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On the Cover: Located near Akaka Falls, Linda and Fred Levine's beautiful home in Hakalau overlooks the sea at the 125-foot elevation. Their 40-foot lap pool was built by Tyson Epperson, of Akamai Gunite Pools Plus in Kurtistown.

PHOTO: KAREN ANDERSON









hen Steve and Robin
Alterman first set their
sights on a home for
sale below Palani Road
in Kailua-Kona, they
recognized that the sprawling, utilitarian
residence would be in need of some serious
custom upgrades. Fortunately, Steve's 34 years
as a renowned woodworker in Hawai'i gave him
the freedom and creativity to turn the previously
blah home into a canvas for creativity.

"This house was built in 2000 and occupied a papaya farm," said Robin, pointing toward the enormous park-like lawn in the backyard that was once a papaya grove. "This was a large home with cheap finishes and basic stuff. The house was divided into two separate buildings, with three 2-car garages in between. There were no baseboards, trim or wooden doors at all. The white ceramic tile and teal carpet were totally dated."

Steve began crafting handsome mahogany accents including a beautiful front entry door, plus doors for every room of the house. In the kitchen, Steve's koa cabinetry reveals all the hallmarks of fine craftsmanship, such as matching grains and colors as well as tongue-and-groove panels on the koa drawers that impart a classic look.

Also in the kitchen area, an enormous buffet made of koa extends almost the entire width of



the wall. Because the Altermans have hosted so many large gatherings at their house through the years, the buffet was an essential addition, said Robin.

"The number-one thing I wanted in the home was a buffet with a wine cooler. It's fantastic to have a woodworker for a husband."

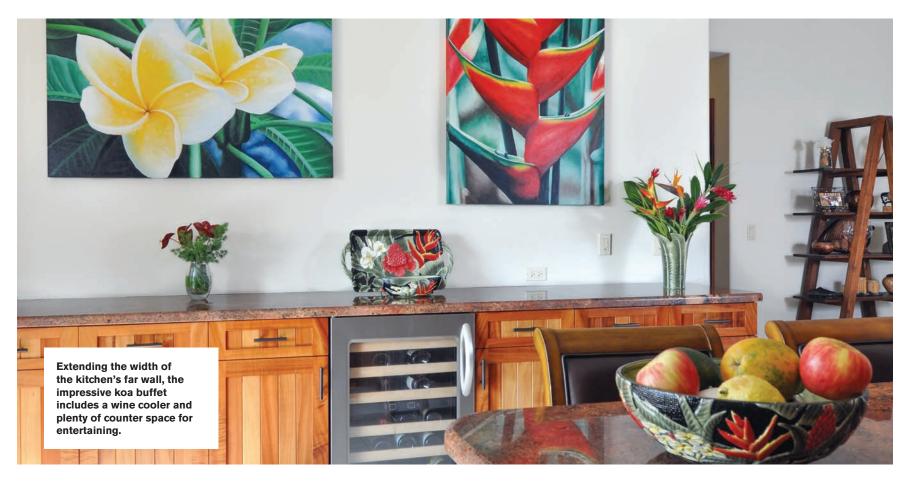
Steve got into carpentry as a profession after he moved to O'ahu from California in 1982. In his early years, he had taken intensive college courses in cabinet and furniture making in Orange County, where he was raised. He and Robin married in 1990 and relocated to Kona in 1992, living just a couple of blocks down the street from where they live now. Steve recalls the old days in Waimanalo, where he shared a small shop on a horse ranch with a contractor friend.

"We had an old school bus for storage," he

said. "Then I moved into a larger shop that was an old cow barn on the same property. It had concrete troughs inside, and the horses next to us would stick their heads inside the shop while we were working."

Today, Steve and his crew of five employees keep busy at his shop in the Kaloko Light Industrial Park, doing custom work for resort homes on the Kohala Coast, as well as for restaurants and resorts. His most recent large



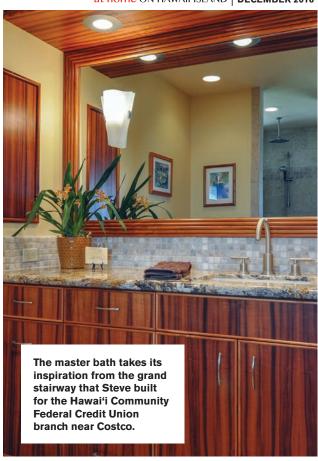


job was a remodel at Mauna Kea Beach Hotel's Manta restaurant that included architectural pieces, cabinetry, buffet cabinets, a hostess stand, and a new bar. Steve's work can also be seen at the elegant Ulu Ocean Grill + Sushi Lounge at the Four Seasons Hualalai.

Steve says that creating things for his own house gave him a certain sense of freedom to do whatever he wants to, rather than having to fulfill a client's specific visions.

"I wanted to mix it up and use different woods in the house," he said. "We have mango in the guest kitchen, koa in the bathrooms, monkeypod in the office, teak trim in the ceilings at the entries and above the lanais, and mahogany for the trim and doors. The variety of woods doesn't really clash. They are all natural colors."

Totaling 4,000 square feet, the home meanders from the main wing to the guest wing connected by a billiards/rec room that was previously a garage. Outside, an enormous covered patio with gazebo sets the stage for large dinner parties. Steve made the base of the giant granite-topped table out of two massive kiawe tree stumps that he milled with the help of a Bobcat. Featuring a swimming pool, putting green and massive lawn on the property, the Alterman's house has always been the go-to place to hold kids' gatherings, PTA meetings, wedding receptions, birthday parties and more.





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"Back in the day, we would have all these parties for our kids' soccer team," said Steve. "The house and property are so big, you could have a couple hundred people here and not really know it."

Steve says the reason they bought the house was so their kids' could hop the fence and walk to nearby Hualalai Academy. In recent years, Robin's parents come to visit for a month at a time, staying in the ohana wing and enjoying the convenience of having their own kitchen and private lanai thanks to Steve's many talents as a craftsman and woodworker.

"I really enjoyed putting it all together and working on my own house," said Steve. "I was a little sad when it was all done."





Dear Santa, I Can Explain



Call me sentimental, but there's something about a Christmas tree that always brings a tear to my eye: *the price!*

Oh holy cow, it's that time of year when trees get trimmed, waistlines get fat and wallets get sliced in half. Seems like the holidays come around faster than you can say, "Put it on my credit card!" Fortunately, my new Visa card has this awesome theft protection feature. It gets declined every time I use it.

This year, I'm starting my Christmas shopping early: the day *before* Christmas Eve. The first step in overcoming procrastination is . . . I'll tell you later. If it's the thought that counts, then I thought about getting you a present for Christmas. Homemade gifts are the perfect way to say I'm not spending any money on you.

Looks like those giant inflatable holiday characters are popping up everywhere again (but enough about my Aunt Mildred). Trouble is, they completely deflate and collapse the next morning. This explains the limp figures strewn around people's yards as if Santa and his buddies were on an all-night bender. Nothing says "Seasons Greetings" like Santa face down in the dirt with an eggnog hangover.

Maybe that's why it's foggy Christmas Eve every year for Santa. Because his reindeer are always getting *Blitzen*. ■

Karen Anderson is the managing editor of "At Home" magazine and the author of "The Hawaii Home Book, Practical Tips For Tropical Living." She can be reached at kanderson@westhawaiitoday.com



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t all started with this front door," said Hakalau resident Linda Levine, who along with her husband, Fred, designed their beautiful Craftsman-style home inspired by photos they saw in magazines. The idea for their red-barn entryway, for example, came from the cover of an Australian home magazine that caught Linda's attention. Today, their entry is nearly an exact replica of that photo.

"This was the very beginning of our house," said Linda pointing to the massive white door framed by rustic-red walls and open-beam pine ceilings. "We like that our entry has an 'island style' look in a Hawai'i plantationera kind of way. Before we built it, I had assembled an entire binder of photos and ideas from home magazines to show to our architect, Neil Erickson. We had the vision and he helped us realize it."

Erickson, who now works in the Hawai'i County Department of Public Works Building Division, drafted the plans for the Levine's home, which was built in 2003. Showcasing architectural attributes that look as new as the day the home was completed, the one-story, sprawling residence retains a contemporary, fresh, artistic feel thanks in part to innovative architectural accents, gorgeous mango shelves and built-ins, distinctive acid-stained floors and a combination of paint colors that



creates dynamic backdrops in every room of the house.

In selecting the color palette for the home, the couple enlisted the assistance of Interior Designer Sue Moss, ASID, of Trans-Pacific Design in Waimea. A color specialist, Sue came up with complementary red and green hues for the interior walls, plus multiple colors for the exterior siding and trim.

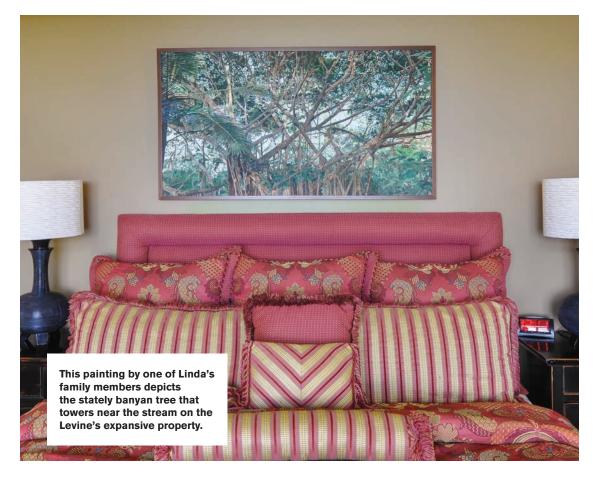
"Sue Moss helped me with fabrics, paint colors and all those kind of details," said Linda. "I couldn't have done it without her. In recent years, we changed up a couple of the rooms and she helped us with that as well. Her choices of hues for the exterior of our home are just fantastic. We just love all the beautiful colors."

Designed almost like a single-story California country ranch house, the Levine's residence

includes different styles of ceilings in most every room. Whether the 10-foot coffered ceiling in the library or the open-beam vaulted whitewashed pine ceiling in the dining room, the home's variety of ceilings helps to delineate each of the residence's unique living spaces. Linda learned about the concept from the book, *Not So Big House*, by Architect Sarah Susanka.

"The book says to make all the ceilings different in each room to create the effect





that the house is larger than it really is," explained Linda. "We wanted tall ceilings as well. When we were building the house, we didn't want the eaves to be hanging too close over the windows, so we bumped up the height of the ceilings to 10 feet."

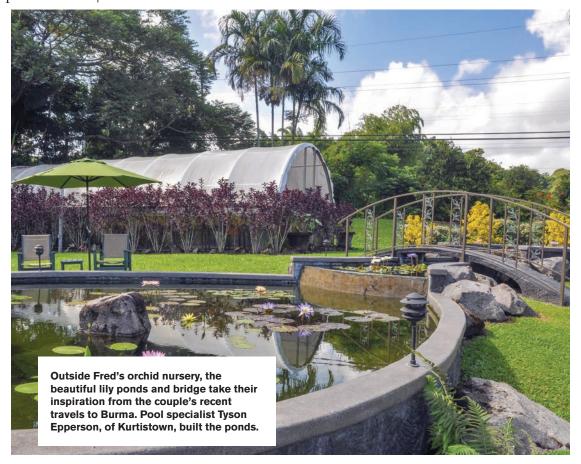
Linda credits their contractor, Ray Lahman, for the extraordinary custom details, particularly in the library outfitted with floor-to-ceiling mango bookshelves, cozy window seat and built-in mango desk. A stalwart San Francisco Giants fan, Fred displays his collection of autographed baseballs signed by such greats as Stan Musial, Mickey Mantle and the couple's favorite player, Giants' catcher Buster Posey, after whom they named their standard poodle.

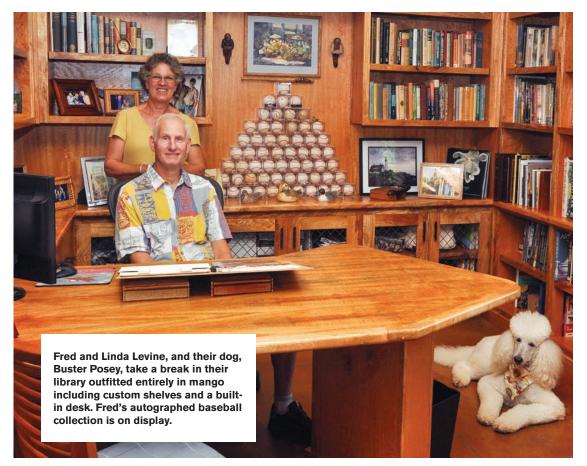
Buster Posey (the Levine's poodle, that is) loves to romp around the one-and-a-half-acre property, which is situated just above the ocean at the 125-foot elevation level a mile from Akaka Falls on the Hamakua Coast. In the backyard, a 40-foot lap pool built by Tyson Epperson, of Akamai Gunite Pools Plus in Kurtistown, provides a therapeutic retreat for exercise. Separate lanais overlook the pool from each of the home's two wings.

"We can hear the ocean from here," said Linda. "The view was very important to us. That's why we have so many large windows and French doors."

The couple continues to enhance the property with such additions as above-ground lily ponds and a garden bridge they built last year inspired by a recent trip to Burma. An avid orchid enthusiast, Fred, a retired teleradiology specialist, spends every day in his greenhouse tending his plants.







"Coming from San Jose, California, we wanted a yard with no sprinklers where we could grow orchids," said Linda, a former ESL teacher. "The greenhouse was the first structure we built on this property."

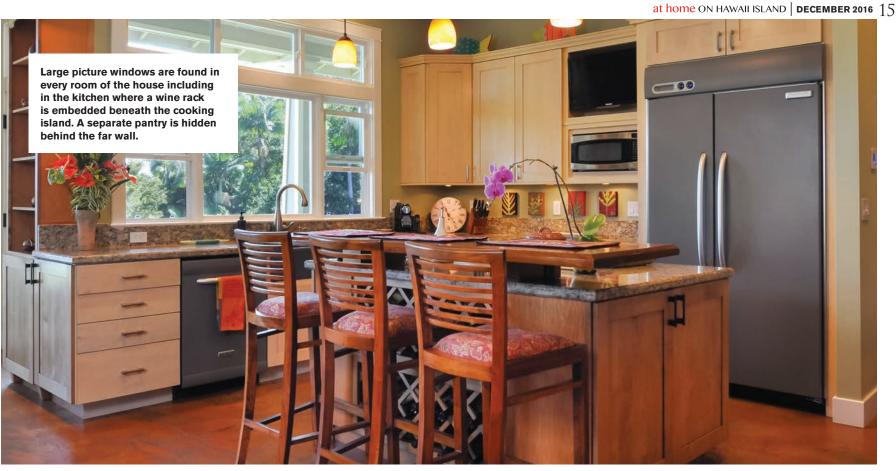
Below the pool, the plush lawn extends to the edge of a gulch that leads to the rocky shore. The old sugarcane railroad once passed through here; remnants of the old spur are still visible. On the other side of the property, a sparkling stream traverses beneath an old bridge that the Levines lovingly restored. Near the bridge, a majestic banyan tree is the inspiration for an oil painting that hangs in the couple's bedroom. The painting was done by one of Linda's family members who came to visit.

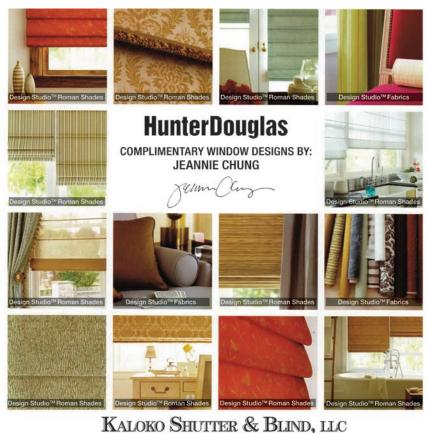
In addition to installing the pool and new ponds, Tyson Epperson also built the custom garden fountain that takes center stage outside the front entry. In the middle of the fountain, a commissioned metal sculpture is an exact replica of the beloved metal sculpture at Mustards Grill restaurant in Napa Valley.

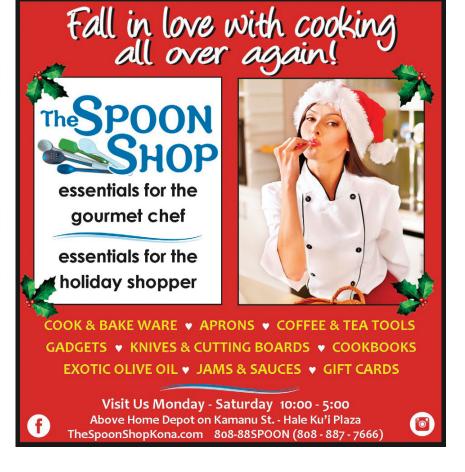
"We contacted the artist by mail and asked him to make it for us," said Linda. "We saw it in Napa Valley 20 years ago and fell in love with it."

For the Levines, their home provides the perfect sanctuary for displaying their potpourri of art from San Francisco and the many places they've visited, such as the Arctic and Canada.

"Fred and I both love the lifestyle here. We designed this house with our taste in art in mind."









ess Ramirez is all fired up about the paint-your-own pottery workshops and other crafts-related classes she offers at Tess's Table Arts & Crafts Workshop in Kailua-Kona. Located in the Old Industrial, the do-it-yourself art studio has become a creative haven for would-be artists and crafts enthusiasts since its grand opening a year ago.

In addition to providing fun arts opportunities for all ages, Tess also gives back to the community,

hosting fundraisers like the recent two-night benefit for the Hawai'i Island Humane Society in which she gave 100 percent of the proceeds directly to the non-profit organization.

"I'm a dog lover, so I was thrilled when the Humane Society approached me to do the fundraiser where we made string-art pieces," said Tess. "From here on out, anytime a customer creates one of our string-art designs of puppy dogs, kitty cats and paw prints, we donate a portion of the cost back to the

Humane Society."

Whether string art, custom painted signs, pre-fired pottery ready to paint, or special crafting projects like Christmas bulb ornaments, Tess's Table offers a welcoming space to relax and be creative. Openstudio hours are Saturdays and Sundays from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Wednesdays from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Private parties and pre-scheduled classes take place throughout the week.

The focal point of the studio, a giant 12'x7' herringbone wood table, built by her husband Randy, provides a communal place for patrons to gather to paint bisqueware, take classes or enjoy group events.

"Our gigantic, beautiful table evokes the feeling of sitting around your own table at home with family and friends," said Tess, who serves appetizers and beverages at every class. "For me, it's like having friends come over for a party."

Tess's Table features a pottery studio adjacent to the crafts room and outfitted with electric pottery wheels and a large clay-throwing table. Anyone experienced working with clay can rent the studio by the hour and use the equipment. Clay and tools are available for purchase. There's also a kiln on site.

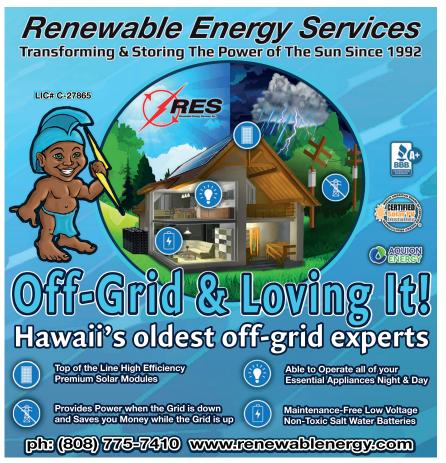
During the holidays, Tess has acquired an array of ready-to-paint pottery objects including gingerbread houses, mugs, bowls, reindeer, Santas, Christmas trees, and more. For last-minute gifts, Tess will do a final kiln firing on December 23, with pieces ready for pick up on the 24th.

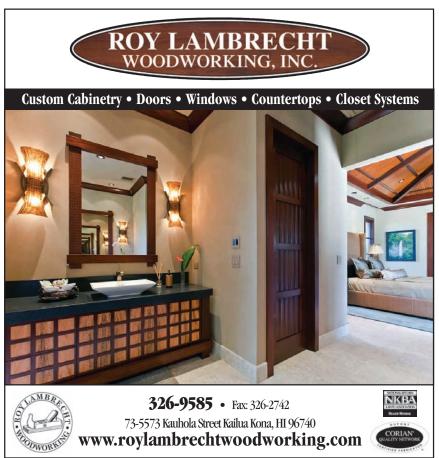
"For Christmas classes, we are making different kinds of decorations including quilted balls made of fabric," she said. "We can also show you how to make Grinch or Frosty-The-Snowman ornaments out of recycled light bulbs. Our pre-fired Christmas tree lamp comes with a bulb, cord and lights. We'll also be doing a recycling project that transforms plastic spoons into a Christmas tree."

To sign up for classes, visit Tess's Table's Facebook page and use the "Book Now" button. A schedule of holiday classes is listed there as well.

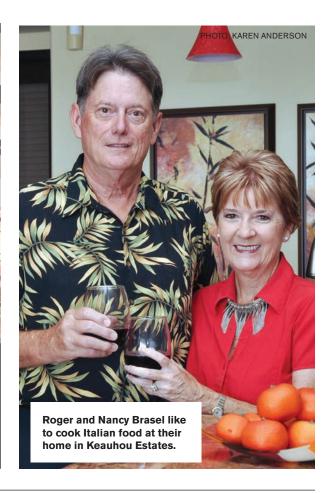
"I love doing classes and making it affordable for people," said Tess. "It's giving the arts back to the people and reconnecting folks with that love of art and creative bonding."











hen Kona architect Roger
Brasel designed his own
house in Keauhou Estates,
he received plenty of
helpful advice from his
wife, Nancy, who suggested they have "hisand-her" cooking islands in the kitchen.

"Mine is the larger island, of course, because that's where all the real work takes place," said Nancy with a laugh. "I love to cook, and this is the dream kitchen to do it in."

Nancy's island includes a large porcelain farmhouse sink, warming drawer, dishwasher and trash compactor. Designed for food chopping and prep, Roger's island is taller to accommodate his height.

"We wanted to make the kitchen as functional as possible, but not too large," said Roger. "I believe the kitchen is the soul of the house. We always felt it was worth the price to go the extra mile with high-end appliances like Wolf and Sub-Zero."

Roger chose alder wood for the cabinets, which are inset with glass panels that illuminate from within. There's also a separate pantry for storage, plus a wine cellar. Cork flooring provides a cushiony surface. Tripletiered soffit ceilings extend from the great room into the kitchen, casting a dramatic and unique glow throughout the residence.

The flow of the kitchen is perfect for entertaining, like when the Brasels hosted a holiday party that accommodated 26 guests who gathered in and around the kitchen.

Owner of Hawai'i Island Architects, LLC, Roger arrived with Nancy to Hawai'i in 1977 and has specialized for decades in residential architecture and commercial projects. He has just completed designs on two homes in Hokulia, and is currently designing the new clubhouse for Big Island Country Club.

The Brasels enjoy traveling to other countries, but relish their lifestyle at home in Keauhou.

"We love it every time we walk in the front door," said Nancy. "The kitchen is still our favorite room in the house." ■

RECIPE

Nancy's Mom's Spaghetti Sauce

1/2 cup Chopped onions
1 lb. Ground beef
2 Garlic cloves, minced
6 oz. Mushrooms, sliced
1/4 cup Parsley, minced
1 (8-oz.) Can tomato paste
1 (20-oz.) Can tomatoes (mashed)

1-1/2 tsp. Salt ½ tsp. Pepper ¼ cup Sugar 1 cup Red wine

Simmer onion and garlic in olive oil for 5 minutes. Add ground beef and stir until meat is brown. Drain. Add mushrooms, parsley and paste. Then add rest of ingredients. Cook at least 2 hours. Enjoy!

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