

# Slice of Heaven

By Pam Hathcox Thomas

John and Jennifer Key have a wonderful home located in the Ryan Creek section of Smith Lake. It is on the main channel near the Smith Lake Park slough. What first intrigued me about this house was the fact it sits high above the water, yet there are no steps from the house to the boat dock. A tram is used to go back and forth from the house to the lake.

The tram was built by Hillside Glider, which was based out of Tuscaloosa before it went out of business. It is a self-leveling tram and provides an amazingly smooth ride up and down the steep mountainside. I soon discovered this fascinating tram is just one small detail that makes this property truly fantastic.



The Keys grew up in Decatur and now live in Huntsville. John was an engineer for 20 years and then owned a wine wholesale business for 10 years. Jennifer is a nurse who retired to raise their two sons, Josh, 21, and Joe, 19. Both attend college. The family loves the lake and being at their lake home. Even when they can't be here they constantly check on it via their state of the art security system that allows them to look at their property at any time, from anywhere in the world.

The property consists of 27 acres with one-third mile of water frontage. The land is teeming with wildlife. Deer, fox and other wild animals are often seen by simply looking out the window. In fact, when they started looking for property they were in the market for a piece of land they could hunt on. Josh and John love to hunt deer. Jennifer wanted lake property and this piece of real estate fits the criteria for everyone.

A short walk from the master bedroom terrace leads to a creek and waterfall. There are other trails that lead to hidden treasures such as a natural fern garden and beautiful plateaus that overlook the lake. The

lawn is flat and large enough for the occasional afternoon baseball game.

The Keys bought the land five years ago and, one year later, in 2007, this beautiful home was finished. It was built by Jason Grimmert of Heartland Homes. He did such an amazing job that recently, when the Keys decided to add concrete steps from the house to the water, they called Jason because they knew Heartland Homes would do a great job.

You enter the stone house through nine feet tall doors into a foyer. The house has tile flooring throughout but in the foyer there is a large black marble star inset in the tile and surrounded by a circle of mosaic tiles. The foyer is actually breathtakingly beautiful because it overlooks the 1,600 square foot great room which is on the lower level. A banister separates the foyer from the great room and is in front of you as you enter the house. Beyond the banister you can see the lake through windows that cover a wall in the great room that is 30 feet tall.

Along this banister but to the right is a spiral staircase that leads down to the great room. For the faint of heart there is a regular staircase to the left of center, along the banister, that leads downstairs. To your far right, in the foyer, is a door that leads to the master bedroom wing. Next to this door, near the front door, is an elevator that provides access to the lower level and great room. Another door in the foyer leads to the boys' wing. It is to the left of the banister and on the opposite wall from the master bedroom suite, balancing out the room perfectly.

The first thing you notice as you enter the master bedroom wing is the warm rich colors. A wrought iron bed is on the wall to the right. Also on this wall is a door that leads to John's office, which is perfectly situated in the house for peace and quiet. The wall to the left has a sliding glass door that leads to a terrace. From this terrace you can hear the waterfall. On the wall in front, as



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