

# CORDILLERA

*Life*

THE ULTIMATE COLORADO  
LIFESTYLE EXPERIENCE  
SUMMER 2015

## *The Pursuit of Perfection*

DR. KAREN NERN

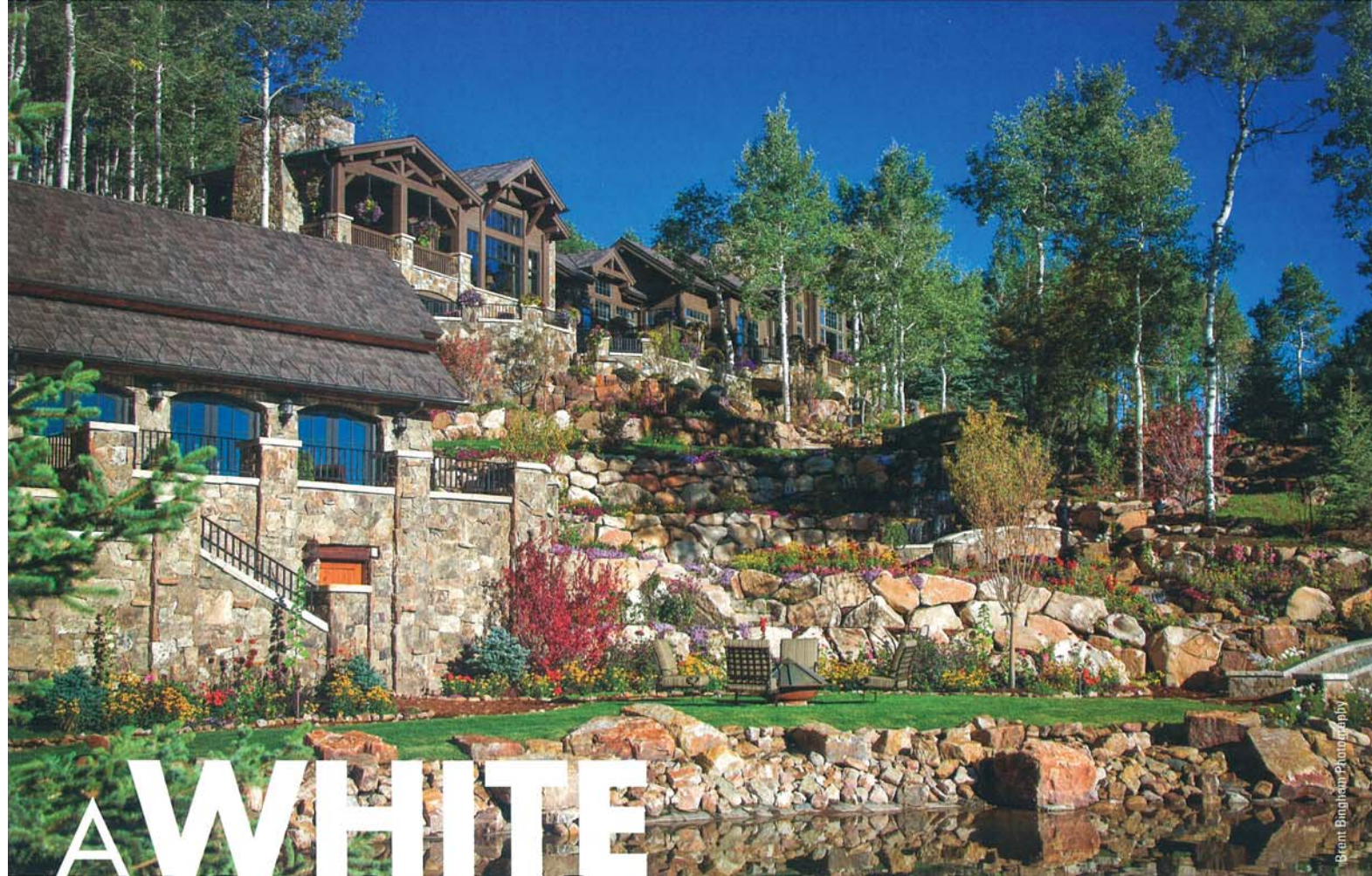
VAIL'S PREMIER DERMATOLOGIST  
RESIDENT AND CLUB MEMBER



FASHION  
CORDILLERA MOTHERS  
AND DAUGHTERS

HOMES  
LIVING A DREAM





Brent Bingham Photography

# A WHITE HOUSE TOUR

THE HOUSE THAT DREAMS BUILT

by Diane Tauber Schultz

On a rainy Labor Day weekend 10 years ago, prominent Florida orthopedic hand and micro-vascular surgeon, Dr. George M. White, and his wife, Charlotte White, decided to pass the time looking at homes in Cordillera. Today, they're sitting on the hearth of one of their home's 10 fireplaces in a great room that has earned its name. Their completed estate renovation that they aptly named Black Bear Lodge nearly doubled the size of the existing home and is now surrounded by cascading waterfalls, exquisite gardens, a previously non-existent fishing pond, killer views, and even a sanctuary. It's a giant leap from what they stepped into that rainy day.

"I call this my favorite place on earth," George says walking under one of the home's multiple interior arches and over a suspended bridge that seamlessly connects the old house with the new. "We've been all over world. By far this home is where I look forward to coming the most. It's an incredibly special place," he adds. "We work very hard in Orlando, long days and nights. This is really an escape place for me."

The home is nestled at the end of Black Bear Trail and backs up to a Wildlife Corridor, a habitat link that joins two or more larger areas of similar habitat for ecological preservation and continuity of animal movement and population preservation. William Randolph Hearst shipped in exotic animals from all over the world for his San Simeon castle estate grounds. The White's estate is naturally amassed with wildlife year-round. They even installed exterior cameras so they could remotely enjoy the perpetual sightings of elk, deer and mountain lion that pass through their little slice of heaven.

"We have incredible wildlife adventures," George says. "A

mountain lion sat on a rock wall by our garage for 10 minutes one day, and we woke up one Christmas morning to an entire yard littered with elk, about 100 elk." The Vail Daily published Charlotte's photo of the mountain lion chilling on the wall.

While RMT Architects provided the spectacular design, George is the idea guy on this project. He says so himself, as do all the major contractors who worked on the renovation. White had his hand in everything big and small and would come in once a month to make changes or see it executed. One of White's hobbies is to design intricate elaborate wood ceilings, which he incorporated into his Orlando home.

"George was the creative genius and visionary," says the project's general contractor Sean McGinley, owner of Meadow Mountain Homes. "He's very passionate and had this vision and dream. Sometimes he'd have an actual dream the night before and was really good at conveying his ideas, and we were happy to make the changes."

Bringing that vision to life required a small army. The deadline? Labor Day weekend 2014, just in time for a White wedding. George and Charlotte's son was getting married. On any given day for nearly a year and a half you'd find 40 to 70 masons and other tradesmen working on the project year-round, pushing through a winter that had record snowfall. The last six to eight months of the job required two shifts of workers onsite day and night, including weekends.

"What I love about what we do as general contractors is that all the trades we use are small businesses," says Ingrid Monson McGinley, co-owner of Meadow Mountain Homes. "Here's a beautiful home they





Brent Bingham Photography

The objective of bringing the Cordillera great outdoors inside is continued with taxidermy above the fireplace and other locations, and wildlife photography on the walls. "A friend of mine took all the photographs and most of them, except for the bears, were taken here," Charlotte says.

The great room bar is a combination of fine woodwork and intricate ironwork with a solid hammered metal countertop handcrafted by a local blacksmith and looks like you need a cowboy hat to be served. What's being served is George's extensive bourbon collection, 100 bottles to be exact, which are impressively displayed. The continuous warm colors in the furniture, drapery, carpeting and walls cause your eyes to climb up to the open log and reclaimed barn wood ceiling. George wanted a rustic feel to the entire renovation reminiscent of old national park architecture—think initial homes built in Bachelor's Gulch and Strawberry Park, Beaver Creek.

Rustic Western frontier style of architecture developed in the early to mid-1900s has elements in common such as exposed roof beams, time-intensive hand craftsmanship and huge stone fireplaces. This architecture achieves its purpose—to be in harmony with the environment—and your senses get it faster than your eye.

The log portion of the home was built offsite upside down, disassembled, trucked to Cordillera in phases and re-erected right side up using multiple cranes. The logs are from Utah, Colorado and Montana and cover the ceilings, walls, and support beams.

As you descend into the lower levels a castle-like feel sets in and you're not quite sure what will meet you at the subterranean level. The stairway's walls are pure stone with wood ceilings, rope iron handrails and iron long-stem candelabras that make you want to remove them from the wall to light your way.

At the bottom, the staircase turns and widens revealing a home

theatre with 13 leather seats with cup holders set in a half-moon configuration in front of the screen. There's a wet bar, a wine cellar, and, of course, cozy seating around the fireplace.

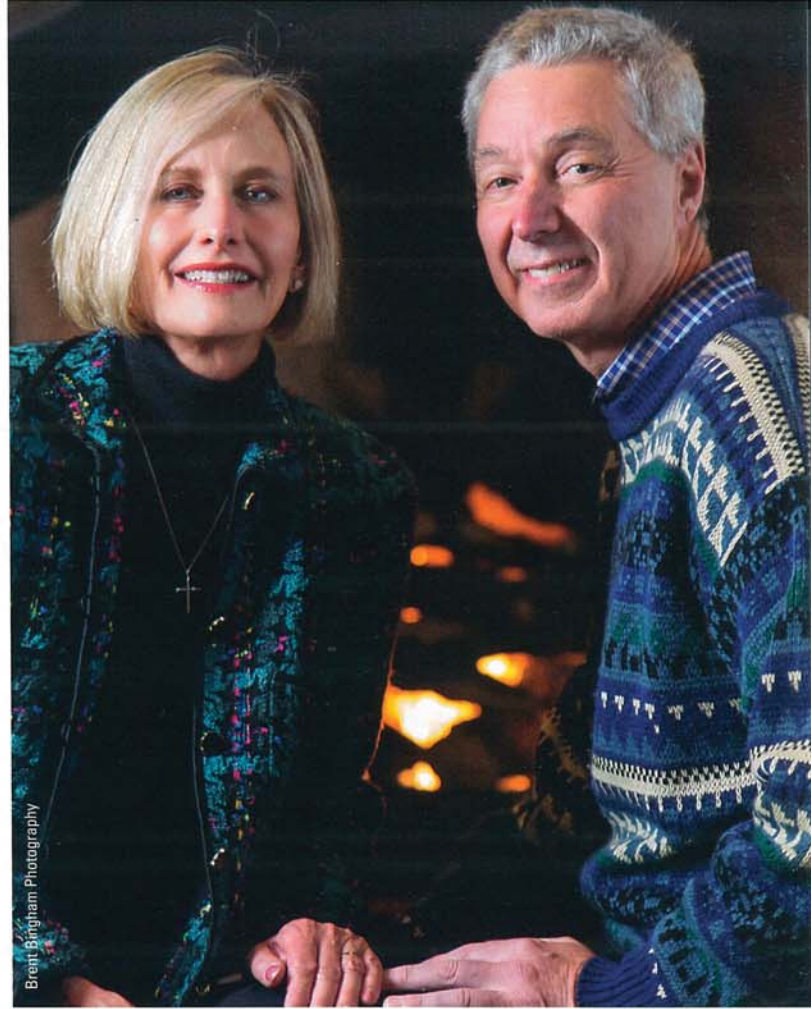
Three double-door arched inset cabinets showcase a collection of crucifixes from Europe. "George surprised me with those last Christmas. The Archbishop of Avignon collected crosses and when he passed away they were given to his family who sold them," Charlotte says. "Some are marble and granite and are so heavy, but when you pick that one up (she points to a crucifix) it's made of balsa wood and you could throw it over your shoulder." Charlotte shares a thick book George made especially for her that showcases the history of the crosses.

A door just beyond the theatre room leads outside to the sanctuary. "George built the sanctuary for me," Charlotte softly says. "I'm the one who gets up everyday and reads the bible."

Everything within the house has been peaceful and welcoming including Charlotte. Outside, along the mountain's gradual slope is what the Whites call the sanctuary area. It's a series of walking paths, outdoor gardens, waterfalls, a fishing pond and a recreational building. When you're inside the recreational building the waterfalls adjacent to it reflect off its windows, an unexpected bonus to the structure's inner beauty.

George's very own fishing pond is one-third the size of a football field. It's 12 feet at its deepest point and holds a whopping 523,600 gallons of water that continually recycle through the streams and waterfalls. Built with Cherokee boulders it has a natural spring source on the property that was an old water trough previously used by ranchers for cattle and horses. That's the thing with creating a fishing pond. A natural spring source is required, which George accidentally stepped into one day while walking with his dog, turning his dream of





can have for generations and we as a small business, along with other small businesses, worked on it. That's a huge driving force of our economy in the Vail Valley."

Upon entering through the home's arched front double-doors there's an immediate sense of home and hearth. Despite its sprawling 13,000 square feet, a cozy intimate space appears at every turn that invites you to crawl up next to a warm fire and read a good book. The interior décor has been personally rather than professionally appointed by the Whites to make this house a home in its most authentic sense. There are warm hues of color throughout, nothing jarring.

An original Remington entitled "Bronco Man" is displayed on the coffee table. Remington himself gave it to the U.S. Secretary of the Navy in 1940. George purchased it 25 years ago at an estate sale for \$300 believing it was a replica. Imagine his surprise.

Every room in the house opens up to the outdoors and sounds of the streams and waterfalls flow in. The multiple upper and lower outdoor decks continually lure you to step out and take in the awe-inspiring views of the New York Mountains. Your eye moves down through layers of gardens and running water features from one level to the next that cascade down mountain, under bridges, and into the fishing pond. In case the views don't keep you on the decks, several seating areas, fire pits, and a hot tub will nudge you to relax and stay awhile.

Ah, but this is a tour so back inside. As you pass the dining room where the house previously ended and walk across the bridge connecting the new addition to the pre-existing home there is no

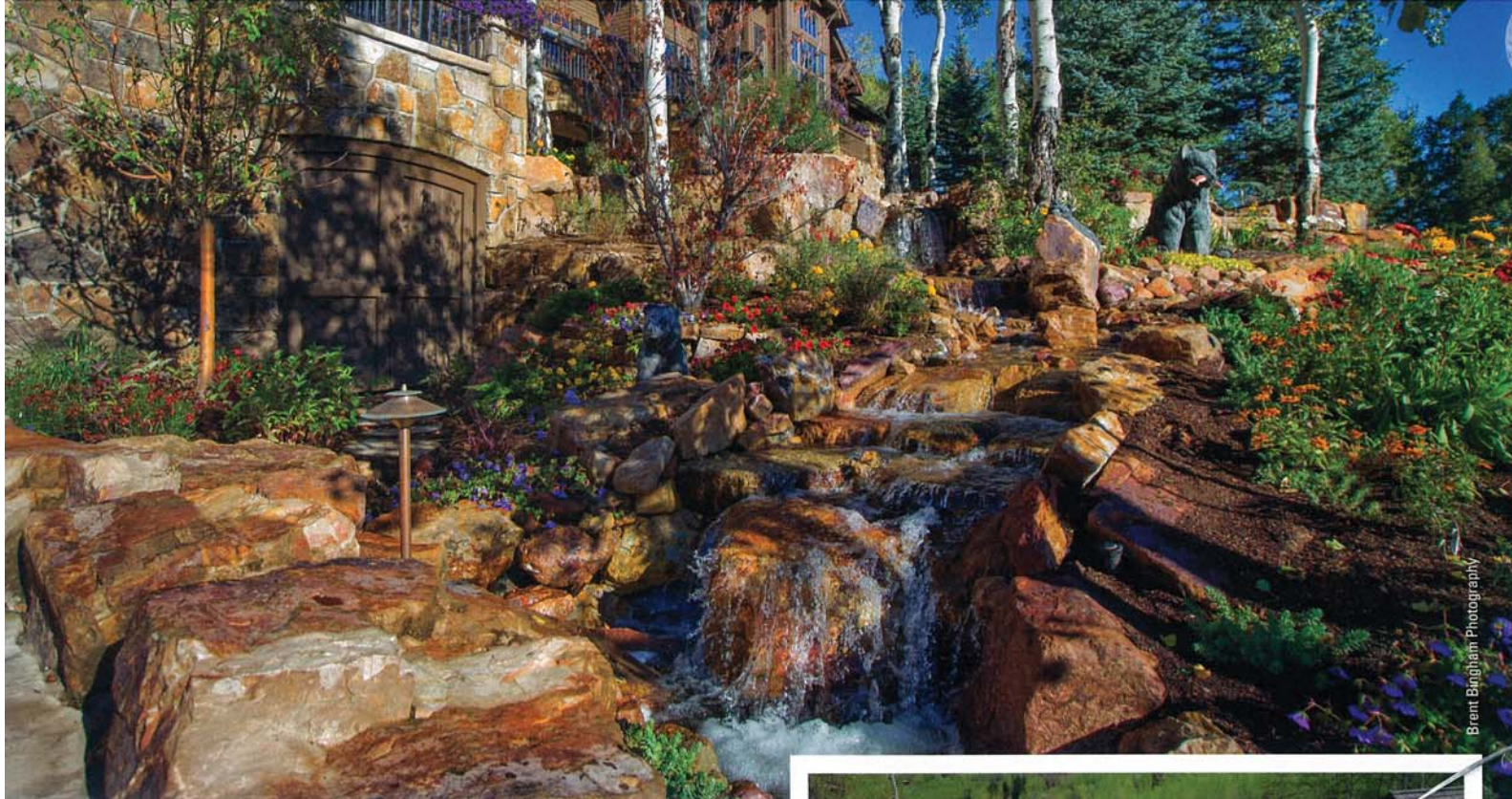
artwork necessary. The floor-to-ceiling windows expose long-range mountain views on one side and the national forest on the other. This creates a unique feel of being tucked in the woods while offering views typically only available on mountaintops.

Under the entry arch the expanse of the great room gradually opens up. This is the heart of the home and is one of the catalysts for this renovation. George wanted a large gathering place for family and friends. Its focal point is a huge inset fireplace you could almost step into made of Colorado Moss Rock with handcrafted iron doors. Some of the fireplace rocks were so massive they had to be set into the house by cranes prior to the roof being set.

The three-level renovation of 4,894 livable square feet (not counting porches, mechanical rooms, etc.) houses the great room, covered deck with fireplace and outdoor kitchen, an enormous master suite with a full bath and a fireplace, an adjacent sitting room which opens onto the lower deck, a home theater with a sitting area and a fireplace, a kitchenette and wine cellar. The additional six bedrooms are located in the pre-existing home.

The logs used to build this home range eight to 36 inches in diameter. Arnold Schwarzenegger couldn't wrap his arms fully around some of the vertical spruce log beams that ascend into the ceiling. A custom stick-branch staircase railing at one end of the great room leads up to an open-air loft office above the bar. The covered porch off the great room is an extension of this room and comes equipped with outdoor heaters on the rafters, a 10-seat iron table, a wet bar, a grill and smoker, a wood-burning stove, and even a pizza oven.





Brent Bingham Photography

a private fishing hole into a reality.

The pond and water features were eight months in the making. Some of the boulders used were as big as a VW Bug. While most ponds are created on more flat surfaces, Rocky Mountain Custom Landscapes (RMCL) had an additional challenge due to the land slope. Moving mountains takes on new meaning. They cut into the mountain, flattened the pond area, imported materials, and built a 20-foot dam. They also created the series of waterfalls that begin at the main house level and run into the pond.

"The challenge was to create a natural environment," says Jason Ulberg, vice president of RMCL. The water features on this property look like Mother Nature had a hand in it. The design deliberately takes the water's normal path down mountain. "The sheer mass of water movement in all of its glory as it comes down off the mountain is really beautiful," Ulberg adds.

George was involved in the landscaping and water features design from the get-go. "Dr. White is a very intelligent man and he can visualize things, which is a huge help when you're doing a creative project like this. A lot of the time individuals can't see it," says RMCL president Bobby Head.

All around the pond and sanctuary are spruce, crab apple and plum trees, as well as Ginnala maple shrubs and specialty evergreens that cascade over the waterfalls and hang down into the water feature. The annual flowers that were planted for color to meet the White's family wedding timeline were by Lynn Dwyer, of Dwyer Greens & Flowers, who sponsored a garden tour for the Cordillera community in the fall of 2014.

Looking up from the sanctuary, the massive amount of stonework glimmers gold in the sunlight and it's not clear where the old house ends and the new one begins. The suspended bridge between the two larger structures that has a shadow garden and a stream flowing below it and down mountain was George's idea.

Avignon Stone & Outdoor Living is in large part responsible for this visual marriage of two structures. Avignon's masons did all the exterior stone veneer, interior stonework, flagstone floors and



all fireplaces.

The exterior of the home is a combination of Oklahoma and Telluride gold stone veneer that the masons meticulously matched to the original structure. Moss rock was used on the sanctuary's recreational building. The series of walking paths, bridges (Augusta National Golf Club style), and the homes' fireplaces are all products of this company's masonry.

"This is one of the larger custom home projects we've done in 13 years," says Christian Avignon, president and owner of Avignon Stone & Outdoor Living, Inc. "We were trying to match and resemble certain aspects of fireplaces in the old house while making them resemble but be a little different, creating a really massive impact in every room."

"Dr. White was really good about giving a clear and concise message regarding what he wanted with masonry work," Avignon says. His biggest challenge? "To complete it by a wedding date which is never easy for that scale project, but we did it. We can work on deadlines." Side note: Avignon is also owner of 10th Mountain Whiskey and Spirit Co. Creativity never ceases.

Sean McGinley adds, "All of our contractors on the job really pushed for the success of this project. Everyone wanted to deliver this beautiful property to the Whites for the wedding and did whatever it took to get there."

The project was fully completed less than a week prior to the White's wedding, which allowed the ceremony to be moved from Cordillera's summit to the White sanctuary.

A dream home deserved a dream wedding. ©