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Home Life Style



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A new monthly publication that features the lifestyle, homes, neighborhoods and

people of the most prestigious and affluent communities in the Washington, D.C. area, and focuses on home products and services, family activities, and the essence of the secret places and shared activities that makes each of them special.

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Potomac House Tour features personal garages, motorcycle and car collections, along with spectacular interiors.

On the Tour: Inside & Out

BY CAROLE DELL

This year, the 53rd annual Potomac House Tour on Oct. 4 and 5 will have a surprise for the guys: very large, very spacey, very personal second garages. These “personal” garages featured on the tour may show a trend that reflects the role that some hobbies play in the design and building of the family home.

Ask Frank Bell of Bell Builders and long-time motorcycle rider why he built his personal garage and he will answer: “That part out there, away from the noise, the homework and the TV — that is my playpen,” he said. “I am the father of three daughters and this is where I escape.”

THAT GARAGE serves as a stable for his three brilliantly polished, sleek-as-a-cat motorcycles of various speeds and sophistication, and is a place where, he said, testosterone reigns and he can putter on the engines. Or, if not out riding his 800-pound, hand-built, modified replica of a 1949 Harley-Davidson, he may just sit in a chair (made of a recycled motorcycle seat) with a long string of sticky fly-paper flapping above him and a mural showing his love affair with motorcycles and cars behind him, and read the latest cycle mag all day if he

SEE HOUSE TOUR, PAGE 4



Frank and Jocelyn Bell in the kitchen of their Sugarland Lane home in Poolesville.



Gary Farha with his baby, his 1970 Chevrolet Chevelle muscle car, the pride of his fleet.

PHOTOS BY CAROLE DELL

53rd Annual Potomac Country House Tour

Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 4 and 5.

- ❖ **Tickets:** \$20 pre-event and \$25 on day of tour will be on sale at St. Francis Episcopal Church, 301-365-2055 or visit www.stfrancispotomac.org
- ❖ **Activities at the church:** Artisan boutiques, 11-5, and lunch, 11:30 – 2 p.m.
- ❖ **House tour:** 12 to 5 p.m.

The \$60,000 proceeds from the 2007 tour benefited numerous local, regional and worldwide charities.

For more information call Carol Jarvis 301-299-4296

Adding Dimension to Homes Tour

FROM PAGE 3
wants to.

A little distance away in the other garage, the attached one, Bell keeps another treasure: his shiny red, 1966 Volvo P1800, sports car. It sits there, like a trembling racehorse in the gate. It is drivable and he uses it.

Meanwhile, back at the house, Jocelyn Bell, his wife of 30 years, applauds the hours in the playpen. "I think it is marvelous," she said. "They (motorcycles) are a wonderful venue, a get-on-your-horse-and-go-west kind of thing." That gives Bell her own time to work at combating poverty and disease in Lare, Kenya through the Mercy Center Foundation USA, Inc. But she and her husband have time together for their lovely, rambling 5,600-square-foot home that Frank Bell built two years ago. It started as a spec house and ended up as their family home.

Bell's passion for the kind of architectural details found in grand old country homes is evident in every room, starting with the fine patina on the black walnut floors, to the painstakingly painted walls showing an exquisite reverse stenciling by Tracy McGranaghan

Studios in the dining and power rooms, to the dark wooden ceiling fans, each its own work of art.

IF THE BELL HOUSE shows the country style of Frank and Jocelyn Bell, the home of Susan and Gary Farha on Red Barn Lane is a result of her love of all things English and his lust for antique cars. So, off to the left, concealed slightly from the approach down the long drive, is that trend again: the personal garage.

Gary Farha calls it his "Hot Rod Heaven," and it is a place for some visceral pattering on some well-groomed chassis. Formerly in storage, his four antique cars now sit spit-polished and stylish in their new home. "You could eat off this engine," said Farha pointing to the 1957 Corvette motor that he dropped in to pump up the moxie of his startling black and red 1932 Ford Roadster.

His baby, he admits, is his 1970 Chevrolet Chevelle muscle car, meaning that the 454-cubic inch/450 HP engine may propel the car right off its slender tires. He found the car in his home state of Kansas, muscle car territory. Slide in a 1965 Chevrolet Corvette Sting Ray with a 327-cubic inch/350 HP engine alongside a pretty and pink little 1957 Ford Thunderbird, a gift from Gary to his wife, and this is an auto showroom on steroids.

If the cars are the stars to Gary Farha, the house is the sun to



Susan Farha, a former dancer, enjoys music and the quiet time spent at her piano in the library.

Susan. Built by Brendan O'Neill, it sits on a few acres where space didn't matter but the personal garage did.

"We moved because I wanted another garage," he said, and Susan Farha moved because, well, she wanted another kitchen. "I have always enjoyed cooking,"



she said, so she convinced the architect to place the kitchen at the end of the house. There, she found the light she was looking for and put together a layout with kitchen designer Galen Harley,



Two sitting rooms, or living rooms, compliment each other in their rich jewel tones, a collaboration between Susan Farha and her decorator, Linda Steimke. Each room is a cocoon of dazzling color with an emphasis of deep red and gold.

including her own cubby of an office and a seating area with fireplace.

It is a sweeping house with ceilings very high, fabrics and walls very deep shades of rose and



This home on in Merry Go Round Farm will also be on the October House tour. Homeowners and nature enthusiasts Chris and Jim Cockrell worked with architect Jim Rill and builder Guy Semmes to blend nature and simplicity with this river-view setting.

red and a piano of very sleek ebony in the library. Regardless of room size, and many are spacious, the bold wall colors enclose each room in its own brilliant cocoon. But, it is Susan Farha's cozy English style furniture that entices guests to come and stay a while.



This 28,000-square-foot mansion, decorated by Cindi La Pietra, features oversized custom made furniture, and each room has an ornate fireplace with classic Greek or Roman statuary.



The Farha home, built by Brendan O'Neill, features formal and ornate interiors, and a "personal garage."



Frank Bell in his "playpen" with his toys and a mural of his life and passion for motorcycles and cars.

Selling Potomac's Super Homes

BY JAMES GISCHE

So far in 2008, Potomac's housing market has proved resilient compared to the region's as a whole. According to Metropolitan Regional Information Systems, Inc., in all of Montgomery County, average sale prices from the first six months of 2008 were about 2.4 percent lower than they were in 2007, while in Potomac, average prices increased by about 1.5 percent. As Montgomery County real estate agent Yvette Chisholm wrote in her market condition report, "Potomac has the charm to attract the buyers even in the current marketplace."

A few factors are contributing to the slowdown in home sales. According to Audrie Gue of Optima Properties, who has been selling houses in Potomac for 28 years, buyers tend to take a "wait-and-see attitude" during election years, especially when there is a lame duck president. Dianne Bailey of Long & Foster emphasized the effect of the media overhyping the downturn in the national housing market.

The upper echelons of



The first floor hallway.

Potomac's housing market especially have shown "this is a really good time to buy," as Gue put it. During the first half of 2008, seven homes in Potomac sold for more than \$2.5 million. In the same part of 2007, 17 such houses changed hands. This 59 percent drop is more than two-and-a-half times greater than the overall decline in Potomac home sales between the same periods. However, Bailey remains optimistic, describing the market as "still viable."

As for the absolute pinnacle of the market, one home in Potomac sold for more than \$5 million during the first half of 2008: a house on Harrington Drive off River Road across from Congressional Country Club went for \$10 million in April. The first half of 2007 was similar, as the only exchange in the price range was a home on Persimmon Tree Road in Avenel that sold in January of that year for \$5 million. Overall, in the two years

from July 2006 to this June, five homes in Potomac sold for at least \$5 million. Houses in this price range often stay on the market for more than a year, according to Bailey.

Despite being a relatively small segment of the market, Gue noted that sales in this price range can have a "trickle-down" effect. "The big house market determines the whole market."

According to Haleh Niroo, an interior designer in Potomac, wealthy homeowners often create custom entrances to create a "beautiful [and] grandiose first impression." She added buyers prefer classical, conservative style for the first floor while using more contemporary designs in lower and upper levels.

Top 10 For Sale in Potomac

1. Price: \$8.5 million
Location: Bencross Drive
Agent: Dianne Bailey, Long & Foster
2. Price: \$7.2 million
Location: Bradley Farms
Agent: Audrie Gue, Optima Properties, Inc.
3. Price: \$6.995 million
Location: Newbridge Drive (Falconhurst)
Agent: Marc Fleisher, Long & Foster
4. Price: \$6.2 million
Location: Iron Gate Road (Camotop)
Agent: Krystyna Litwin, Long & Foster
5. Price: \$5.995 million
Location: Bencross Drive (Falconhurst)
Agent: Marc Fleisher, Long & Foster
6. Price \$5.775 million
Location: South Glen Road
Agent: Lenore Rubino, Coldwell Banker
7. Price: \$5.5 million
Location: Bencross Drive (Falconhurst)
Agent: Bradford Deel, Coldwell Banker
8. Price: \$5.125 million
Location: Great Falls Estates
Agent: Henry Stuart, Stuart & Maury, Inc.
9. Price: \$4.995 million
Location: River Road (Bradley Farms)
Agent: Marc Fleisher, Long & Foster
10. Price: \$4.95 million
Location: Rapley Gate Terrace (Avenel)
Agent: Jane Fairweather, Coldwell Banker

Tragedy Leads to Sale Of Dream Home

After four years of construction, this property on Bencross Drive was going to be a dream house for cardiologist Hector Collison and his family before tragedy ended the dream. Collison and his son died in a single-engine plane crash in February, forcing his wife, Connie, to put the home on the market June 1 for \$10 million with help from Dianne Bailey of Long & Foster. After three weeks, Bailey, who had worked with the Collisons for more than a decade, decided to drop the price to \$8.5 million to spur interest in the estate.

That sum not only buys 27,000-square feet, but luxurious materials and detail as well. The home is constructed completely of rare Turkish limestone. Inside, the house is full of marble, including the impressive front staircase, along with onyx and granite. A slate roof tops it all off.

The large windows and open layout gives the home a "bright and light" feel, says Bailey. The property also features first- and second-floor



The home's symmetrical exterior, as seen from the street, cuts an imposing figure.

master bedrooms, housekeeper's quarters above the garage, an indoor pool house and a sport court for basketball and tennis.

Aside from the owner's situation, one of the home's aspects is that it is only about 90 percent complete, but the necessary materials for the rest are on site. To Bailey, this is an advantage rather than a drawback. The lower level, for example, only has wooden frames, so the buyer can easily redo the floor plan to fit exactly what he or she wants. This "custom house," as Bailey called it, is the most expensive property currently on the Potomac market.

Sold: Million-Dollar Homes

Potomac had 32 homes sell for more than \$1 million in June 2008.

- ❖ 9301 HARRINGTON DR (3BR, 4BA, 1HB) sold for \$3,200,000 on June 2.
- ❖ 11118 CRIPPLEGATE RD (6BR, 7BA, 2HB) sold for \$2,945,000 on June 25.
- ❖ 8539 RAPLEY PRESERVE CIR (6BR, 6BA, 3HB) sold for \$2,700,000 on June 30.
- ❖ 12604 TRIBUNAL LN (6BR, 7BA, 2HB) sold for \$2,400,000 on June 13.
- ❖ 9220 VENDOME DR (5BR, 6BA, 3HB) sold for \$2,310,000 on June 17.
- ❖ 8904 IRON GATE CT (5BR, 5BA, 1HB) sold for \$2,000,000 on June 13.
- ❖ 9517 NEWBRIDGE DR (5BR, 6BA, 1HB) sold for \$1,999,999 on June 23.
- ❖ 11601 LUVIE CT (6BR, 4BA, 1HB) sold for \$1,850,000 on June 27.
- ❖ 12531 LINDA VIEW LN (5BR, 4BA, 1HB) sold for \$1,546,000 on June 23.
- ❖ 11314 RIDGE MIST TER (6BR, 4BA, 1HB) sold for \$1,350,000 on June 9.
- ❖ 12200 DREWS CT (5BR, 4BA, 1HB) sold for \$1,350,000 on June 20.
- ❖ 10412 MASTERS TER (5BA, 4BA, 1HB) sold for \$1,325,000 on June 2.
- ❖ 13141 BRUSHWOOD WAY (5BR, 4BA, 2HB) sold for \$1,320,000 on June 26.
- ❖ 13300 BEALL CREEK CT (6BR, 4BA, 2HB) sold for \$1,310,000 on June 26.
- ❖ 12223 DREWS CT (4BR, 4BA, 1HB) sold for \$1,300,000 on June 20.
- ❖ 8004 COBBLE CREEK CIR (3BR, 4BA, 1HB) sold for \$1,275,000 on June 16.
- ❖ 10017 SORREL AVE (5BR, 5BA, 1HB) sold for \$1,257,000 on June 12.
- ❖ 12501 BRACKEN HILL LN (5BR, 3BA, 1HB) sold for \$1,256,500 on June 30.
- ❖ 1 MASTERS CT (5BR, 4BA, 1HB) sold for \$1,250,000 on June 27.
- ❖ 11711 ROBERTS GLEN CT (6BR, 4BA, 1HB) sold for \$1,250,000 on June 30.



11500 SKIPWITH LN
(6BR, 7BA) sold for
\$4,500,000 on June 3.



11618 HIGHLAND
FARM RD (8BR, 7BA,
3HB) sold for
\$3,375,000 on June 30.

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