

*Great Homes of Durham.*







For 20 years, while golfing at Croasdale golf course, **Jeff Files** would admire the country club colonial house overlooking the 8th green. Two decades of seeing just the outside, falling a little more in love with it with every putt. But love can be blind.

Two years ago Jeff was in the market for a new house. “My realtor, **Janet Breedlove**, was showing me the home across the street, and I said that I had always liked this one.” As luck would have it, the house was for sale. But was he really lucky?

Once inside to look at the one-level house Jeff realized that the room designs did not match his style. “I loved the view and the fact that from the inside you could not see either of the houses next door, but the interior was a lot of separate rooms with no flow.”

Time to call in his expert, his longtime decorator, **Teresa Chancellor**. “He called me as soon as he started looking at it, and I knew that meant he wanted the house.” Teresa saw that the layout with master suite on one end and guest rooms on the other were a good match for Jeff’s needs, but the chopped up kitchen/family/living rooms, all divided by walls, had to be changed.

Over the last 22 months, Teresa, Jeff and contractor **Joe Berini** – along with a herd of

Thrill-seeker Jeff Files dove headfirst into designing his Croasdale dream home

BY DANA LANGE PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIANA BROUGH

**The newly created outdoor room, complete with pool, is the perfect place for Jeff to entertain his friends and family**

**Above: Jeff’s beloved Ferrari**



craftsmen – took the house down to the studs, ripping out every interior wall but two and digging out a giant double-faced concrete fireplace before beginning the rebuilding process.

It was a slow job, especially for Jeff, whose real passion is speed.

## His Email Name is Racer

Three years ago, Jeff was the second fastest ski racer in his division in the whole state of Colorado. That's Colorado, where everyone skis. It's not like being ranked the fastest skier in Alabama.

"I also like to race cars," he says. "I have almost reached 180 miles per hour. On a track, of course." Jeff is a car enthusiast, having spent time on almost every racetrack on the East Coast.

Retirement from the HVAC business has given Jeff the time to enjoy his other passions: golf, wine, cooking and travel. Good thing he had the time, because redoing his current Durham home was a job in itself.

"Jeff needed a house that could make him feel like he was retired and on vacation all the time," Teresa says. And yet, "He was very involved in the design," she says. ➤







**Far left:** The elephant foot container was just one of the many items Jeff picked up for his house during his travels abroad

**Below left:** The inspiration for the decorating scheme in the master bedroom was the Louis Vuitton trunk at the foot of the bed

**Below:** Jeff walks across the leather rug made of old steam engine belts

**Above:** The newly covered terrace has a windowed vaulted ceiling

**Left:** The open kitchen is perfect for entertaining







**Above left:** Jeff and interior designer Teresa Chancellor spent many hours re-doing every inch of this house

**Above:** The glow of the chandelier is reflected in the beautiful dining room mirror

**Left:** The luxurious guest bathroom

## Good Bones

Thank goodness the house was built using a truss system, so that, with the help of architect **Sam Brockwell**, a new interior layout could be redesigned. The original house had a kitchen that was walled off from all the other rooms except for a small pass through window into the living room that looked more like a Burger

King drive-thru window. The master bedroom could only be entered from a door in the kitchen. Although there was a beautiful swimming pool, there was no covered outdoor area. The bathrooms were typical 1980s sizes and styles. None of it was adequate for Jeff's lifestyle.

The new layout has an open kitchen and sitting area that opens to a gracious living room and wine room all with views of the





**Above:** The master bath has a Mackenzie-Childs ottoman outside the shower

**Right:** Jeff chose every detail – each bathroom has a different style of sink

**Below:** Jeff wanted a wooden bar, so he married a giant slab of old wood to the granite counter using a metal support system from Germany

