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**Sugar Land Couple
Builds Family
Heirloom**

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Building a Family Heirloom

Antiquity meets modern technology in spacious home for grand get-togethers

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Tammy and Billy Brown are a “typical” Louisiana family—and that’s a good thing. Family and friends come first. Sometimes it’s hard to separate the two, as friends are integrated into family festivities. Tag along with a niece to a summer afternoon crawfish boil in the back yard, and the next thing you know, you’ll be sharing Thanksgiving dinner in the Brown home.

The Browns are also a generous lot, committing their time to organizations like Court Appointed Special Advocates and making themselves available for home tours and fund-raising events.

With son Dustin, 19, daughter Emma, 7, and Tammy’s mom residing with them, the Browns knew they wanted their new house to accommodate an active family, extended family gatherings, company social events and community open houses. Most everyone in their large, extended family has moved to the Houston area from Louisiana, and rarely do they miss a chance to get together.

Heirloom Home

Billy Brown is a typical inventor who struck oil and cleaned up. Literally. Bright-eyed and quick to smile, he worked in sales in the oil and gas industry in Lafayette, La. One day he was cleaning his outdoor barbecue grill when providence struck. Examining the long-handled brush he was using to scrape the grate, he began toying with an idea for a better way to clean rig casings. He crafted a prototype, and it worked.





Entertaining 36 friends and family last Christmas, 28 for daughter Emma's sixth birthday party, and 150 for a company crawfish boil demanded the significant square footage.

Within a year, his better mousetrap was on every rig in the Gulf of Mexico and now is being used all over the world.

Billy grew up in a family of seven, in a 1,000-square-foot house in Louisiana. His business success has ensured his family a decent nest egg. His greatest pleasure, he says, was to buy his folks a new house near the couple's home. Next, it was time to build the Brown family hub.

They knew it would be big. Entertaining 36 friends and family last Christmas, 28 for daughter Emma's sixth birthday party, and 150 for a company crawfish boil demanded the significant square footage.

The house plans had nearly been completed. And then Billy said he wanted a pool table. That required stretching the media room. And that meant enlarging the rest of the house to main-



Previous Page: Exterior of Tammy and Billy's Brown's home is reminiscent of a Southern plantation. Azaleas outline perimeters of backyard overlooking the golf course. → Seven pairs of stained mahogany French doors become the focal point in the family and breakfast area.

These pages: In the dining room, the stripes are painted on the walls, not papered. The hutch features a pendulum clock. Rich dental molding and a specially designed fireplace complete the gracious decor. → Entry has basket weave walnut floors and a stunning stained-glass dome with stained-glass trellis filled with magnolias, camellias and azaleas.



→ Arch above stove is focal point in the kitchen. → A magnificent and expansive island accommodates helpers in the kitchen. The copper farmhouse sink is one of two. The hutch near the back staircase was custom-made. → In breakfast area, the floor is stained limestone with a walnut grid. Overhead, cypress beams reflect the pattern. Linen shades lend a touch of Southern grace.

tain the symmetry. Yet, at 11,000 square feet, it is still half the size of some of the neighboring houses. The Browns use every square inch.

"I know it will be big," Tammy had said to Kelley Hann, when she asked Hann to coordinate the interior finishes. "But I want it to be cozy, not fussy. I want a house that looks like we live here."

"They live in their house and they use it," says Hann. "Tammy loves antiques, but she was not confined to a particular period. If she liked it, we got it!"

Tammy concurs. "I like what I like. If it's at Target, I'm buying it. If it's in the most expensive store in Houston, I buy it."

Billy desired a home he could pass on for future generations of family get-togethers, much as one would bequeath a fine heirloom. He traveled around Louisiana, touring and researching plantation homes like Oak Alley, the classic Greek revival-style antebellum plantation. Louisiana craftsmen were brought in to create many of the distinctive details. While the home itself recalls a bygone era, inherent features like



the "smart home" technology, controlled via the Internet, make it nothing short of contemporary.

Plantation Inspiration

Approaching the home, one is taken back to the days of a reserved Southern plantation. A formal hand-poured brick façade, a slate roof, massive solid-concrete columns framing the 12-foot-deep porch, the gracious upstairs verandah, and gas lanterns framing the front door collaborate to extend a proper welcome.

Inside, a grand and breathtaking dome with stained-glass trellis filled with glass magnolias, camellias and azaleas dominates the foyer. Walnut floors laid in an exploding basket weave pattern were inspired by those in the Palace of Versailles. Intricate dental molding is representative of Louisiana period homes. The Steinway piano was placed under the dome so that, when played, music fills the home.

Near the entryway, the formal dining room is filled with art and furnishings from an incredible variety of sources. Tammy and Kelley counted on serendipity to pull it all together. And it worked. An intriguing pendulum clock is

the centerpiece of a magnificent reproduction hutch in a walnut burl with a warm honey finish. The table was custom-made to accommodate 12. The robin's-egg blue fabric covering the chairs softens the striking chocolate faux-finished stripes on the walls.

Billy's study, richly paneled in mahogany, is a working office and think-tank for his next business scheme. "I'm dreaming of the next big idea now," grins Billy, an incurable visionary. It also displays his collection of cherished pastimes: travel, fishing, hunting and golf.

Adjoining the study is the billiard/media room, where Billy's "grand slam" dominates the walls. Three magnificent fish, a blue marlin, a sailfish and a swordfish, mark an unforgettable day in the Gulf of Mexico when, on his 60-foot Hatteras, Billy landed the big ones. The pool table, custom-made for the house, sits conveniently near the bar. Opposite is the 70-inch TV, surrounded by comfy furniture, completing the entertainment space. Billy intentionally situated the room downstairs to facilitate the overflow of their large parties.





The media room features a bar, a pool table and Billy's "Grand Slam" caught on an unforgettable day in the Gulf of Mexico. → Emma's room adds an exuberant touch to the house, with cheerful purple walls, color-filled fabrics and two canopied double beds for sleepover fun. → Luxurious master suite has two oversize lounge chairs and chaise for relaxing. → Spacious master bath (shown next page) has comfy ottoman under beautiful mosaic dome.





Sit for a Spell

A more festive "laissez le bons temps rouler" is spoken in the courtyard, where the family gatherings generally begin and end. As several dozen folks converge around the loggia—with the pool's waterfall setting a soothing ambience and Louisiana crawfish boiling in the outdoor kitchen—it's hard to believe that New Orleans is five hours away. This is Billy's domain, where he relishes serving his guests everything from rotisserie-roasted chicken to alligator sausage.

No less than seven (of 28) pairs of stained mahogany French doors topped with transoms lead inside to the spacious kitchen and family room. Lightly stained limestone floor tiles are set in a walnut grid, reflecting the cypress ceiling beams overhead. Linen crab shades and café curtains trimmed in plaid soften the space, while rich, distressed alder cabinetry and a brick accent wall add warmth.

Like any self-respecting Southern woman, Tammy deems a decent kitchen essential. She insisted on her two oversize copper farm sinks; the third oven was not optional. There is plenty of room for extra hands; of course, everyone pitches in to serve and clean up. While the kitchen is often filled with a crowd, the spacious design eliminates the feeling of being crowded.

And for family and friends who stay over, the sleeping arrangements rival

the most hospitable of bed and breakfasts. The master suite is luxurious, with persimmon walls, plaid drapes in gold and terra cotta, a curved chaise at the foot of the bed, and two oversize lounge chairs with ottoman, where Tammy loves to read. The master bath boasts a hand-crafted mosaic dome and a gorgeous chandelier. Guestrooms have their own baths, of course. And daughter Emma's room contributes a splash of fancy—vivid purple walls, "mod" fabrics, and two canopied double beds with trunks at the foot to accommodate her Barbie collection and dress-up clothes.

Tammy and Billy devoted three years to the completion of their home. The result was clearly worth it. The couple has crafted a true labor of love, and it is filled with theirs. It makes for a very difficult place to leave when the party's over. Lucky for Dustin and Emma, they never really have to. ●

Resources:

Art Glass by Wells
Noël Furniture
Osborne Cabinets and Millwork
Lighting, Inc.
Sherry's Antiques
Matt Courlson - faux finishes
Olympus Marble and Granite
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