

'Tree house' fills the bill for pre-retirees

WANTED: The perfect retirement home for two people too young to retire, who entertain frequently.

FOUND: A house with only seven rooms to clean, no lawn to mow and no leaves to rake.

What was once a figment of a Birmingham couple's imagination is now a reality. Designed by architect Paul Gaiser and built by William Chickering, this "tree" house fits the description the couple had in mind.

The couple has grown children who live in when they're not at college or in their own homes, so they needed room for both family and formal occasions. The house accommodates such activities.

A fireplace wall reaching 32 feet at the top of its roofline angle separates two huge rooms used for entertaining in both modes. On one side is a formal living room with an elegant arched window and walnut panelling above the traditional fireplace mantel.

Combining the furnishings from two generations for this room was the task appointed to interior designer Irene Hanslow of Pierson's Interiors.

Velvet and silk-covered chairs in tones of apricot and light green are placed to form distinct conversation areas in the living room.

"Everything is very understated with no pattern, so I added some at the window," Ms. Hanslow said. A patterned drape outlines the arched form of the huge window.

On the other side of the fireplace wall is the "Room we really live in," the owner said. It is an informal, same-size version of the living room. One of its focal points is a 10-foot wood sculpture hung over the fireplace. It was made by the builder for his clients.

Because Ms. Hanslow had

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Elegant furnishings set the formal tone of the one of the home's living rooms. An arched double story window illuminates the room by day and the generous fireplace adds warmth.

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