: Rustic Elegance

KITCHEN: Poggenpohl

APPLIANCES: Metro Appliances

SCHOOL ROOM: Winfield Cabinetry

For a full list of resources, as well as a gallery of before images, visit arkansaslife.com/worththewait.