

GOING RURAL ... SORT OF

BY ELAINE ROGERS • PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERRI GLANGER





Newly applied stained concrete on the back patio gives a polished look and creates a relaxing outdoor retreat that's all the more inviting because of its rural-styled setting and pastureland views.

SKIRTING THE ISSUE OF CITY LIVING IN NORTH FORT WORTH

As the urban sprawl of the Dallas Fort Worth Metroplex continues to expand, developers seem surprisingly adept at finding new zones that feel miles away from everything yet retain enough proximity to “civilization” to attract new residents. The trade-off is fairly straightforward: longer commutes or a few more miles between their homes and shopping conveniences for the luxury of “getting away from it all” with larger lots and more space between neighbors.

The appeal of the concept was strong when Chuck and Debbie Chirillo purchased seven acres in a new, countrified development in north Fort Worth, especially given both a rekindled and newfound love of horses, and their desire to find property that would accommodate adjacent pastureland. They found their answer in a gated community situated along a farm-to-market road between Lake Worth and Aledo, where they built a new home with a barn to match. Today, a year after move-in, the couple’s idea of bliss is an updated version of life in the country with a contemporary residence situated in a rural-styled setting where they view horse pastures from their living room or back patio and tend to their three horses themselves. This embracing of equestrian life came about a few years ago, Debbie explains, when they were living near Eagle Mountain Lake and attended a cutting horse show that gave them both a fairly serious case of horse fever. For her it was a first; for Chuck, a renewed passion and a reminder of boyhood days spent on horseback.

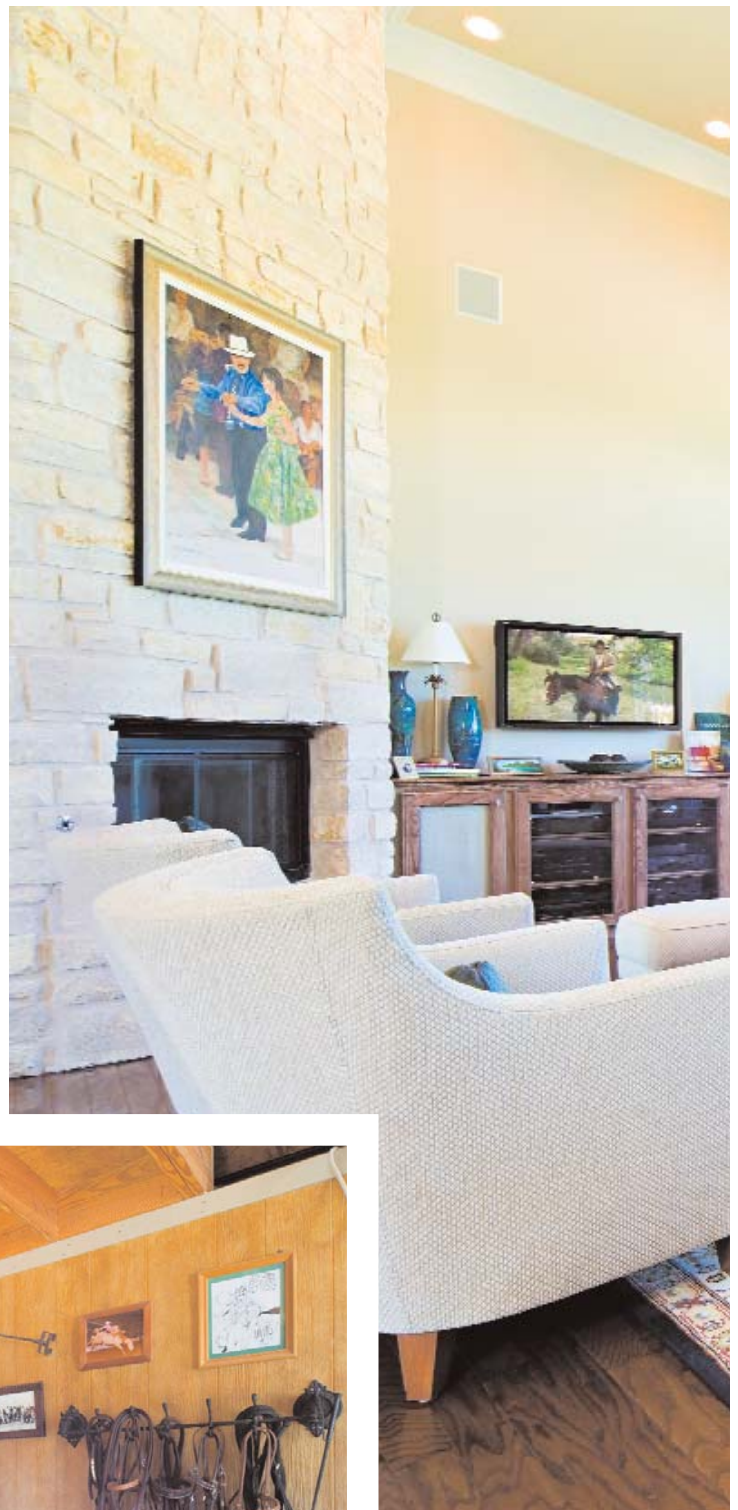
“He’d always had horses, but he thought he’d left that behind when he moved to Texas because he traveled so much for business,” Debbie explains. Chuck bought Debbie her first horse and they boarded her at Eagle Mountain Equestrian Center, three miles from their home at the time. Not long after, Debbie suggested that Chuck track down his old horse, King,



A striking horse portrait dominates a space between dining and living rooms and helps set an equestrian theme. Because both homeowners play the guitar, the instrument to the left was a sentimental choice of decoration.



Interior designer Debbie Chirillo, owner of The ARTEC Group, Inc. in Fort Worth, doles out an alfalfa snack to Marquis and Ace, two of the three horses she and husband Chuck tend to personally in a barn matched to the home they built on a seven-acre lot in north Fort Worth, between Aledo and Lake Worth.



Sage-colored leather couches in a setting of soft colors and blended textures brings to mind the phrase "casual elegance" in the family room. Window views lead to the rural-styled property's comfortable patio and a horse pasture beyond.



In the small barn, located 40-feet from the house, horses Ace, King and Marquis get personalized treatment and enjoy personalized treatment from their doting owners.



whom he'd sold to neighbors in Missouri when he'd relocated to the Metroplex.

"His eyes always lit up when he talked about King," Debbie recalls. "I told him he needed to buy him back, and, if you can believe it, the people he sold him to agreed to sell King back to him for the very same price. ... They shipped King here and you've never seen a reunion like that one. It had been seven years since they'd seen each other, but it was just two long lost friends."

Now, King and two companions, Ace and Marquis, reside in a barn placed 40 feet from the couple's garage, and Debbie notes they often take advantage of the subdivision's creek-side riding trails as well as a covered and

outdoor arena. As an extra bonus, deer and wild turkeys are common visitors to the neighborhood, and improvements on the property continue, so that their horses soon will have four acres to roam.

While scenic it is, rustic, it's not since Debbie, an interior designer and owner of the ARTEC Group Inc., has practiced her craft on-premises, creating a home environment of soft colors and blended textures that brings to mind the phrase "casual elegance." Artworks and coordinated accessories abound in the living room where sage-colored and buttery soft leather couches surround a custom-made trunk of one hundred-year-old cypress that serves as a coffee table. A striking horse portrait dominates a space between living and





As an interior designer who practices her craft at home, the homeowner recently redecorated for summer, altering the light-colored room's mood with ocean blue ottomans and accents. A custom-made trunk of 100-year-old cypress doubles as a coffee table.

Opposite Above: In the dining room, a Kriess Collection dining ensemble provides formal seating for six and conversation pieces such as a painting by Fort Worth artist Roger Ikers depicting famed Texas Indian chieftain, Quannah Parker as he might have looked in his younger years.

dining rooms and helps set an equestrian theme that is echoed by a delicate horse statuette prancing on a console between the larger couch and the window views of the pasture behind. The home's tile entry forges a path between the hardwoods of the dining and living rooms into the kitchen, where Debbie went with light-colored porcelain tile countertops with a tumbled marble edge and backsplash.

"I've gotten tired of granite," Debbie says as a way of explaining the unusual choice. "You just see so much of it, and this works better because it ties in with the brick on our fireplace."

Many art selections in the home come from regional artisans Debbie grew familiar with years earlier when she owned an art gallery in Houston. "You get to know certain artists very well and admire their work," she explains, adding that she is especially drawn to those who have a strong passion for what they do. "I had a lot of ideas about what type of art I wanted to put where, and who I wanted to do it for me," she says.

Favorites include a painting over the fireplace called "Dance Contest" by Gerald Peterson, an Oklahoma artist known for his paintings of Mexico, water colors in the bedroom and breakfast area by Wendy Hill of Mobile, Alabama and a pastel called "The Porcelain Maker" by Francois Arenas, a Spanish artist now located in the Metroplex. Having recently redecorated for summer with ocean blue ottomans and accent pillows, Debbie took inspiration from the home's variety of decorative blue and teal glass vases that perch on bookshelves and built-ins throughout—all creations of local glass artisan and University of Texas at Arlington art professor, David W. Keens. In the dining room, a Kriess Collection dining ensemble is bounded by a framed Kalaga tapestry from Burma on one wall and a portrait of famed Texas Indian chieftain, Quannah Parker on the other. The latter item was commissioned from Fort Worth artist, Roger Ikers. "I wanted it to be a depiction of him in his younger years," Debbie explains. "That's unusual because all of the photos we see of him in our history books show him as an

Opposite Below: In the kitchen, the homeowners used light-colored porcelain tile with a tumbled marble edging on both the countertops and island. With plenty of elbow space, the cook zone accommodates frequent entertaining and leads to a tranquil sitting area referred to as the keeping room.

older man."

Furnishings in the master suite are custom made of light-finished alderwood, and in a surprising touch, Asian paintings add an element of "feng shui" to the mix. "I like putting different things together in unusual ways," Debbie explains. However, she and Chuck also have a proven tendency to stick with what they like, as evidenced by their preferences regarding the newer three-bedroom home. Working with custom builder David Pickett Construction Company in Fort Worth and architects at Plansmith Residential Design in Aledo, they styled their home very similar to their previous residence near Eagle Mountain Lake. "We sort of duplicated that home," Debbie notes, "only we switched the floor plan around a little."

Although neither Chuck nor Debbie are Fort Worth natives, it hasn't taken them long to acclimate. Debbie muses that perhaps serendipity was at play, as she recalls visiting Fort Worth when she was still living in Houston, "just loving this town" and telling a friend "this is where I should live." A year later, she met Chuck, who was in the process of moving to the Metroplex from Missouri, and soon, wedding bells and moving trucks brought her here too. "Sometimes things just seem meant to be," she says with a laugh.

Of her countrified address, she adds: "I know it seems like we're way out there when you're not familiar with the area, but we're just 25 minutes from downtown Fort Worth. You hit a highway and you can get around pretty quick ... We drive a lot, but it's worth it when you come home to this."

