

Recharge zone:
A builder crafts his
dream getaway



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Retired at 31 after a successful career in building homes in Florida, Stephen Brooks stayed idle for about six weeks. He returned to Texas homesick for friends, family, barbecue and Mexican food. He started up Grand Homes in 1989 and built its reputation on design expertise. Since then he has been named America's Best Builder and won the Consumers' Choice Award and the Lee Evans Award for Management Excellence—the most prestigious homebuilding industry award, given to only one company a year. His own home is a culmination of a lifetime of wisdom gained in construction, craft, and creating great living spaces.

GETTING STARTED

I'm originally from Ardmore, Oklahoma. My dad was a fighter pilot in the war, and my mother was in Bob Hope's USO show. That's how they met. My dad owned a grocery store—we grew up on a Shetland pony farm. I graduated from UT Austin and in 1973 got a job with Centex Homes as management trainee. They sent me to Florida, and I eventually started my own homebuilding company there with a couple of partners.

THE TEXAS LOOK

In my view there isn't one style that defines Texas architecture. It's a mix of different looks unique to the regions and heritages of the state—German, Spanish, Hill Country. I wanted to design a home that was a collaboration of these styles and still take advantage of the beautiful view of the lake from every room.

BRICKS AND MORTAR

Buying a home is a challenging, emotional transaction and often the largest investment a person will make in a lifetime. Buyers take it personally, so we take it personally. My work is my passion—we built and sold 739 houses last year. It's a calling you can't do unless you have sawdust in your veins.

A WORLD APART

I work long, hard hours, so I need to have a place where I can really turn it off. And that's my weekend home on three acres at Cedar Creek Lake. My wife and I designed this house so it would take us as far away visually, architecturally, from Dallas as possible. It's just an hour's drive from the city but a million miles away. It's an escape—a place to refresh, recharge. It's a real family experience, wonderful for kids. We ski, fish, sail, play golf, and chill. It's a great place to have fun.

THE RIGHT LOOK

The Mueller roof was a perfect match for the architectural style—this house would not have looked right with any other roof. It matched what I was trying to achieve, hands down. It's a standing-seam green metal roof. The product is just incredible. ■