



by Norma Lugar

TOP LEFT: Open hospitality. Two of the home's charming gathering spots include the dining area just beyond the kitchen and the adjoining screened porch.

LEFT: Afternoon delight. Grandsons Jay and Henry share fun and a fruit snack during a special moment with Marjorie at the primitive-styled porch table.

Warm welcome. Aglow with the polish of a professional touch, the Johnston home greets guests at unusual doors and a stained glass overpiece from an English church.

"In the end, a house is defined by the people who live there. Taste is acquired; style is more illusive." —Marjorie Johnston

SHE IS A CREATIVE WIZARD WITH TALENT IN HER BLOOD. USED TO THE CHALLENGE OF TRANSLATING HER CLIENTS' STYLES, MARJORIE JOHNSTON FACED HER biggest test: How to furnish the family's Cashiers, N.C. mountain getaway with the same sophistication and élan as her personal taste. The result is a perfect mountain getaway for her and husband Jay from their home in Birmingham, Ala.

They started out to build a little cabin in the woods. Before it was finished however, Marjorie and Jay Johnston had a stunning second home large enough

for themselves, their family and friends. Located in North Carolina's lush Wade Hampton area of Cashiers, the Johnstons' Three Buck Lodge is a handsome, five-bedroom tribute to the talents of Marjorie, a Birmingham, Ala. interior decorator, and Asheville, N.C. architect Jan Grierson.

It didn't happen by chance. "We became familiar with the area in the early '80s," says Marjorie Johnston. "Our daughter Wendy went to nearby Camp Merrie Wood and my husband had friends who were founding members of the community. As an avid golfer, he was attracted to the golf course, which was designed by Tom Fazio, one of the best in the business.

"We bought our land in 1993 on a wild hair, and later



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switched lots because our original lot was too steep. Then, although I'd worked with an architect in Birmingham, we hired Jan Grierson on the basis of spec houses he'd designed. I liked his style and I wanted to work with someone fairly local."

She also found inspiration in her daughter and her friend, Barrie Caison Benson, a professional designer from Charlotte.

"They came up with terrific ideas that added more life to the house," she says. "It became younger. In architecture, input from a lot of people creates a great result if they are working in concert."

The Johnstons began construction in 1996.

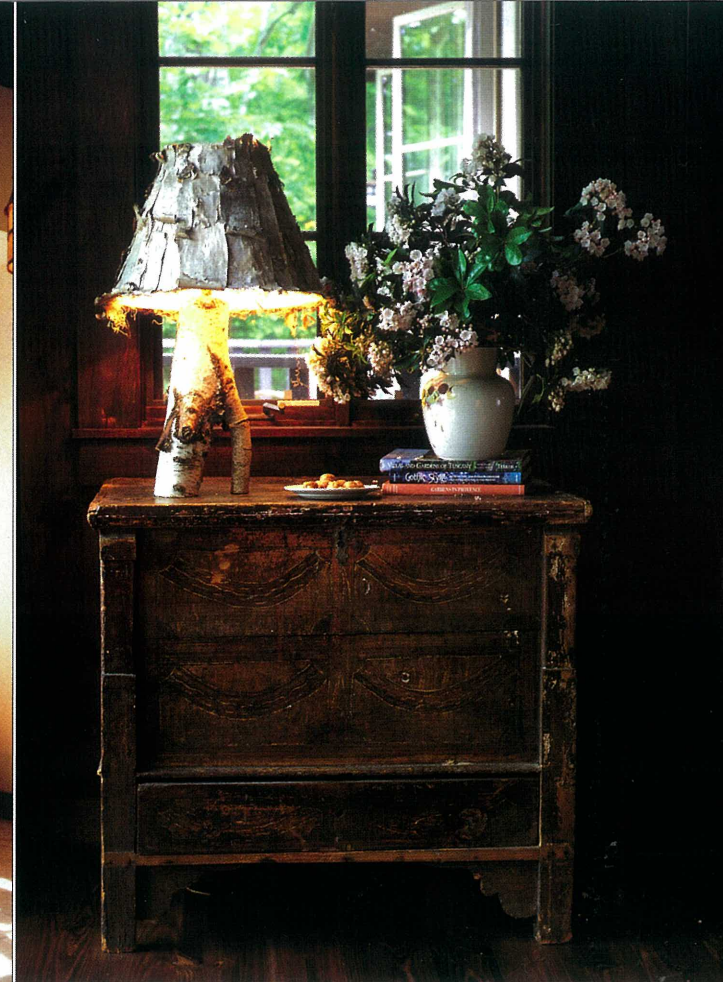
They moved into their new home on Labor Day 1998.

Today their lodge is the perfect weekend and holiday gathering place. Though son Jeffrey lives too far away for frequent visits, the couple fills the house with daughter Wendy, her husband Brian, grandchildren Henry, 4, and Jay, 2, and an assortment of friends for both generations, as well as Marjorie's mother.

"This is a big luxury, a big deal to us," Marjorie says, "and we love to share it. A house needs to be used. There's nothing here that can be ruined."

Actually, the interior is a celebration of Marjorie's unique style.

Cheered on by her attorney husband, her number-one fan, Marjorie created an inviting décor, notable for its flawless



blending of antiques, shabby chic-styled pieces, oddities, curios, and an occasional castoff here and there. It's the sort of combination that takes a practiced eye and an expert like Marjorie who meticulously scaled her furniture to room sizes before ordering for her new home and continuing to add additions that fit the overall look.

"I like primitive things, things with character," she notes, "with a rubbed-off look to appear old."

Her first, and perhaps, most important purchase is pivotal to the home's décor.

While attending the Nashville Antique Show on her birthday, she spotted a pair of antique doors from an English church with stained glass overpiece symbolic of the Holy Spirit. Smitten, she quickly called her husband and, catching him on his way to the jewelry store, requested the doors as her present. Only later did he discover the price, and though the doors had to be stored with the North Carolina dealer for two years, they were worth the wait.

"They set the tone for the interior, which needed to be lodgey in feeling," Marjorie says. Other elements contributing

TOP LEFT: Graceful entrance. Setting the tone of the home's décor, the foyer is dominated by tile flooring and massive church doors with overpiece symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

TOP RIGHT: Character study. Typical of Marjorie's style, this chest has an aged, near-shabby look that teams well a rustic birch log lamp with bark shade.



Regal inspiration. Majestically silent observers, a trio of mounted deer overlooks the great room of the Johnston's home, dubbed Three Buck Lodge in their honor.

to that motif: dark-stained paneling, a 13-foot brick fireplace with pickled mantel, a gold Victorian mirror rescued from a junk pile, white pine floors, black display cabinets fitted to great-room niches, and a concealed television area covered with double doors and hinges soaked in saltwater for aging. Also of note, exterior barn siding from Kentucky, locally crafted chairs for the wide deck, an enclosed screen porch with the house's third fireplace and charming wicker furniture, first-floor master suite, lower level "King's Room" that's accessible only from outside, and upstairs accommodations named for childhood addresses and a favorite aunt.

Overall, Marjorie's eclectic and rustic nature comes through in what she calls "a collected look."

"It's made up of an assemblage of things I collected over the years," she says, adding that when the family moved to a smaller house in Birmingham, they brought accessories to their mountain place, giving it a healthy dose of personality.

As she notes, "Lamps, mirrors and accessories are the jewelry of a home."

Carrying on a historic tradition that started in the area when people came from Florida, New England and other areas to summer here with their staff and children, the Johnstons have expanded that schedule to suit their lifestyles.

Jay is sometimes host to his golf group and Marjorie spent an entire month in Cashiers last year, enjoying such outdoor pastimes as jogging, walking and hiking, then returning later to celebrate a family Thanksgiving on-site.

"When you own a house and love it, there's always something to do," she says, marveling at the good fortune she and her husband share. "This is almost resort-like. People are here to relax and play golf. When they buy homes in the community, they form friendships and a lot of them travel together."

And though it's essentially a summer location, the Johnstons are considering returning for an old-fashioned Christmas.

After all, there's that awe at a near-perfect escape.

"I can't believe we own it," Marjorie confesses. "It's such a joy and so much fun." ■■■



BOTTOM LEFT: Family time. Three generations – grandsons Jay and Peter, daughter Wendy and husband Brian, Marjorie and Jay – gather on the deck for evening refreshments.

TOP RIGHT: A different mood. Classic toile fabric, which Marjorie purchased and kept for more than two decades, sets a romantic tone for the home's master bedroom.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Sweet solitude. Jay relaxes in one of the deck's locally crafted chairs for a quiet moment of reading and relaxation.

TOP: Youngsters' delight. Jay and Henry bounce off surplus energy atop an iron double bed in the white-themed, glass-enclosed sunroom.

CENTER: Handsome exterior. Striking a complementary note with the mountain terrain, the Johnston home is a celebration of stone, old barn siding and staggered rooflines.

BOTTOM: Weather proof. When the open air of the screened porch grows chill, the stone fireplace provides the right atmosphere for comfortable gatherings.

Developer: William McKee

Architect: Jan Grierson

Builder/Contractor: Dayle Baumgarner/
Roy Baumgarner
Builders

Community: Wade Hampton,
Cashiers, N.C.

Flowers: Mary Jo Means, Atlanta

Lifestyle Photographer: Scott Crowder

Architectural Photographer: David Dirtrich