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.. { home of The Great One } ..

By Julie Allin
 Photos by
 Erhard Pfeiffer

How does hockey superstar Wayne Gretzky live? Very comfortably, if his family's California home is any indication.

There are two words that sum up the Gretzky family home in the Lake Sherwood area of Westlake Village, Calif., and that's "elegantly detailed." With custom blended brick and neo-classic ornaments on the outside, and ornate mouldings, rich textiles and onyx on the inside, the seven-bedroom mansion is part of a 12,000-square-foot, four-building compound set on nearly seven-and-a-half acres of land. A guesthouse, carriage house/garage and gym make up the rest of the estate.

"The area in which they live, outside L.A. in a gated community, was established with more of an east-coast flavour," explains principal-in-charge, architect Richard Landry of Landry Design Group, Los Angeles. With its dramatic white columns and latticed loggias, the home's Georgian-Colonial inspired look blends in with the style of the existing amenity buildings like the country club. "We wanted to have the grandeur of the country club," says associate-in-charge Brian Pinkett. "We wanted to be part of the design, so as opposed to using some more west-coast materials, we chose to use the same materials as these buildings, like brick." In this case, the reddish-brown brick was actually blended so the colour would modulate, and rolled to create a softer and less uniform look, in order to make the house look like it had always been there.

The entrance features a neo-classic port cochère, supported by white

pillars. In keeping with the style of architecture, the lower level has classic cash windows, while the glazing on the upper storey has a delicate arch. Black shutters contrast with the hue of the brick and the white accents. A bridge joins the main house to the carriage house's guest quarters. The rear of the house evokes a Southern plantation, with two-storey pillars, and Palladian windows. Think *Gone With the Wind*, with a great pool.

Wayne Gretzky might wear the captain's C on the ice, but in matters of home décor, it's wife Janet who calls the shots. "What's interesting is that with the exterior being a bit more Georgian, the interior would typically not be this detailed, but Janet really liked the moulding," says Landry, a transplanted Canadian from Berthierville, Que., explaining that the details were added in layers until it was just right.

Janet Gretzky was very much involved in the process from start to finish, working closely with Landry and interior designer Monique Lafia, of Lafia/Arvin Design, Los Angeles, to create her home. As Landry says: "she came to every meeting. Wayne came to the site, too, but he trusts her judgement. It's a good representation of what makes her more comfortable."

"I wanted it to have great bones, so that it would look good even with-



Above left: The rear of the house makes a Southern statement with dramatic columns, a loggia and a terrace overlooking the pool. Above: A touch of Versailles. The parlour features ornate moldings and medallions and custom furnishings, a hallmark of the project.



Above_The library's classic dark wood panelling and brocade drapes contrast with Gretzky's hockey memorabilia, including an Andy Warhol portrait.

ing a Southern feel, incorporating elements from various sources she has seen, including magazine articles that she had read and places she had visited. "I knew what I didn't like. I knew it had to be something I like. Anything that was brought to me, I didn't like, because it was someone else's taste," she says.

The home has to balance a double role: it's a place for the couple to entertain, but it also has to be a workable home for a family of seven. The formal areas, which include a living room, have a decidedly European look, channelling rococo chateaux. There are the famous layers of intricate mouldings, Ionic columns, gilded mirrors and sconces, silk shaded chandeliers, and custom everything. "There's custom area rugs, and all the furniture is custom made," Lafia says. "There's a lot of onyx, and marble, the fabrics are all European. We were in the stone yard for eight hours, picking out the marble and onyx. It was wonderful that Janet was so involved. We worked really hard."

And by "we," Lafia does indeed mean herself and Gretzky, who was more than happy to spend a day surrounded by stone. "I went to the marble yards and handpicked each piece of onyx," Gretzky explains. "Nothing was brought to me, I went and picked it out."

The floors throughout are ebony-coloured walnut. "The floors are very important to me. They're high-gloss and high shine and almost black in colour. They just look so rich," she says, explaining with a laugh that she didn't mean that to sound like rich as in money, but rather depth.

Luxury meets hockey in the library. Dark wood panels and built-in

bookcases line the walls and swirling acanthus-type mouldings cap off the top of the room. There are brocade drapes, a carved chandelier, and masculine touches like a mahogany desk with an accompanying caramel-coloured, button-backed executive chair. Memorabilia and family photos are interspersed with the leather-bound volumes on the built-ins, and an Andy Warhol painting of Wayne Gretzky in his Oilers days takes pride of place behind the desk. Three jerseys, including Team Canada's, hang on hooks to the right of the desk.

The family-oriented spaces, like the kitchen, family room and breakfast room, are more relaxed. There are painted wood beams taking the place of cornices. "The kitchen has that great teak island," Lafia says. "We added all kinds of drawers for storage and gadgets. It was lots of fun."

On the back of the house, the loggias and a terrace with spectacular views of the lake and surrounding hills allow the family to enjoy the climate. Lafia included plenty of places for the family to get together to enjoy a meal and each other's company. "It's important for our family that it's not too formal, so I wanted to bring elegance and casual together," Gretzky says. "The family room is very, very comfortable, and having that indoor-outdoor feel is great."

While certain pieces of memorabilia inhabit the library, when you've had a career as celebrated as Wayne Gretzky's, there's a lot to accommodate. Trophies and awards don't always fit into one's décor tastes, so how does an interior designer go about incorporating them into her plan? Give them their own space. "We set up a sports bar, designed specifical-



Above left_With its simpler details and casual seating, the kitchen was designed as a comfortable family space. Above right_By using smaller tables instead of one large one, the designers created a formal dining room that accommodates both large or small groups with the same sense of intimacy. Below_With the mild weather and beautiful scenery, the family gets plenty of use from the outdoor living areas.

ly to house Wayne's trophies," Lafia says. "Up on the ceiling there are different medallions with the logos of the teams he played for. All of that was specifically done for him."

One challenge the architects and designers had to cope with was the growing family. "They had three kids when we started and by the time we finished, they had added two more," Pinkett laughs. Suddenly, seven bedrooms makes sense. The five Gretzky children, three boys and two girls, range in age from two to 16, so their needs vary greatly. "Each child has their own suite, so they can have privacy. The younger kids are closer to their parents, while the older ones are farther away," Landry explains. Creating a unique room for each child across such a spectrum was no easy task. "Each room is designed specifically for the child," Lafia says. "Paulina's room is very feminine, very girly, which is what she likes. The boys' rooms have darker colours, like a deep khaki, and dark blue."

Many people would put home building and renovations fairly high on their stress scale, but Gretzky relishes the opportunity. "I love the process of building, it's not stressful for me at all," she laughs. "It's like doing a movie; you have pre-production, production and post-production." And she has nothing but praise for Landry and Lafia and also for the Lake Sherwood community for making the experience so enjoyable.

Gretzky will most likely get the chance to dive into a new project soon. The estate, which was completed just two years ago, is now on the market for \$25 million US. □

