

Haven

Creating the home you love

Empty nest too comfy to quit

Architect Paul Macht transformed a gym so nicely that his wife would rather they "never move."

By Diane M. Fiske
FOR THE INQUIRER

One advantage of being a residential architect like Paul Macht is that you can create a home that grows with your family, then design a new one as the children move on.

Sounds good, but not to Macht's wife. She loves their current home in Abington and doesn't want to move.

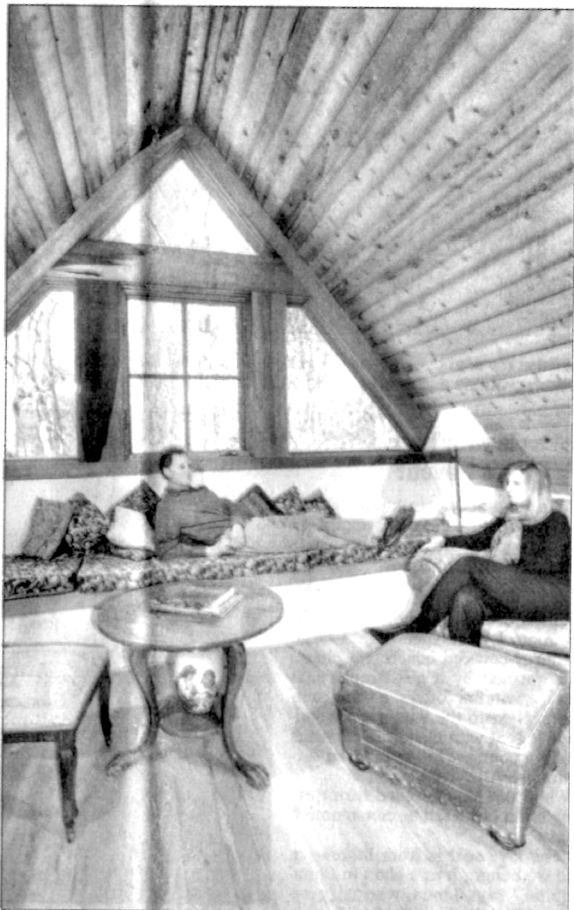
"I want to live here for the rest of my life," Linda Macht says. "If I have my way, we will never move."

The solution, says Linda, who met her husband in high school and married him soon after his graduation from Princeton University, is this: a summer house in the Poconos that "Paul can design to be as modern as he wishes and leave this one as our permanent home."

For a visitor, it's easy to see why the Machts' house would be hard to leave. It started out as a 1,000-square-foot gymnasium for children on a 19th-century estate overlooking the former Ogontz School for Girls (now Penn State Abington). The estate was subdivided into housing lots in the early 1940s.

When the Machts bought their property in 1990, it included the original owners' chicken coop, the children's gym, and a woodshed area. Five years later, they

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BOB WILLIAMS / For The Inquirer
Linda and Paul Macht relax in the master bedroom of their home in Abington. The structure was once a gymnasium for children.

Empty nest is way too comfy to leave now

HAVEN from J1

built a 1,600-square-foot addition to the house.

Today, woods and trees still surround the white structure, which has a vaulted roof and a number of smaller pitched roofs. The result looks like a cross between a Swiss chalet and a children's fairy-tale illustration.

The house can be entered through the redesigned chicken coop, which is now Paul's office, a space for five employees that is warmed by an Oriental rug.

Though the office has all the modern architectural equipment you'd expect, it also has chicken wire holding back books on a shelf.

Why save the chicken wire?

Paul laughs, but he says he seriously believes it is our duty to save the planet.

"We try to salvage everything and throw away as little as possible," he says. "Trying to be energy-efficient and designing houses that conserve energy and use recycled material is important to me."

A huge kitchen, which the Machts describe as the heart of their home, is the first room that opens off the office. It takes up half of the original square footage the Machts moved into.

The couple took down the walls installed by a previous owner and built a balcony around the kitchen, an open loft space that includes sitting areas and a library.

"Our younger son [Alexander] is studying to be a chef, and everyone ends up here eating his wonderful creations," Linda says.

(Their older son, Kyle, an engineer, is married; soon, his former room will be used by a cousin who is studying in Philadelphia.)

An enormous stove and oven anchor the kitchen, which has a comfortable mix of styles and eras: another Oriental rug; a blue Queen Anne chair; a rocking chair; and a couch.

A doorway leads to a dining area with seating for 10 around a butcher-block table.

"This dining area was the bedroom for Linda and me, and the boys' room was where the hall now is for six years," Paul says. "They had to go through our bedroom to get to their room until we built the addition when they were 5 and 7 and they got their own space."

Pass through a hallway into the



The living room, above, has plenty of light and space. Below, a forbidding griffin keeps watch over the exterior. The woody grounds and pitched roofs create a chalet feel, as well as the effect of a fairy-tale illustration.

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addition, where a contemporary living room is furnished with a large corduroy-covered couch and chairs and warmed by a gas fireplace. A picture window offers a view outdoors. Next to the window, a wooden love seat with elaborate carvings offers a contrast to the modern furnishings.

When the Machts need furniture, they often buy used or consignment items.

"The love seat is from Indonesia, and we bought it at a shop in Philadelphia," says Linda, who is president of Tottser Tools & Manufacturing in Huntingdon Valley.

Up the stairs from the living room is a 7-by-7-foot bathroom, where an elegant soaking tub sits under a



round window. Two high pedestals hold large, fragrant candles.

"This is my room, my special place to relax," Linda says.

Next door, the master bedroom is a return to chalet style. Here, the vaulted ceiling reaches 12 feet at its peak. The wall of the cross-beamed



Ben Roscoe, above, a friend of son Alexander's, peers from a balcony. Below, a stairwell nicely decorated.



ceiling comes down to about four feet above the floor, giving the room a look reminiscent of the exterior of the house.

The floor is raised around the bed, which is placed between two special windows through which sun and moonlight glow.

Nice?

As Linda puts it, "I am glad the summer house has solved the moving-to-a-new-house problem."