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Homes

WHERE THE LIVIN' IS

Easy

by Lee Ann Sandweiss
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What makes a house a home? When you come right down to it, a true home transcends décor and style preference—it is defined by how it has been customized to suit the owner's lifestyle.

Bloom's 5th annual homes issue features four distinct dwellings that are not only lovely but loved by their owners because each just makes life, well, easier and more comfortable.

Laurie and Michael McRobbie's roomy contemporary home can easily accommodate their extensive art collection and family gatherings with their six children. New Orleans transplants Cindy Drury and Ed Lazzerini modified an elegant limestone home to suit their Big Easy way of entertaining. A sleek midcentury ranch inspired Shelli and Russ Herndon to explore a new aesthetic and simplify their lives. Jeannine Bell's plants and little dog are happy in her 1920s bungalow, surrounded by her eclectic treasures. Take this year's tour—but caution: you might not want to leave!

1. Expect the unexpected in Jeannine Bell's eclectic abode.

2. Midcentury modern is the muse for Russ and Shelli Herndon's home.

3. Cindy Drury and Ed Lazzerini enjoy New Orleans elegance in their Elm Heights home.

4. Art and family heirlooms warm the home of Laurie and Michael McRobbie.



“A Nice Reflection of Bloomington”

IU President Michael McRobbie and First Lady Laurie Burns McRobbie

The Bloomington community is familiar with many of the public contributions and accomplishments of its most recognizable couple, Indiana University President Michael McRobbie and First Lady Laurie Burns McRobbie. Yet one achievement that is a source of great pride and pleasure is of a more personal nature: the home they have created together. It is both an expansive and private home—a place for gathering with their large family and entertaining their friends, as well as a place to unwind away from the demands of public life.

Nestled in a wooded subdivision, the McRobbies' two-level contemporary home has an understated exterior, but, upon entering, a visitor is immediately struck by a palpable “wow” factor—soaring angular walls covered with the couple's extensive and eclectic art collection.

“We have purchased a lot of art on our travels around the world; it's a great way to remember our trips, but a large part of our collection is by local artists, including IU students,” says Laurie. “The openness of our home and the way the light comes in creates the most wonderful setting for what is a very colorful collection.”

Michael notes that when there's an acquisition, he likes to be the one to find a place for the new work. “I'm always looking for new possibilities—just like with the campus,” he says with a chuckle. “I like the challenge of finding the right place for a piece. I find hanging art very relaxing.”



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1. The downstairs living room is perfect for watching movies and entertaining. The lighted wall shelving displays art glass and ceramics; the center painting is by IU MFA student Kelly Jordan.

2. The first-floor living room is a gathering place where the couple serves pre-dinner drinks and hors d'oeuvres when they host dinner parties and where their large family gathers on Christmas morning around the tree.



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3. Above the credenza hang official documents certifying Michael's family coats of arms. On the left is the McRobbie coat of arms, and on the right is his mother's.

‘Since two of our children are at IU, we have Sunday night family dinners here. This is the family home.’

The house, in which Michael has lived for 15 years, has been a versatile hub for family life. “Michael bought the house in 1996, when he was hired by former IU President Myles Brand to serve as vice president for research and vice president for information technology. He and his family moved from Australia to Bloomington in January 1997,” Laurie explains. “I moved to Bloomington from Ann Arbor, Michigan, in July 2005, just before Michael and I were married; we lost our first spouses in 2003.”

After they married, Laurie and Michael decided to stay where they were rather than make Bryan House on the IU campus their primary residence. “We were combining two households with a total of six children,” says Laurie. “When Michael became president [in 2007], our three youngest were still at home, and we thought it best to not uproot them. Bryan House is lovely, but it was built in 1924, and it’s not very practical for a large family. However, we use it a lot—for university receptions, guests of the university stay there, and I have an office there,” she says. But family life



centers in their primary residence. “Since two of our children are at IU, we have Sunday night family dinners here. This is the family home.”

One area of the house that serves the family especially well is the kitchen, which is original to the 1980s house and opens onto the upstairs family room. “We haven’t done anything to it,” says Michael. “It’s got a great layout for entertaining.”

“Michael is a wonderful Asian cook,” adds Laurie. “My repertoire is more home cooking with local ingredients.”

When their youngest child started at the University of Southern California in 2009, the couple decided to embark on a number of remodeling projects, including building new closets in the master bedroom, removing a Jacuzzi from the master bath, and install-

ing a new walk-in shower. The most ambitious renovation was on the lower level, where they added a wall of lighted shelving backed by mirrors to display their art glass and ceramics collection. There are pieces gathered from Ann Arbor to Australia, from old friends and recent journeys. To Michael and Laurie, each piece is special and each has its own story.

“When we first thought about remodeling, we envisioned how beautiful it would be to have all of our glass and pottery in one place,” Laurie says. “The other goal was to sort of reclaim the downstairs since the kids were all at a college now.

“We love this house. We love being here. We think it’s a nice reflection of Bloomington.”



4. Laurie and Michael’s favorite year-round reading spot offers a serene view of their wooded property.

5. McRobbie ancestral pictures hang in the dining room above a cabinet that holds family china from both Michael’s and Laurie’s families. The painting on the same wall is by Cincinnati artist

Nancy Berninger and was purchased at the Fourth Street Festival. The large oil (right) is by IU MFA student Ryan Cobourn.

6. The master bedroom has a lofty chalet-pitched ceiling and wooded views. Above the bed are a large oil painting by Ryan Cobourn and a photograph of Venice at night taken by a friend on the same

day that Michael proposed to Laurie in Venice in November 2004.

7. The family room opens onto the kitchen, which Laurie says tends to be her domain, but adds, “Michael will make an occasional Asian meal, and he’s terrific!” The paintings above the kitchen cabinets are by IU MFA students.



“A Heavy Dose of Southern Flair”

Cindy Drury and Ed Lazzerini

Hurricane Katrina swept away many of Cindy Drury’s irreplaceable family heirlooms in August 2005. So when she moved from New Orleans to Bloomington later that year to join her husband Ed Lazzerini, a professor of Central Eurasian Studies at IU, she was determined to bring as much of her Southern heritage with her as possible.

For almost two years, the couple rented an apartment before they found their dream home in Elm Heights. It is a large 1938 Federalist-style house built for the Hoadley family, founders of the B.G. Hoadley Quarries, and later owned by Henry Radford Hope, founding director of the IU Art Museum. A small brass plaque mounted on the staircase states that it was designed by James D. Foley of Indianapolis and built by Charles F. Mustard of Bloomington.

With its imposing 18-foot-high stone columns on the front porch and its large windows, the Indiana limestone structure had an obvious Southern feel that appealed to Drury. “One of the reasons we bought this house was that we could restore it and update it while retaining its integrity,” she says. “It also has the largest windows with the best light of any house we considered, and it was made of stone, not wood like New Orleans houses.”

Drury and Lazzerini have painstakingly renovated the house from top to bottom. In 2005, the kitchen and family room were gutted and redesigned, and a new master bath was added to the second floor. An architect’s daughter, Drury drew the designs herself while carpenter Ralph Fletcher turned her visions into reality.



1. The 1938 Federalist-style home in Elm Heights features 18-foot columns and large windows that lend an elegance to the house. Owners Cindy Drury and Ed Lazzerini retained and restored the house’s original character while updating and expanding it.

2. Cindy Drury and Ed Lazzerini, shown here in their comfortable TV room, love the Big Easy feeling of their spacious Elm Heights home.

3. The living room sofa is a Duncan Phyfe-style antique that has been in Drury’s family for four generations.

4. The living room’s style is very Southern, formal, and French. Although the fireplace is original, the mantle was replaced by a scaled-down replica of the mantle in IMU’s Federal Room.

‘The original dining room is now my study—it’s a larger, more suitable space for working...’



Creative repurposing of space on the main floor allowed Lazzerini to have his dream study. “The original dining room is now my study—it’s a larger, more suitable space for working and it accommodates most of my library,” he says. “My former study is now the dining room where we had lighted cabinetry installed to display china and crystal. Over the last several years, we have completely redone the basement level by renovating the guest quarters, adding a wine cellar, an exercise room, a library annex, and work room for design projects.”

Drury’s indefatigable energy for enhancing the beauty and functionality of their home recently

focused on adding an outdoor dining room and grill space with a grape arbor, pergola, and resting bench—ideal for having morning coffee or a mint julep at cocktail hour.

“It’s a wonderful place to enjoy the outdoors without the glare and heat the patio offered previously,” says Drury. “This summer I intend to finish the landscaping, a real challenge given the climate. In New Orleans nothing ever freezes; gardens bloom all year. It’s been rewarding to create a home that reflects the way we live and entertain, with a heavy dose of Southern flair.”



5. Lazzerini’s study, formerly the dining room, houses his bookcases, desk, and leather chairs.

6. Cindy designed the cherry kitchen cabinets that were built by Fox Custom Cabinets near Columbus, Indiana. The cherry wood island had been in her New Orleans kitchen but fit the new house perfectly. A “pot filler” faucet over the stove comes in handy when cooking large pots of gumbo or boiling shrimp.



7. The new master bath, also designed by Drury, features a large soaking tub, a double vanity, and a toilet tucked behind French doors. The room has a corner space appointed for Lazzerini’s shaving needs.

8. Limestone leftovers from a landscaping project were used for the walls of the wine cellar, which features a tin ceiling. The wine rack was designed and custom made by Bloomingtonian Ralph Fletcher.

9. Drury found the master bedroom’s wallpaper at Bloomington Paint and Wallpaper. Its antique gold tone with delicate scrollwork adds a warmth to the elegant room. The sleigh bed was bought in New Orleans but is not an antique.

A Home with a New “Voice”

Shelli and Russ Herndon



Shelli and Russ Herndon weren’t really looking for a new house when they saw the compact midcentury modern on Craigslist in the spring of 2008, but they were intrigued. After a quick jaunt to take a look, they knew they had found their next home.

The Herndons, owners of Herndon Design, have created some of Bloomington’s most stunning and unusual homes, including their previous personal residence, a large new-construction Arts and Crafts-inspired house in Elm Heights. Completed in 2005, the house was done in exacting period detail and furnishings, but the couple was ready to explore the next idea.

“We collected everything—the books, the furniture, the pottery. Arts and Crafts interior design can be a bit strict or severe with the plethora of period furnishing options. It can be overwhelming,” Russ explains, with reference to their previous home. “With this move and change in home style, we sold all our furnishings, too. It felt very liberating to start over.”

For six months, Russ and Shelli, who have worked together for most of their 26-year marriage, lived in a 31-foot park trailer in the new house’s driveway during the extensive renovation. They took



the 1964 structure down to the studs, removing dark paneling and a massive stone fireplace in the center of the house. Major additions included radiant in-floor hydronic heat, spray-foam insulation, and eight additional windows to increase natural light.

Original features retained include the floating I-beam open-riser staircase, decorative vertical wood fins, some light fixtures, and much of the house’s exterior. Limestone veneer salvaged from the demolished fireplace was used to infill an exterior wall opening that was previously a one-car garage. This change, along with a Palm



1. In addition to the house’s great bones and potential, the Herndons loved its large, park-like setting.

2. Russ and Shelli Herndon lived in a 31-foot park trailer in the driveway of their midcentury modern during the extensive renovation.

3. The removal of a massive fireplace created a more open, airy first floor.

4. Everything’s illuminated—the house is dramatic when lit from within at dusk. The 1968 planter seat by Elsie Crawford for Architectural Fiberglass lends an extraterrestrial vibe.

5. The Herndons have found vintage modernist pieces, such as the blue Danish “Komfort” chair, at estate sales and vintage modern shops.

‘With this move and change in home style we sold all our furnishings, too. It felt very liberating to start over.’

Springs-type front porch with a flat roof and screen wall, reflects a new “voice” for the house.

The results are a bold, complementary mix of original midcentury detail and new construction with a California aesthetic. The ultramodern kitchen flows into the dining and living areas, which are furnished with vintage Danish modern pieces found at estate sales and vintage modern shops. At just 1,800 square feet, the house seems much larger due to its open floor plan and three-sided exposure.

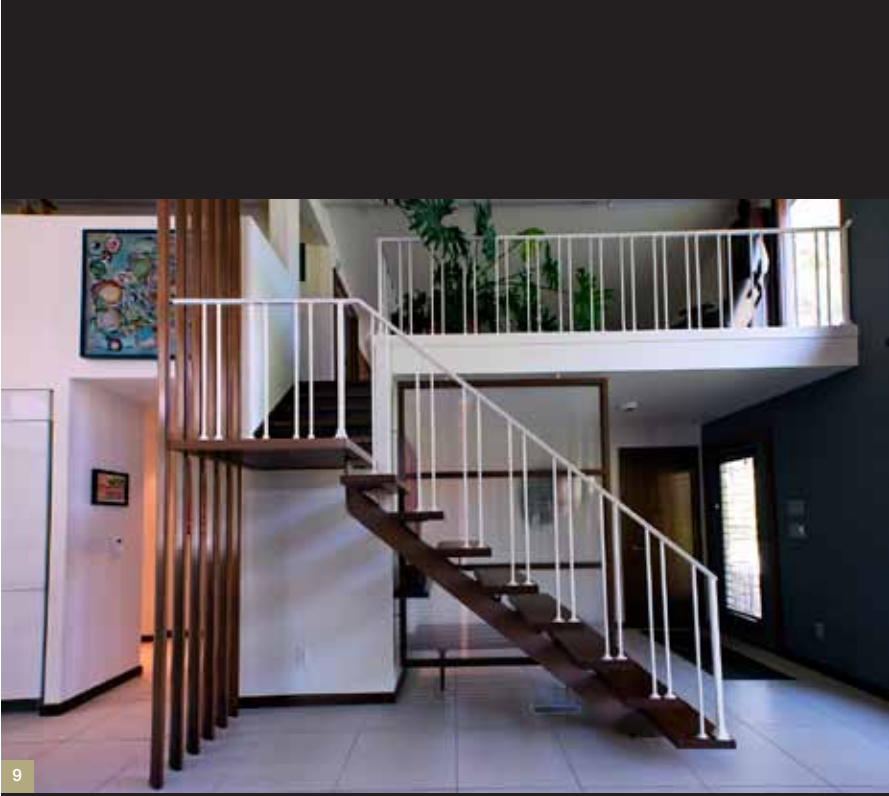
Although neither Shelli nor Russ can swear that this is the last house

they’ll build for themselves (it is the fourth), they are very content with their new home.

“Since the main floor provides the essentials—master bedroom and bath, living, dining, kitchen—it is well suited for accessibility. We rarely use the second level, which has a guest room, full bath, and a loft/balcony space for a future studio,” says Shelli. “The best thing for me is that when I’m in the house I don’t feel enclosed—the indoors and outdoors kind of run together in a seamless way. I would spend all my time outdoors if I could, so this house really speaks to that.”



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6. The Euro-style gloss-laminate cabinet fronts are sleek and inconspicuous. The kitchen features new energy-efficient appliances, including an Advantium speed-cooking oven and microwave.

7. A classic midcentury Poul Henningsen pendant lamp hangs over the dining room table.

8. The minimalist master bedroom has a Zen quality.

9. The original staircase is backed with vertical Douglas fir louvers.

10. The master bath has an open spa effect and universal access design. Features include slot windows for natural light and a black-walnut vanity made by woodworker John Rinne, with an Indiana limestone top.



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“Nowhere Better Than This Place”

Jeannine Bell

Jeannine Bell had lived in houses in every geographic area of the country and looked at probably 50 houses when she moved to Bloomington in 1999. So what was it about the small bungalow near Bryan Park that won her over?

“I saw the light,” says Bell, a law professor at IU. “I stepped into the living room and it was aglow with midafternoon light. Right there and then I decided to put an offer on the house.”

The living room, like most rooms in the house, gets great light most of the day, and Bell’s plants love it. “I have an overabundance of plants,” she admits. She also often takes in foster plants for friends and colleagues at IU who’ve gone on sabbatical.

Every room in Bell’s house is filled with things she loves—from her extensive African and Chinese art collection to the bookcase built by her father.



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1. Charmingly nestled in its leafy green setting, Jeannine Bell’s 1920 bungalow is the quintessential Bloomington abode.

2. Bell shares the sofa with Harry, her West Highland white terrier. The wall behind Bell is covered with family photographs, of which “exactly two were taken by a professional,” says Bell.

3. Twin Chinese emperor chairs and an American folk table exemplify Bell’s eclectic collection. Against the wall, the wood-burning fireplace gets a lot of use in the cooler months.

4. The kitchen was redone by the previous owner and features period-appropriate cabinets made by Nancy Hiller.



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5. Bell decided to turn a bedroom closet into a second bathroom; Matt Murphy of Foursquare Painting Restoration & Design did the construction and tile work.
6. A weathered blue cabinet topped with a Tiffany lamp and Songye mask from the Congo creates visual interest.
7. The lovingly mismatched dining room chairs come from different times and places—some are Chinese, others Bloomington and Ann Arbor finds.



8. Eye candy: random items, all collected in Bloomington, on a cheery red lacquer tray.

Built in 1920, the Arts and Crafts gem retains much of its original detail thanks to the care of its previous owners, three of whom, like Bell, were women attorneys. “It’s true and totally verified as of fall 2010—I am the fourth in a row!” reports Bell.

Every room in Bell’s house is filled with things she loves—from her extensive African and Chinese art collection to the bookcase built by her father to Harry, her five-year-old West Highland white terrier. True to his surname, Harry rings a bell hanging on the sunroom door to announce that he’s ready to go outside.

Bell, who is “passionate about cooking,” is grateful to the former owner’s 1999 renovation of the kitchen, which features period-appropriate cabinets built by renowned Bloomington cabinetmaker Nancy Hiller. Bell’s cookware hangs from a steel Enclume pot rack that was special ordered from Goods for Cooks and installed by her handy father.

Among Bell’s more significant alterations are the addition of a large custom closet in the master bedroom

and a charming bathroom (formerly a closet) with pink and black tile, both executed by builder Matt Murphy.

A stickler for personalizing her living space, Bell had the persimmon-colored paint on the guest room walls custom mixed by Bloomington Paint and Wallpaper. “I saw the color on a brochure and had to have it for that room, so I oversaw the mixing until it was just right,” she says.

Bell says she might tackle redoing the basement sometime in the future, but for now, she says, how she feels about the house is summed up by a framed statement on a wall: “Nowhere better than this place.”

“There’s nothing in the house that I don’t love. If I don’t love it, I give it away,” says Bell. “I’ve always been a collector, but what I have is an eclectic, diverse mix; there’s no one theme. It’s just like me, and, I might note, just like Bloomington.” ✱



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