

A Symphony of Curves

Located on a wooded lot in Lincolnshire, Illinois, “The Millennium Home” is no speculative flight of fancy. Designed for real clients with a real budget and strong opinions about virtually every product and material, it demonstrates the power or collaborative creativity, of perseverance and backbreaking work on the part of the entire creative team.



The 30-ft. hearth (left) includes a gas-lit woodburning fireplace. Sevon’s crew bolted the 30-ft.-wide 20-ft.-tall Dreaming Creek timbers together before lowering them into place. Interior designer Jayne Dranias suggested laying hardwood flooring on the diagonal. Other photos (above) show a tile medallion in the foyer and detail of the dining room fireplace. CDI created both hearth surrounds.

Scott Sevon of Sevvonco, Inc., stepped into this project at a full sprint last fall. In just six months he had to complete a three-level custom detailed brick home – a project he might normally spend 9 or even 12 months to finish. We made the pressure even worse by asking him to specify only premium products. You may recall that we criticized last year’s show home for its inclusion of some single-pane aluminum windows and other minor design quirks. The Millennium Home has no such chinks in its armor.

Outfitted from top to bottom with argon-filled, low-E Pella windows and skylights, framed with engineered wood and insulated to a center-of-wall value of R-30, this home’s infrastructure holds up under the closest scrutiny.



Sevon used EIFS to add detail to window details in the largely brick exterior. The custom mahogany door in the entry measure 2' _" thick.

VIRTUAL WALK-THROUGH

To thoroughly explain many seen and unseen details of the house, Sevon and architect Bill Styczynski led us on a leisurely tour. Naturally, we began in the Promethean eight-car garage.

“The client collects ’55 T-Birds,” the builder explains. “He wanted a larger garage, fully conditioned with a lot of light and a hydronically heated slab.”

Operable skylights, complete with rain sensors and motorized blinds, supply the daylight. A spray-on FloorGuard system (about \$2.50 per sq. ft. installed) protects the concrete. A state-of-the-art Buderus boiler provides heat to the Wirsbo hydronic tubing buried in the slab. The radiant system also traverses two zones in the basement, and provides a snow-melting zone at the home’s entry.

“The garage has its own thermostat,” Sevon notes. “And we put in Clopay’s top garage doors. They have one of the new silent belt drives, with keyless pads on the outside.”

Styczynski explains how the size of the garage impacted the overall design. “It takes over more than a third of the home’s footprint,” he says. “We wanted to create scale, so four large window groupings face toward the street. The idea was not to have this massive wall as you drive up. That was one aspect. The other aspect was doing something with window detail. We went with Sto EIFS window surrounds to give it a little character.”

Fully insulated and finished, the garage also includes a workshop area with cabinetry for storage, along with Corian counter-tops and integral sink.



To maintain street appeal, the architect added banks of windows to the fully conditioned, eight-car garage.

PROLOGUE

At the home's enclosed brick entry, a 2_-in.- thick custom mahogany door with custom leaded glass draws immediate attention. "I like to put unique doors on most of my homes," Sevon says. "It tends to set them apart from other homes that builders *call* custom." We're also attuned to energy

efficiency. A lot of little features set us apart.

"Little features?"

"Well, for example, most consumers aren't even aware of different efficiencies of can lights. We have an Iris recessed system from Cooper Lighting. These cans are airlocked and sealed so no air escapes. There's no energy waste. Also, cheaper fixtures tend to rust. Then they come into default.

"We also sound insulate all bathroom walls and the media room," he continues. "We have gone over to a cast-iron drainage system, where most builders around here use PVC. One of the general complaints we hear from clients is noise of drainage. Cast iron alone takes ninety-eight percent of the noise away. We also installed five-eighths-inch-thick drywall throughout the house. It has a one-hour fire rating, and just makes for a much smoother surface. In addition, we put one inch insulating foam on the outside of our walls.

"Of course," he says, "molding out the windows does take a little more labor – but our Pella salesperson meets with us and actually makes the windows to the depth of wall we're using."

LIVING LARGE

The clients put a significant chunk of their budget into making the great room live up to its name – and reflect the home's woodsy setting.

"We have a thirty-foot tall, gas-fired, wood burning fireplace with a CDI concrete surround unit," Sevon explains, "along with risers 18 ft. high." An artist also created a custom faux finish on the walls using hand-burnished plaster.

"This custom beamed ceiling is really sharp," he says, gesturing aloft. "We had originally specified standard collar ties, but the client upgraded to these hand-hewn white oak beams from Dreaming Creek. They joined with dowels, and the structure actually holds the walls together."

A combination of patio doors, transoms and round windows gives the great room some of the best views in the house. The clients can entertain here using a full wet bar that includes Wood-Mode cabinets, granite counters, as well as a U-Line wine caddy and compact ice machine.

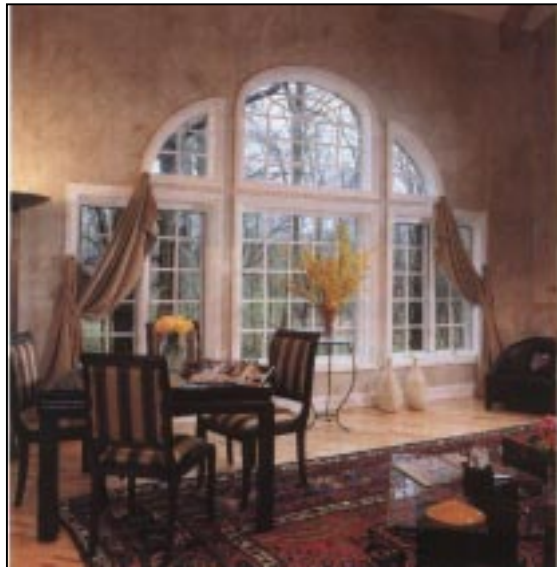


“The walls of the entire great room and foyer are made with TimberStrand two-by-six material,” says Sevon. “It’s straight as an arrow. We also used Trim-Tex accessories to create radiused drywall corners here and all around the house. It makes the drywall – U.S. Gypsum in this case – appear flawless and seamless.”

BUILDING SCIENCE

Sevon backtracks here, to discuss the home’s airtight pedigree. His wall elevations consist of brick, then Tyvek Home Wrap, followed by 1-in. Dow foam; stud cavities filled with blown-in cellulose, and drywall coated with a latex-based, vapor-barrier paint.

“We deal with hypersensitive clients quite often,” Sevon explains. “We know we need to provide plenty of fresh air. So we put one ERV (energy recovery ventilator) in the lower level furnace room, and one on third-floor attic space.



The unusual cabinetry in the kitchen (top) includes an island with standing post legs- intended to looklike furniture. Stainless appliances, pull-out Kohler faucets and bullnosed granite countertops immediately define it as a first-class cooking area. Sea Gull undercabinet lighting and cove lighting the support Cooper recessed and track fixtures overhead. This window wall (above) in the great room shows off several custom Pella units.

“What we did was built a furnace room on the third floor. The peak is a large space – more than two thousand square feet. When you put a heating and cooling system up there, you can condition the house much more efficiently. There are actually two furnace units, with six Trol-A-Temp zones in the main house. We had a programmer in the home for seven days to program all zones to open and close properly, but it’s well worth it.”

WITH THE FLOW

Sevon leads us from the great room into the formal dining room, which has what the builder calls a recessed “racetrack soffit” ceiling. Adjacent to the bank of curved glass windows a tiled, recessed area paved has its own drainage system to handle runoff from the owner’s plants.



A “racetrack” soffited ceiling in the dining room defines the space. Columns and rounded drywall corners make spaces flow.

Still more light pours in as we enter the breakfast room, convenient to the custom kitchen. “Wood-Mode’s designers get a lot of credit for the finish of the kitchen,” says Styczynski. “They brought it to the next level. They’re doing some different things with finishes. They came up with some ideas and presented them to the owners. It took a little selling. That’s the difference from doing this on spec. But after getting over that initial concern, I think the clients have grown to appreciate it.”

MEDIA CENTRAL

We follow the builder back to the entry foyer of the home to visit entertainment central. The media room is an important social tool for these clients.

Dennis Mariasis of Audio Video Environments designed the media room package. “We put a dedicated Sony system in there,” he explains, “including surround sound format AC3, CD players and a big-screen television. The great room includes one of Sony’s Web TV systems.”

“These clients can see closed-circuit TV images of their front door on any television,” Mariasis adds. They also can directly choose a disc or CD by just turning on their TV to the CD channel. That’s a menu-driven Sony unit called a ‘text-ready CD player.’ You can actually download artwork to use, as graphics for CD’s you own.

Mariasis also specified a SmartLinc touchscreen for the media room. He describes it as “very basic, but it gives you about 250 pages on the LCD, good for programming anything in the home.”

PRIVATE PARTS

One can take the stairs or the Matot elevator to reach the second floor, where the master suite attracts the most attention.

“The master bedroom has a trayed ceiling, gas fireplace and his & hers reading light,” the builder says. “ClosetMaid did the shelves and the center island drawer unit. If you go out the French door, here, you step onto an open balcony, which has a nice, seamless roof deck system. It’s like EPDM, but made to sustain foot traffic.”

The connecting master bath has all of the trimmings. Hipped cathedral ceiling. Two lavatories. Corian countertops. Kohler plumbing: faucets, fixtures, spa tub, custom shower. The floor and wall tile includes decorative inserts from Impo Glaztile

An adjacent bath includes a custom foot-massaging whirlpool bath system.

LAY OF THE LAND

The difficulties of putting this challenging home on its relatively small lot merit a few final words. The story is a familiar one. Trees had to be protected.

“The town has a tree ordinance, so we could only remove so many trees,” Sevon says. “We walked the site with arborists and fenced off intact trees. Then we had to have pruning done, trees saved, build protective fencing. It was costly. We had to pump and convey in all of our concrete for walls and slab. Small-type tractors used for the backfilling had to be lifted over trees with a crane. It created an interesting challenge.

“To be a true custom builder, you’ve got to be willing to accomplish unique things. Otherwise, you’re eventually going to be left in the dust.

THE MILLENNIUM TEAM

A. William Styczynski, Kim Haig
Styczynski Walker & Associates
Willowbrook, Illinois

“The clients had a list of items,” recalls architect Bill Styczynski. “The eight-car garage probably stands out the most. The owner had been thinking about this house for about five years. He had actually constructed a little cardboard model. He had preconceived that this was what the house would be – but when we saw the site restrictions (the house wouldn’t fit on the lot), we adjusted our first presentation to include both his ideas and what we thought the house *should* be. There was a lot of resistance.

“The next morning, he called and said ‘I like what you guys did, let’s go with some of the ideas you put together.’”

At that point, project architect Kim Haig took over as lead designer. “We thought of the house as cutting edge on a technical level,” Haig explains, “although the exterior looks like a traditional house, very much in line with other homes in the area.”

“This house reflects a lot of what the public are looking for in this price range, this age, this clientele,” adds Styczynski. “It includes a lot of features we’ve included for other people, such as the elevator. That’s something people want a lot more. In some cases, we’re actually putting in a roughed-out shaft so they can add an elevator later.

“The other thing we’ve found is that the media room has changed,” he adds. “It’s not a home theater in the basement any more, but something on the main level.”

Says Haig, “Dealing with a client is very much a balance of what they can afford versus what they want. I think we ended up with a pretty decent balance.”

This article was written by Matthew Power of Custom Builder and was in the May/June 1998 issue.