

A healing home

BY Diane Taylor

PHOTOGRAPHY BY Gary Summerton

When Sylvia Hasey purchased land in Bradford more than five years ago, she knew she would design her new home as a welcoming place for family and friends. A lifelong artist and an interior decorator, Hasey relished the prospect of tapping into her own creativity, the challenge of starting from a clean slate to build whatever she wanted.

At a time when Hasey and her husband, Chip, could have chosen to do some downsizing — their son and daughter had both graduated from college and were married and raising families of their own — they opted to be expansive.

Instead of designing a cozy place for just the two of them, Hasey planned a two-story home with enough bedrooms and play areas to accommodate a growing number of grandchildren. Instead of merely setting up a single guest bedroom, Hasey hired Frank Farmer of Weare to build a house that included a boys' room and a girls' room.

"We wanted our home to be a gathering place for the whole family, including the children," says Hasey. "When the kids were here, we wanted them to have their own special places to play."

"The boys' space became something of a place for nostalgia," Hasey says. The decorating theme revolved around antique flags and family photographs, mementos of family military history, and a 5-foot stuffed camel.



Sylvia Hasey and dog, Diesel

And then there was the girls' room. To say that Hasey designed a room for her granddaughter based around a princess theme vastly understates the grandeur of her vision. What Hasey had in mind was something more akin to a Disney experience. She wanted a room that would transport a child straight from the ordinary into the extraordinary, a space where imagination ruled the day.

To get the job done, Hasey needed a contractor capable of sharing her vision and working with her as a collaborator, someone who could be more of an artist's assistant than a regular contractor. On a friend's recommendation, she called David L. Lambert Quality Remodeling, based in Webster.

"The first remarkable thing about Dave, is that he returned my call right away and came over to the house ASAP," Hasey laughs. The girls' room was already finished and painted. But Hasey had her ideas; she had sketches and photographs to show to Lambert. Still, she wondered if it could be done.

Lambert's response was simple: "If you have a picture, I can build it."

And so the Princess Room, as it would become known, came to be. Lambert built the basic structure of the room. Hasey did the rest, creating



a dreamlike environment of vaulted ceilings and antique chandeliers and the turrets of a castle fashioned out of sauna tubes and papier mache. What used to be a closet is now an elegant dining room, scaled down to just the right size for a small girl.

From an adult point of view, the Princess Room has the advantage of not being a permanent structure. Calling it the "funnest project I've ever worked on," Lambert still kept practical matters in mind when he made the renovations.

"Everything is built on a back-board of plywood, so it can all be easily removed," says Lambert. "There was no damage done to the original structure of the room. The closet can still be a closet, if that's what you want."

It's pure theater. A fairytale come to life.

Like all great fairytales, this story has a happy ending. But it also shares other traits that fairytales are known

for: grief, fear, sorrow — all of which must be overcome in order to attain the happy ending.


At about the time Hasey was creating The Princess Room, her husband, Chip, was diagnosed with leukemia. Chip would hold off the illness long enough to participate in his first Prouty Century Bike Ride & Challenge Walk, and to encourage Sylvia to not give up on their dream of creating a home where all are welcome. But he would not outrun the disease long enough to fully enjoy the fruits of their labors.

Sylvia Hasey has been rethinking her home — and her life — ever since. Her thoughts, like the home itself, are becoming more expansive.

“The Princess Room was fun, and it will continue to bring joy to a lot of people,” Hasey says. “But it is not the only special place in the house.”

Her hope now, Hasey explains, is to make the home that she and Chip designed available to others who battle against cancer.



“I think a lot of nurturing, love, and healing can happen in this home,” Hasey says. “Even if for one moment someone can come here and get away from the disease, that’s what I would like to see happen. I know this home is meant for more than just me.” 

Gary Summerton lives in beautiful Sunapee with his wife, Cheryl, and his children, Cameron and Morgan. Gary is the owner of Gary Summerton Photography, specializing in portraits, weddings and commercial assignments. You can visit his web site at www.garysummerton.com



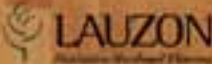


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