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HOMESWEET HOME

by Kristina Florea

Photography by Allison McBee





Judy Rizzo was most particular about the kitchen during construction of the home on Gray Gables.
Inset: The view of the outdoor terrace from the poolhouse.

When Dan and Judy Rizzo set out to build their home on Gray Gables, they were planning to stay there for a while. So, they wanted to make it perfect. They had learned a lot from their years of moving from house to house – 15 moves in 31 years – that they knew what to do and what not to do.

“We’ve done a lot of this kind of thing and this was going to be it,” recalls Judy. “We were going to do this house and this was going to be permanent. They were going to take us away to the funeral home when we left this home.” They even thought ahead. They wanted wide doorways that could handle a walker for years down the road.

So it should be no surprise that the Rizzos took great

pains and lots of planning to create their ideal home.

“When they first approached me,” remembers architect



Cothran Harris, “they were living on a four-acre site that had lots of gracious landscaping and a rambling house, yet they wanted to downsize. They wanted to do something that was more compact, and yet still had a lot of the grace and a lot of the nice landscaping and so much of a homey feel to the interior of the house.” In fact, the Rizzos were living off Greenville Loop on Hewlett’s Creek. Judy was concerned about missing the water view, but her

husband, Dan, kept insisting that he wouldn’t. They had already bought a lot on Gray Gables, but were unsure of what kind of home they wanted to build on it.

Right: The Rizzos utilized built-ins such as these for storage throughout the house. Inset: The great room is the centerpiece of the home.



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"We just love the street," Judy says. "It's a wonderful location. We're close to everything, yet it feels very private. We do have the dock, with the water access, without actually being on the water. It's a nice, little friendly neighborhood. They do things ... they have a Lobster Roast and everybody comes and brings their kids. They have a Christmas party. It's a neighborhood with little kids on up to grandparents. It's a nice mix."

After the location was picked, it was time to decide what kind of home the Rizzos wanted.

"We started with a house design and style that was quite a bit different," recalls Harris. "It was very formal. Judy decided that she had lived in formal houses and that she wanted a house that was nice, but not necessarily a house that was imposing." To achieve the look and feel that she wanted, Judy brought Harris a photograph of a cottage that she had found in a magazine.

"So, my charge on this was to figure out how to do a well-appointed house with good square footage and yet make it look like it was a story and half cottage," Harris says. "It was very much like Snoopy's doghouse. It needed to look simple on the outside, yet have all of the accoutrements that they wanted on the inside."

Now that the plans were underway, Judy and Dan began to focus on the interior of the home with the help of Carol Helton from Ambiance.

"Carol's worked with me for about 20 years," Judy says. "The first time we had a condo at Station One. So,



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having a great room, versus a separate den and living room.

"We lived in the den," she remembers. "The living room was just pretty ... It's an expensive room to do and you just don't use it enough."

Judy's favorite part of the house is the kitchen and the great room. "That's

where we live," she says simply. She and her husband both also love spending time on their backyard terrace and in the pool area.

Harris agrees with Judy regarding his favorite part of the home: the great room. "The paneling and the way it opens up onto the backyard and flows

into the kitchen; every room has its own special features, its own pluses and minuses. But every house has to have one centerpiece and that room is the centerpiece of that house."

The home also has several pieces that stand out. There's the lighted sink in the powder room, which was Carol, the