



# Form, function, family

Couple makes design of Spring Hill haven a family affair.

*words* Cisley Thummel | *photos* William and Jill DiMartino

When Overland Park couple Matt and Penny Terstriep started thinking about building their dream home, they agreed family would play an integral part in their home's design.

"We knew we wanted the kids to come and stay," says Penny, who along with husband Matt has four adult children and four grandchildren. "It's all about making room for family."

Yet little did Penny know how prophetic her statement would become. Just months later, in their quest to decide myriad design details required for building a spacious family home from the ground up, the Terstrieps enlisted the help of another family member: Matt's youngest sister, interior designer Janine Terstriep.

And although Matt and Janine had grown up together as two of nine children on their parents' Illinois dairy farm, the siblings had never partnered in a business as crucial or complex as a whole home design.

"We did have to sit down in the very beginning and lay out a few ground rules," says Janine, a certified interior designer and the owner of Kansas City's The Decorative Touch, Ltd. "I told them early on, 'I'm just going to treat you like any other customer.'"

Penny recounts the same words.

"We looked at it as business and decided that Janine would be our designer, and we would be her clients," explains Penny, who remembers first meeting Janine as her high school sweetheart's youngest sister when the designer-to-be was just 6 years old. "It all had to do with respect."

Matt admits he forfeited any claim to older brother superiority once the project got underway.

"I remember Janine asking me, 'Do you realize how many decisions you have to make to build a new home?' Thank goodness she was there to help," says Matt.



*Interior designer, Janine Terstriep consults with clients and family Penny and Matt Terstriep.*





THE HUNT FOR HOME

Because the Overland Park couple loved the Don Julian-built home they had lived in for more than 18 years, they chose the builder once more, this time to custom-craft the home of their dreams. “Choosing Don Julian was a no-brainer,” says Penny.

But the more difficult decision? Deciding where to build.

“We knew we wanted to be somewhere in between Overland Park and my getaway place,” explains Matt, a healthcare software executive and avid hunter whose getaway was a wooded 80-acre plot of land he owned in Spring Hill.

But the longer the Terstrieps searched for a home site, the more they began thinking about the possibilities Matt’s Spring Hill hunting place presented.

“From my tree stand there in the woods, I would see the most beautiful sunrises,” says Matt, who also sat in awe of the free-ranging wildlife he saw all around him. “It began to make sense—that we could put our home there.”

Not long after, the Terstrieps decided to transform Matt’s hunting refuge into something eminently more shareable: a rustic yet refined home that would become a getaway all on its own, created for family, with the help of family.

EXPANSIVE EFFECTS

Perched on a bluff, with its pool, views, and outdoor living areas encircled by miles of untouched woods, the home’s locale represented a return to Matt’s dairy-farm roots.

“IT’S ALL ABOUT MAKING ROOM FOR FAMILY.”

— PENNY TERSTRIEP, HOMEOWNER

And yet, because the empty-nesters wanted a welcoming space large enough to house four grown children, four grandchildren, and entertain their friends, Janine knew that the home’s interior design would require a mind shift for her brother and his wife.

“Matt and I grew up in a ranch-style home with seven other siblings and my parents. All nine of us shared the same bathroom,” remembers Janine. “So I told Matt and Penny what I tell all my clients: if you grow the size of your home, you have to grow your furnishings, too.”

In the living room, the need for larger-scale furnishings meant embracing the unexpected. While the heft of the great room’s two-story stone fireplace and equally soaring arched windows required a substantial light fixture, the search for the perfect solution proved elusive. That’s when Janine had a thought that ultimately became an answer to the problem.

“It came to me: what if we hung three fixtures instead of just one?” says Janine of her light-bulb-going-on moment.

“They looked at me like I was nuts,” laughs the designer, whose brother and sister-in-law now recognize the design brilliance of the three outsize iron-wheel pendants that infuse their great room with beauty and drama.









UNEXPECTED  
ACCOUTREMENTS

While Penny hatched the overall vision for the home’s rustic-yet-refined feel, the partnership between sister and sister-in-law undoubtedly upped the space’s grandeur quotient.

“Janine has great ideas, and she put the unexpected in the house,” says Penny.

More touches of the unexpected include patterned brick fireplaces, arched doorways, a wall cut-out wine bar that doubles as a dessert bar, and a faux-painted barrel vault ceiling running the length of the kitchen.

“Janine had to persuade me to do the barrel ceiling,” says Penny, who first noticed the unusual ceiling in a Don Julian model home.

“It’s an eye catcher and something you don’t see very often,” says Don Julian’s Jeff Horn. To add extra punch to the feature, Janine suggested the ceiling be faux-painted to a warm and tawny glow.

“Janine had a lot of good input,” Horn adds, noting how the project’s whole-team approach facilitated its stellar outcome. “No one person had it all figured out—everyone’s ideas contributed.”

LOWER-LEVEL LUXE

Perhaps nowhere is the happy collaboration between builder, sister, brother, and sister-in-law more spectacular than in the home’s lower level. The welcoming, light-filled space defies the definition of a basement in every sense: French doors, raised ceilings, an upscale pub-quality bar, a brick see-through fireplace, and overhead library paneling create an atmosphere that’s inexplicably cozy and airy at the same time.

“It’s probably my most favorite space in the house,” says Matt, who now has a new getaway in the room that also houses an antique, ivory-inlaid pool table from the early 1900s. “I like to listen to music and play pool down there.”

Penny calls the space her favorite for different reasons.

“It’s especially warm and cozy with the fire going,” says Penny, who attributes the high-end glow of the library-paneled ceiling to Janine’s ingenuity.

“I had originally envisioned wood beams across the ceiling, yet we found it wouldn’t work,” explains Penny. “But Janine is so good at adjusting, she always has Plan B waiting in the wings.”





Fortunately for her clients, Janine’s contingency plan produced a warmer, more sophisticated look.

“Instead of the beams, we installed raised panel trim and painted it chocolate brown with a glaze. It gives the room a richer effect even though it’s actually less expensive,” says the designer, who credits her dairy-farm upbringing with her desire to help clients get the most for their money.

The ceiling paneling also echoes the rich, dark hue of the basement’s bar, which Janine doubled in size from the original plans.

“It really grew into a restaurant-quality bar,” says Janine, who infused additional energy into the space by repeating the terra cotta hue of a nearby sectional on the ceiling.

Fueled by her brother’s vision for getting the most family-function out of every area, Janine fashioned built-in serving buffets in the basement, grandkids’ playrooms under stairways, and even added a game room for her brother’s custom-built shuffleboard table.

“It’s a special piece,” Matt explains, noting the “T” for Terstriep engraved into its side. “I had it built from some walnut wood our brothers had cut and stored in our dairy farm barn years ago.”

And although more than 40 years have passed since Penny Terstriep first met her husband’s kid sister, she’s more grateful than ever to the sister-in-law who helped make her vision for a warm family home a reality.

“I don’t know what we would have done without her,” says Penny.

Although Matt Terstriep wholeheartedly agrees, he still takes a few digs at his little sister from time to time: “She won’t admit it, but she’s a little spoiled,” he confides.

Not so, says sister Janine, who sums up her approach to working with her brother and sister-in-law on the family-focused refuge: “If anything, I tried to spoil *them*.”



TIPS FROM THE TIERSTRIEPS

Want to make interior design easier? During our At Home interview, interior designer Janine Terstriep offered a few tips, from building a design file to the power of Plan B.

**Pull photos.** “For this project, my sister-in-law came in with a folder of home photos she loved that was an inch-and-a-half thick,” says Janine. Even when you can’t articulate what you want, photos will help a designer spot trends in your preferences.

**Grow your furnishings with your home.** “What worked in a smaller space won’t necessarily work in a larger one, so budget for new furnishings,” says the designer. One easy-math example: if you’re moving into a million-dollar home, plan on holding back at least \$100,000 to spend on furnishings for the main level.

**Add the unexpected.** Don’t be afraid to blend disparate design elements, such as arches with rectangles or wood grain with painted surfaces. “Matching can be overdone,” says Janine, so blend instead to increase sophistication.

**Embrace Plan B.** Some of the best design elements in a room may have been second choices. Like the trio of chandeliers in this project’s great room, sometimes Plan B turns out better than Plan A.

**Take a deep breath.** “A project like a new home carries with it what I call a million stinkin’ details,” quips Janine. The designer suggests adjusting to bumps along the way—such as running into discontinued fabrics or working with a shrinking budget—by “remembering to breathe.”

