



Grace and Ed Novak's newly built home blends Frank Lloyd Wright's style of organic design with prairie-style construction.

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COURTESY NOVAK FAMILY

## The Wright Stuff

When Grace and Ed Novak began looking at Arts and Crafts-style homes, Grace was drawn to the porches and the bungalow style. But after looking at homes that were “big on space, low on quality,” the couple decided to buy a lot in the Village of Martin’s Addition in Chevy Chase, raze the house on the property and build a new one.

That’s when Ed’s passion for Frank Lloyd Wright’s organic style—the house should fit into the land—kicked in.

After interviewing and deciding against four area architects, they selected Christian Gladu of The Bungalow Company in Bend, Ore. His experience designing Craftsman and prairie-style homes sealed the deal.

“Distance was not an issue,” but Ed explains, “[a] McMansion-oriented architect would have been. We had an immediate connection.”

Another benefit was that Gladu already had a working relationship with Bethesda Bungalows, the builder chosen for the project.

“Make sure the architect and builder are compatible,” Ed advises. “We were

piggybacking onto a great track record of teamwork. Many builders claimed they could build anything. But Bethesda Bungalows was one of the few builders who had actually built prairie-style homes.”

“Critically important,” he notes, “they assigned an exceptional project manager to our home who worked with us day in and day out as we ‘tweaked’ the house.”

Based on his commercial real estate experience, Ed, 51, also says, “Our arrangement was a negotiated fixed fee to the builder, with us paying the actual construction costs. It was an ‘open book,’ where we saw all of the actual bids and could suggest other suppliers or subcontractors.”

Once Gladu had seen the slope and typography of the landscape, he recommended prairie style instead of a bungalow. Instinctively, Ed knew it was right.

Grace, 50, eventually agreed with it. She managed their recent move, in September 2008, and prepared their daughters—Nikki, 13, and Julia, 10—for more space than they have ever had.

Detail-oriented, Ed worked closely with the architect and oversaw the project. True to Wright’s principles, the layout of their 5,000-plus square feet is open on

the first floor with low horizontal lines, and backs into the landscape.

The interior has cherry wood built-ins, hardwood floors, Arroyo Craftsmen lights and fireplaces of golden hue stones, which were hand-picked at Tri-State Stone quarry in Bethesda by Ed with his contractors. Two hundred tons of stones and flagstone were used on and around the exterior of the house.

“If you really want something that reflects you, you have to put the time in, not just your money,” Ed says. “You have to sweat the details.”

Noticing the more interesting strata of the stones’ edges, Ed asked Luis, their stone mason from Pana’s Construction, to cut the stones in half to achieve the result Ed wanted.

“They probably have a couple of choice Spanish words for me, but they were delightful and chipped away,” Ed says. “Everything came together to give us the gestalt of what we were trying to achieve. Now we can have neighborhood kids over, we can entertain, and kids can play soccer in the backyard.”

Having lived for years in a tiny house, the whole family—including cats Fluff and Tiger, and Spike the lizard—is settling into their newfound space. And their view of the natural setting? One that Wright would appreciate. “The art outline of the trees at night is like being in the country,” Grace says. **B**

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