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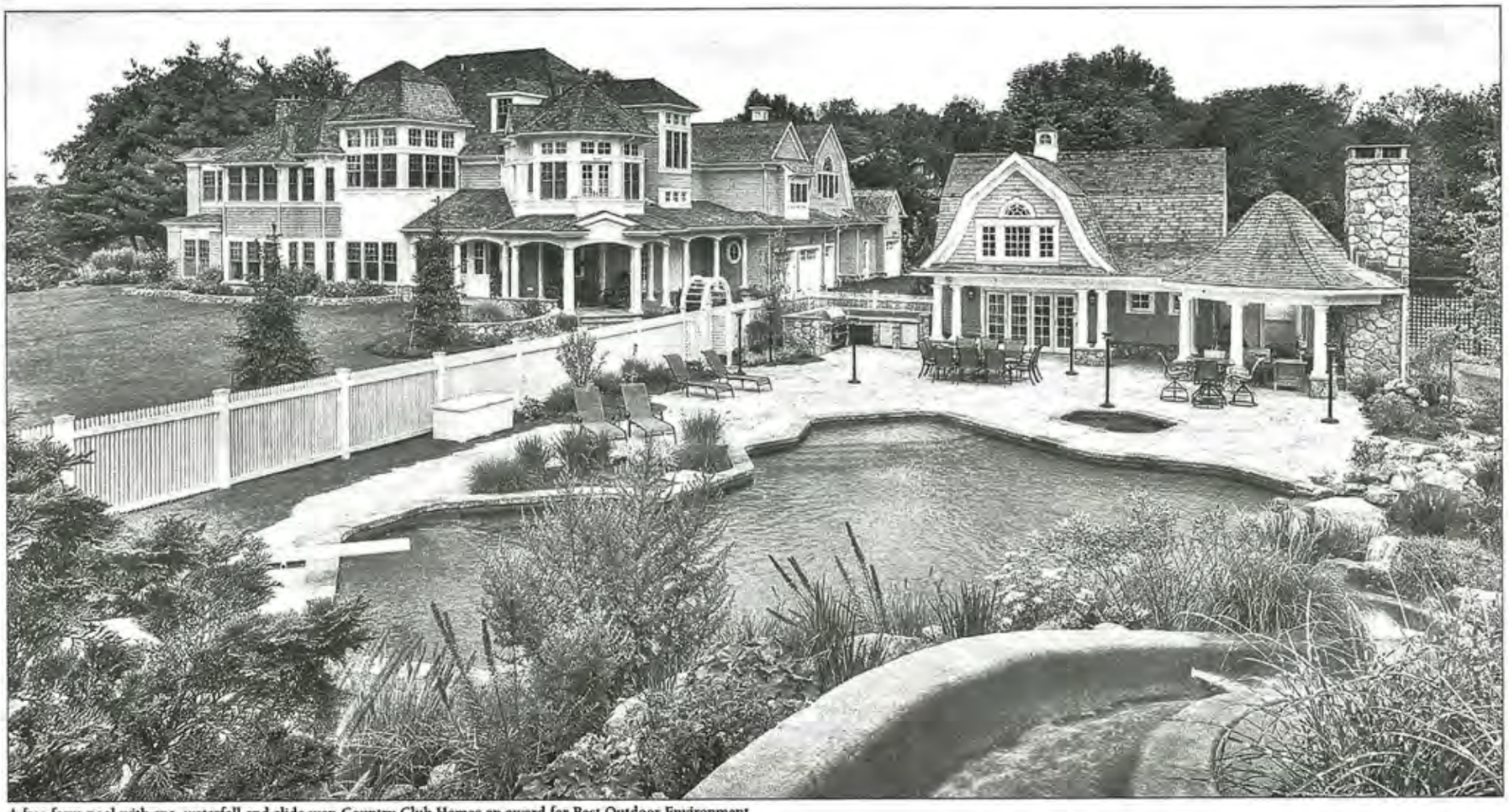

A free-form pool with spa, waterfall and slide won Country Club Homes an award for Best Outdoor Environment.

All the comforts of home ... *and more*

HOBI AWARD WINNER IN WILTON

by Jane Dove

An authentically detailed 1950s-style diner, a full-size basketball court and a dramatic outdoor living and recreation space have won Country Club Homes of Wilton three coveted 2009 HOBI awards, which are presented annually by the Home Builder's Association of Connecticut.

This year, the firm, which is owned by the brother-sister team of Carolyn Wheeler and Walter Cromwell, Jr, won the awards for a home they built in Wilton – one for Best Custom Home over 12,000 sq. ft.; a second for Best Outdoor Environment (a free-form pool, which includes a spa, waterfall and slide built into a tall, landscaped hill); a third for Outstanding Special Purpose Rooms (a diner, basketball court and massage room).

Something Special

"This home is truly something special," said Ms. Wheeler. "The owner has a large family of seven children, ranging in age from pre-school through college. He needed a home with ample space for a large family with many interests."

Sited on four acres, it is a gracious shingle-style home. "Although the square footage is generous, we worked with a design team, including architects Michael Smith of Wilton and Jeff Kaufman of Westport and interior designer Julianne Stirling of Fairfield to design and build rooms that are inviting and intimate," said Mr. Cromwell.

Outside, the home, which sits on a high ridge overlooking Wilton, is classically detailed, with wide, welcoming porches, varied roof lines, and stone accents. Inside, hardwood floors, coffered and paneled ceilings, wide moldings and hallways, wainscot wall panels and custom built-in cabinetry create the ambiance of a well established home.

In addition to a formal living room, formal dining room, library, kitchen, office, and family room with an adjacent built-in children's theater and play space, the three-story home features six ensuite bedrooms and a master suite on the second floor. The third floor provides some private space for the older boys in the family, with two bedrooms, a full bath and a large living area.

Award Winners

Adding to its charm and special qualities is the one-of-a-kind 50s-style diner, which became a labor of love for Country Club Homes and Mr. Smith. The diner is adjacent to the home theater, complete with a twinkling star ceiling. Both are on the home's

second floor in a wing of the house that was designed for the older children.

"The 1950s diner was an exciting challenge for all of us," said Ms. Wheeler. "The owner wanted it to be true to its era, so we spent a lot of time doing research on the Internet for the retro-style materials and items we needed."

They succeeded in their search for authenticity with quilted, stainless-steel walls, domed stainless-steel ceiling and cabinets, and a black-and-white checkerboard floor. Red laminate counters, red vinyl booths, two 50s murals, one featuring Elvis and the other an iconic 57 Chevy, complete the "look." The diner also includes a large jukebox, tabletop jukeboxes, a neon "Diner" sign and a rotary pay phone.

Also special are the pool house, pool, spa, water slide and adjacent tennis court. "The shingle-style pool house was designed to be fun and accommodate a large family," said Mr. Smith. "French doors open completely to a covered porch and pool terrace. The stone flooring of the pool house and the terrace are continuous. An outdoor stone fireplace is perfect for cool summer nights, and the area includes a fully equipped outdoor kitchen."

Accenting the large, free-form pool is a gentle waterfall and a Jacuzzi. A koi pond is surrounded by stone outcropping and native plants.

"Perhaps the most dramatic feature of the pool is the custom-built slide," Mr. Cromwell said. "Family and friends can climb up a 'mountain' on slab stone stairs, and then enjoy the ride down. The area is planted with an abundance of flowering native plants and shrubs that provide a natural backdrop for the curved slide."

Another award-winning feature is the full-sized basketball court. "We did a lot excavating for this," said Mr. Cromwell. "But the result, which includes a scoreboard and climbing wall, was worth the effort. The adjacent exercise room, steam bath and massage room are just up the stairs and overlook the court. The massage room features a back-lit waterfall that runs down glass tiles, adding a soothing sound to the massage experience."

"The entire home was driven by the owner's desire to create a family space that his seven children could enjoy and feel comfortable in," said Ms. Wheeler. "This was one of the most fun and interesting projects we have ever worked on, with the added bonus of a wonderful client." ▪

Adjacent to the home theater is an iconic 50s-style diner.

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