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East Memphis Elegance ~ P. 26

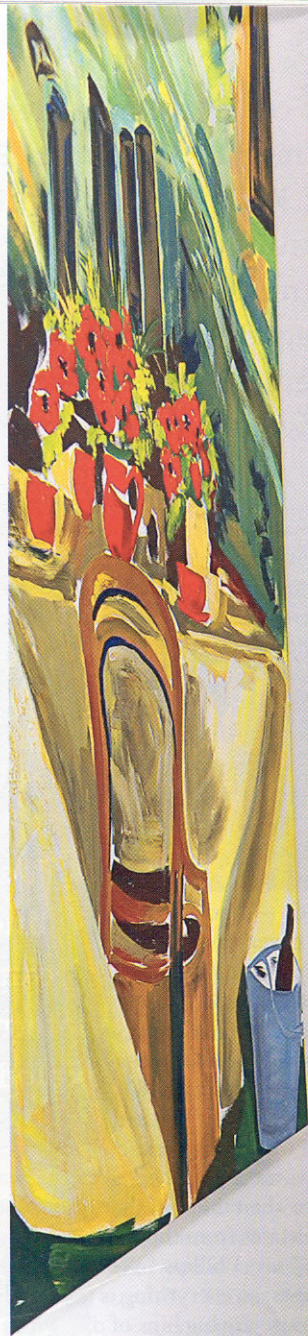
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THE BATTERING RAM

The Tragedy of Busing Revisited ~ P. 36



Breaking New Ground

Here's an inside look at one
Memphian's post-modern
dream home.

By Anne Cunningham O'Neill

Photography by Andrea Zucker and Dr. Paul Shea

YOU MUST HAVE NOTICED IT. Big, bold, and bright white, Dr. Paul Shea's brand spanning new East Memphis home stops you in your tracks. Built in the depths of our financial crisis when foreclosures, "for sale" signs, and forlorn spec houses are the order of the day, this home stands out. His friends have nicknamed it the "Taj MaPaul." All kidding aside, building this magnificent custom house was no small achievement in these tough economic times.

As Shea tells it, he had been collecting ideas for his ideal home for years and had purchased a desirable corner lot on a leafy street off Poplar "at just the right time" in anticipation of breaking ground immediately. The neighborhood is an established one, where older homes often give way in the urban infill



process to large but traditional European-style homes. But Shea had a different vision . . .

He had already been admiring in a nearby neighborhood another house that he considered the literal "bricks and mortar" embodiment of what he had in mind for that vision. Next, he tracked down the homeowner and was pleasantly surprised to learn he was an old friend and former Memphis University School classmate, Albert Alexander. Shea called him up, received a tour of the house, and became all the more convinced; "Wow, this is it," he recalls telling himself.

Alexander's home had been designed by well-known Memphis architect Charles Shipp. Shea eventually hired Brad Shapiro

of Shapiro & Company Architects for the project. Shipp, however, graciously offered invaluable advice in suggesting Shea speak to his next-door neighbor about swapping portions of their oddly shaped lots, so each property would then be "squared off." The trade was an ingenious idea and, as a result, Shapiro determined that the Shea home could be perfectly "sculpted" to fit the lot's new contours.

Shea sees the architecture of his home as having a conventional external shape but one that uses more contemporary materials. Shapiro for his part describes the style as "soft contemporary," with much the same "look" as the Alexander home, though he emphasizes that in the planning process, his



Here's an inside look at one of Memphis's best garden dream homes.

By Anne Conley
Photography by Anne Conley

cues came from many different style homes, both contemporary and traditional.

Bud Hurley was the custom builder who built the home for Shea in ten months, and it was ready for the homeowner to move into last May. Hurley explains that the building material is white slurry over brick, an ancient building process that goes back to Roman times. He notes that by far the most significant line item in the project budget was the roof. A traditional shingled roof was ruled out, and Galvalume, an aluminum-zinc alloy of coated steel that rolls out seamlessly in sheets, was the material of choice. The roof carries a lifetime guarantee and requires zero maintenance, factors which contribute to the high

efficiency of the home.

Shea was determined that there be plenty of privacy for this home, something that's often hard to achieve with a corner lot. For this reason the house is designed in a U-shape around a central courtyard, with the orientation being towards the rear of the house. Every room overlooks and opens onto a glorious outdoor living space, one that includes a split-level pool, sheer descent waterfall, covered porch, and outdoor kitchen. The goal was to achieve the feel of a tropical vacation house right here at home, potted palms and all.

One unique aspect of this project was the fact that Shapiro, Hurley, and Shea worked closely together on every detail, even







designing the interior of the home themselves. Paul Shea's mother, Lynda, is a well-known interior designer and a well-established importer of French country antiques, but she and her son have different aesthetics. Although they disagreed on some things, Paul says he's indebted to his mother for a number of good suggestions, such as enlarging the windows to allow more natural light.

The foyer resembles a small gallery with special "art lighting" for the paintings that line it. Once inside, an open plan fuses the living, dining, and kitchen areas. The ceilings are 14 feet high, and the dark stained and scored concrete floors, as well as hardwood flooring in some areas, provide a rich contrast to the white walls. The select alder and cherry woods used in the cabinetry were chosen by Hurley to soften the overall look. The entire downstairs has a glow that's enhanced by the pendant lighting fixtures.

Furniture and adornments are minimalist throughout the home. The living area is anchored by three oversized contemporary leather sofas, and the limestone fireplace has an industrial, art deco look. Granite countertops in the kitchen area have a "riverwashed" finish, and the stove and large center island are harmoniously curved. The dining area is simple and spare with a fabulous chandelier from Graham's Lighting punctuating the space. Bud Hurley points out that he customized and reproduced

to scale certain features that Shea wanted in the house, such as the stunning wooden mirror surround in the downstairs bathroom.

At the rear of the ground floor is a breathtaking master bedroom. The clean white-on-white décor with its flowing window treatments channels the feel of Miami Beach's über-modern Delano Hotel, which Shea says was, in fact, one of his inspirations. The master bath is solid white marble; the room has a European spa-like feel, with a walk-through shower and luxurious soaking tub. Upstairs are three bedrooms and a balcony overlooking the courtyard. The third story is an attic.

Shapiro sums up "his two biggest thrills" in working on the Paul Shea project. The first was "having his ideas come to life while building something of value." Second was "seeing the client's pride in what has been achieved." There's no question he has a satisfied customer in Shea, who says simply that "it is a wonderful house to live in," adding for the record that his mom loves the way it all turned out.

What's more, Shea's good fortune is continuing, with his upcoming marriage on an island in the South Pacific. He'll wed Jessica Frey, whom we can count as one lucky lady when she's carried over the threshold of this post-modern home.

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