

You're Welcome

Andy and Frances Pratt have created an inviting family retreat

LIKE many Lakers, Andy and Frances Pratt have numerous friends and family members visit each year to enjoy the delights of Smith Mountain Lake. Last summer, there was only one weekend when the couple didn't have company at their new home on Craddock Creek.

"We moved into our new house in early June, and two weeks later we had 'Jones Week,' when about 30 relatives [of Frances Jones Pratt] came mostly from Maryland for the yearly family reunion," Frances said.

While not all of the Joneses stay at the Pratt home (some bunk at nearby vacation rentals), the family shares evening meals, and they all play together — from water sports, golf, swapping family stories, to "Corn Toss" — a

favorite game for all ages in which players aim beanbags at a target.

The family just enjoys having fun together, said Frances, who met Andy during high school, although they weren't sweethearts at the time.

"She was dating my best friend — and everybody else!" Andy joked.

They reconnected when he was in law school in Washington, D.C., and she was working on Capitol Hill. After graduation, Andy decided a good way to gain law experience quickly was to serve a four-year tour as an active-duty Air Force attorney. He ended up staying for 30 years, retiring as a full colonel and as Chief Judge of the Air Force Court of Criminal Appeals.

Story by Ferne Hale
Photography by Andy and Frances Pratt



WELCOME CONTINUED

Through the years, Frances became accustomed to military life and the changes it brought.

"If you didn't like the windows in one house, it didn't matter because you knew that in three years you'd be moved somewhere else," she said.

In their 30 years of Air Force life, the Pratts moved 13 times. Frances mostly was a stay-at-home mom, but filled her "free" time with volunteer activities at school, church and with the Military Wives Club.

In addition to traveling and entertaining company, Andy and Frances are active amateur photographers. They also volunteer each Tuesday at the Smith Mountain Lake Chamber of Commerce, welcoming visitors and helping with office work.

Throughout the years and all the moves, one thing always remained the same: their family vacation at Smith Mountain Lake.

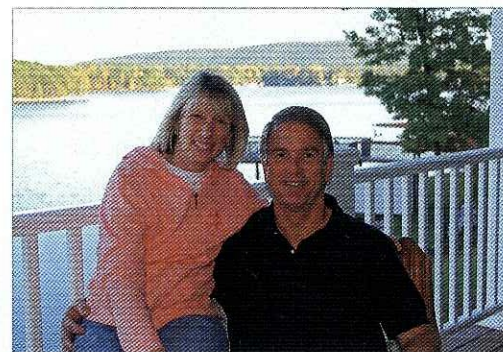
"It was one constant in our lives that provided continuity for our children," said Frances, noting that the family visited SML even while stationed as far away as Arizona and Hawaii.

The Pratts have two children: Their son Mark and daughter-in-law Emily have two children and live in Chicago; their daughter Kerry and her husband Lee are in Tucson, Ariz.

In 1990, the Pratts bought a lake house in Smuggler's Neck with Andy's brother, Ted.

"I'd feel the relaxation even when we got close to the lake," Andy said.

Seven years later, Frances and Andy sold their half of the house to Ted, but continued to visit as often as possible. In 2003, the Pratts bought a home in The Waterways, on a cove where



they'd water-skied for years. They also invested in a lot in nearby Overlook Estates.

Not long after Andy retired in 2005, the couple decided to build a retirement home on that lot with a beautiful view of Smith Mountain and the sunrise. It took about a year to firm up a house design and another nine months for Floyd Enterprises to build the home.

"Phil Floyd made the building so easy and enjoyable," Andy said. "Actually, our guy was Don Winter, who held our hands throughout the building process. He was great to work with and made sure we didn't make any stupid mistakes."

Frances added: "Of real importance was to have two guest rooms with bathrooms so our children could visit comfortably."

There's also a mother-in-law room and bath for Frances' 82-year-old mother who drives from Maryland to visit.

The couple's cherry kitchen cabinets were custom made by Reico of Roanoke, and the floors are Santos mahogany. The custom cabinets and shelves flank the fireplace in the great room, and in the kitchen, the cabinetry is brightened by White Spring granite countertops.

The Pratts also spend extensive time on their covered porch and the lake-level patio underneath which seems to extend right to the lake.

"Having a home where we can welcome friends and family ... and having a place where the kids can come is what it's all about for us," said Frances.

Andy added: "This is the first time we've built a house, and it will certainly be the first one we live in for more than three years. We're not moving any more!"



◀ At special events for Frances and Andy Pratt's family – reunions, weddings, graduations, new home move-in day – a traditional "jump-for-joy photo" is always taken.

▲ The Pratts' living room features a soaring stone fireplace and cherry cabinets.

▶ The couple's home on Craddock Creek has a view of Smith Mountain and the sunrise.

