



The eat-in kitchen with center island is the Vaccaro family meeting place. Dining room table can seat up to 20.

Location crucial factor in Rumson home's appeal

By JANE LEE ANDERSEN
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It was another case of love at first sight, but this time it was a locality rather than a house that inspired the grand passion.

Frank and Helen Vaccaro were cruising Monmouth County in search of a suitable home. "We passed this corner (in Rumson) and knew instinctively this was it," Helen Vaccaro said. "It had just that feeling of hominess. We bought the house on the spot, without even looking inside."

It wasn't the house that had them hooked; it was the location. The house is just a mile from the beach and faces an open, parklike expanse. In no time at all, they razed the existing building and began the home they designed themselves from A to Z. "You never feel quite comfortable in someone else's home," said Ms. Vaccaro.

They are both well equipped for this and appear to be attuned to the same wave length. Frank Vaccaro is an engineer specializing in design. Helen's hobbies are interior decorating and collecting antiques. She feels that their hunch about the neighborhood was justified.

"Every day here feels like a vacation," she said. "There's a feeling of contentment. We've met so many nice people — better than we expected." The Vaccaros built their house in English manor style, flower gardens included. English homes and gardens go together like love and marriage and, fortunately, one of Vaccaro's hobbies is gardening. The house's design and proportions are arresting enough, if not to stop traffic, at least to slow it down.

The roof is especially notable. The search for multicolored slate took the Vaccaros all the way to Vermont. The



Rumson home of Frank and Helen Vaccaro has Tudor-style windows especially milled for the house and custom multicolored slate roof.

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three trained craftsmen who worked on it became Vaccaro house guests. "They lived in the house with us for three months while they worked at it," said Ms. Vaccaro.

Inside, the house is spacious, gracious, light and airy — all 6,000-plus square feet of it. The hand of a master builder and an artistic decorator is evident in all the details.

For instance, the twin chimneys didn't just happen. Vaccaro first made models of them in the garage. Both Vaccaros did extensive research to design the multipaned, Tudor-style windows, which were especially milled for the house. There's a minimum of curtaining throughout because the windows are too special to hide.

Guests are apt to stand wonderstruck at the beauty of the entrance hall with its warm rich oak paneling in the walls and floor. The bannister and balustrades are custom-made and lead to a landing that duplicates the entrance in size. The double front door is 2½ inches thick and a real work of art. There is a fireplace in a recess to the right for cold night warmups. This part of the house deserves superlatives and is all the work of Vaccaro.

"My husband is a very talented man," said Helen Vaccaro. "He's won many awards for design and construction."

The Great Room, as the Vaccaros call their favorite room, is 30- by 32-feet, a cool blue and white Scandinavian-style room with a wall of windows facing east. The fireplace is cream travertine marble and the furniture is off-white lacquer. The Danish rugs on the



Helen Vaccaro relaxes in the sun-filled 30- by 32-foot Great Room, decorated in a cool blue and white Scandinavian style with off-white lacquer coffee table that echoes the free-form design of the Danish area rug.

floor have a blue-and-white free-form design and there are thriving plants for a touch of greenery. Handily situated off this room is a whirlpool spa and a bathroom.

In the living room, traditional, modern and oriental all live happily together. Seemingly disparate elements like a Persian rug, Chinese lamps, a Victorian cellarette and a camelback sofa are combined in a harmonious whole by Ms. Vaccaro's expert touch. Off the living room is a library, now in the process of having book cases and a work table installed.

The dining room has a polished table long enough to seat 20 and looks grand enough for a state banquet. So does the magnificent chandelier above the floral centerpiece.

The dimensions of the kitchen are 18- by 30-feet with a 14-foot island wandering down the middle. It looks even larger than it is because the uniform color is a cool gray-white, with little pink blossoms in the wallpaper. The off-white cabinets were made in Germany and there are some interesting touches, like a pull-out pantry and spice cabinets.

"The kitchen has always been special to our way of life," said Ms. Vaccaro. "It's the family meeting place. Even when everyone had different schedules, we always managed to have meals together to discuss what we did today and what we were going to do tomorrow." The Vaccaros have a son at home, three children out in the world and two grandchildren, and they can all be depended on to fly back to the nest periodically. Sliding glass doors lead to a screened porch.

Upstairs, the rooms display the same harmonious blending of modern

and traditional and the same light, airy color scheme. The master bedroom is an unusual room, with the bed placed diagonally and a complex of handy cabinets in white lacquer next to it. The quilted bedspread and balloon curtains in a misty flower pattern were especially made by a talented seamstress. Ms. Vaccaro seems to have a genius for finding people who do unusual things. "I talk to people," she said. "Someone always knows someone and, if they don't, they refer you to someone else."

There are 4½ bathrooms in the house. The master bathroom has pastel wallpaper with the same pattern etched on the glass shower door. There are white Corian counters and cabinets, a white marble bathtub with gold faucets and a vanity surrounded by theatrical lights.

The guest room is a traditional room in predominating colors of Wedgwood blue and white. The girls' room is

rose, cream and blue, with white wicker furniture. "My 2-year-old granddaughter tells me this is her room," said her grandmother.

The boys' room is another spacious room, with gray, white and mauve colors predominating. The color scheme in the matching bathroom is a cerebral blue-gray Frank and Helen Vaccaro enjoy their new home and live in every part of it. They are people who reach out and make friends easily.

"We feel blessed to find a neighborhood like this," said Ms. Vaccaro. "When you move to a new place, every day is an adventure. There are always new things to find out about a neighborhood. It's a very busy area," she concluded. "There's always something to do — too much sometimes."

Press Photos
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