

TRADITIONAL HOME[®]

May 2005

Beautiful rooms
decorating ideas for all ages



plus, what's in your kitchen? give it great style
magical bedrooms & bliss in the bath



kid-friendly &
COMFY

A young family's new house had to be gracious, cater



to casual entertaining—and stand up to child's play.

BY ELIOT NUSBAUM PHOTOGRAPHY BY CASEY SILLS PRODUCED BY HILARY ROSE





From the outset, **Nina and David Kohler**

knew one thing for sure about the house they were going to build in Wisconsin: Nothing would be off-limits to their children. That meant careful planning and attention to detail. “We wanted comfort, and we wanted character and charm,” says Nina. “With small children, functionality was also high on the list. Plus, there is a high probability that this is the house we will live in forever, so we wanted to take that into consideration, too, in terms of the layout and our ability to grow in this home, to entertain, and to have cozy spaces for the family.”

In the end, the couple built a gracious, sophisticated house that lives large, works well, and most important, brings pleasure to the entire family—adults and children alike.

Recalls Nina: “We spent a lot of time—years—thinking about what we wanted. David and I went through many scenarios when we were choosing what type of house to build. We were on a unique piece of property, and when we committed to that property, we committed to being there a good

Left: When you enter the Kohlers’ home, the first space you see is the dining area. The rustic beams, stone fireplace, and plaster walls give the house the look of an old hunting lodge. **Above:** The Kohlers greet guests in front of custom doors that David found at a home show. **Top right:** Floating flowers add a touch of color. **Above right:** It was important to the couple to take full advantage of the wooded site.



In decorating the living room, they didn't choose furnishings specifically for the kids, David notes. Rather they chose dark leather and sturdy wood pieces that look great but can handle use by the kids. Inset: David and Nina are passionate about cooking and entertaining and wanted an open galley kitchen up to the job. Pine woodwork, granite counters, and copper detailing give the space visual appeal and warmth.



long time. A lot of our friends and family were building around us at the same time, and so we took much of their advice.”

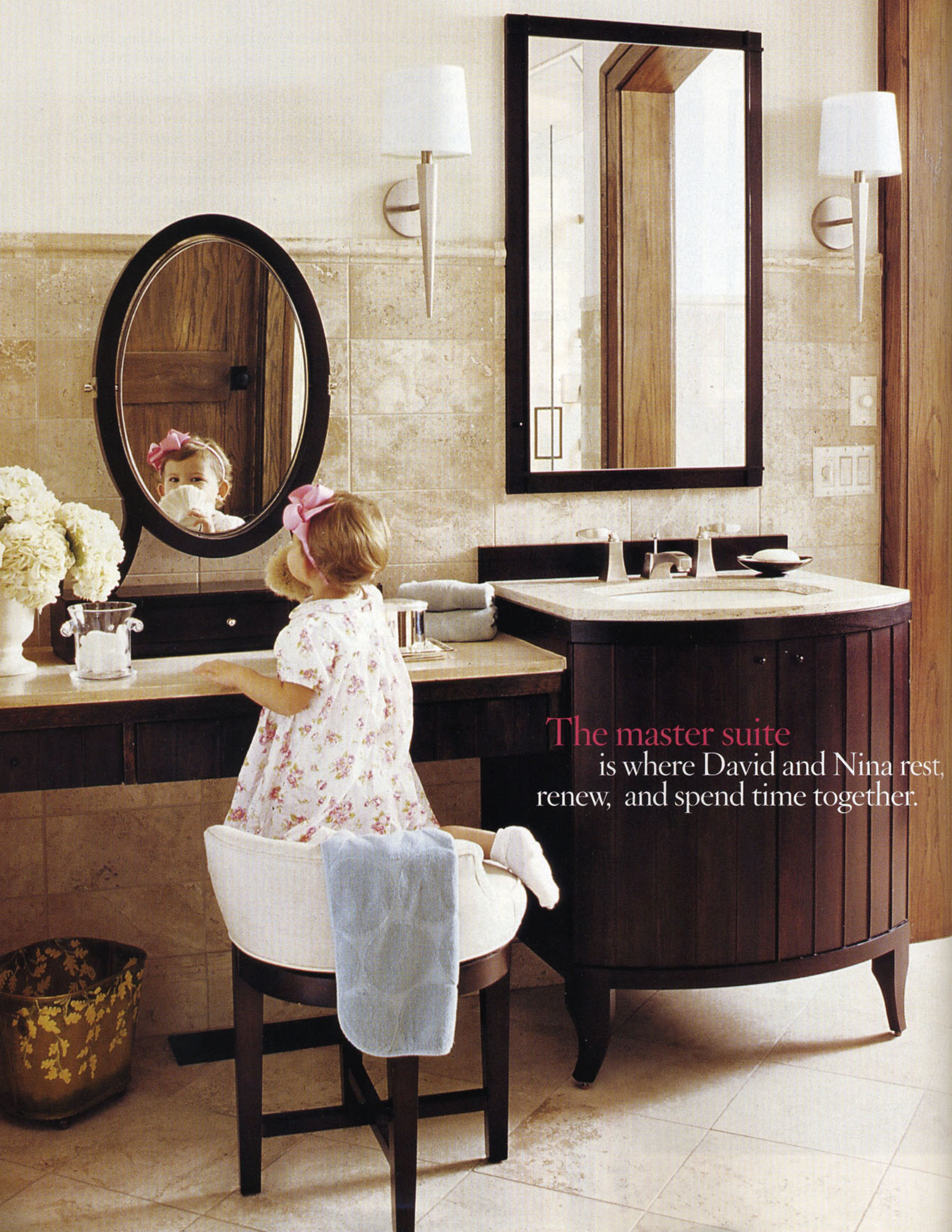
Nina and David, who is president of the Kitchen and Bath Group of the Kohler Company, took all of that information and developed an extensive checklist that they then took to architect Jack Arnold. “We migrated to Jack because we liked the work he’s done,” says David. “We’ve always lived in or wanted spaces that I would say are kind of country traditional. We like the French country aesthetic he designs, and we liked what we believed we could incorporate into that—such as stone from the region.” Their wish was to create a house that looked like it had been there for 100 years.

The couple carefully studied a portfolio of homes the architect had previously designed, picking and choosing their favorite parts, and then asked Arnold to design a house that pulled these different components together under one roof. “One of the focal points of the home that fits the kind of relaxed, casual, entertaining look we wanted was the large, integrated space of the kitchen, the dining room, and the living room,” explains David. “We liked that concept very much, and by not having an enclosed formal dining room, or an enclosed formal living room, we were able to create one very large space that has a casual and inviting ambience. That space is one of the unique characteristics of this home.”

It was also important to have lots of storage and a big basement that includes a playroom for the children, adds Nina. In fact, the Kohlers think there is a valuable lesson in how they planned their basement. By making the space large and by giving it 10-foot ceilings, they made it far more livable and inviting. In addition to the playroom, they included a lot of storage and a laundry area. They also put a laundry on the second floor near the kids’ bedrooms for convenience. There are three bedrooms on the second floor, one for their two sons, one for their daughter, and a room for David’s 19-year-old daughter Ashley.

“We wanted the boys—who are two years apart—to share the same room because we felt it was important to build a very





The master suite
is where David and Nina rest,
renew, and spend time together.



strong relationship between the two of them,” says David. “So even though we had the space, we made the decision to have them share a room. We think that’s important, and we’re going to continue to foster that as they grow older.”

The house was also designed with an oversized landing on the second floor that can be remodeled into a study and reading area when the children are older. A sophisticated master suite is situated on the first floor, to give everyone a little breathing room, says David.

Of course, that main room is the centerpiece of the house. “Entering the house right into the dining area speaks to its open concept,” notes Nina. “It’s startling for most people to come into the house and be in that open space, but I think that’s really one of the defining characteristics of this home. As you look at a lot of homes today, they’re designed with separate, formal living and dining rooms, so there’s a lot of square footage dedicated to areas that don’t really get used.”

Actually, that’s a lesson they learned in their previous home. Nina recalls that the formal living room got very little use and the porch-family room was the center of family activity. So they addressed that in this house. “We wanted to make sure that we’d use each square foot of this home and that all spaces would be equally welcoming. We find that the children on any given day



Opposite: The Kohlers’ daughter primps at her mother’s dressing table in the master bath. The designed-for-two bath connects to the master bedroom through a doorway wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair.

Top: Though not overly large, the first-floor master bedroom suite is a sophisticated retreat for Nina and David.

Above: The yellow bowl is an art project by one of the children.

Above left: Convenient built-in storage next to the bathtub.



Opposite: The mudroom sees a lot of action on a daily basis. Here the kids can dump backpacks, hang coats, and strap on hockey gear. Best of all, says Nina, when she needs to, she can close the door on the whole thing.

Top and above: The home was designed with a deep screened porch that serves as an extension of the interior spaces, offering two seating areas as well as a delightful space for dining.

Right: The side entry, which the family uses daily, leads directly into the mudroom.

select different parts of those rooms—as they should—to spend time doing puzzles, reading books, or playing.”

Anchored by a stone fireplace, the living area is at one end of the main room, and the warm pine, granite, and copper galley kitchen, designed by Dan McFadden, is at the opposite end of the space. The design of the open kitchen accommodates both serious cooking and entertaining.

In addition to the interior spaces, David and Nina spent a lot of time thinking about the exteriors. They had a deep appreciation for their wooded lot and made a conscious decision to spare as many trees as possible

when siting the house. “It’s a very peaceful, beautiful setting that overlooks the river and part of the golf course,” says David.

The Kohlers asked the architect to design an extra large and deep screened porch for the rear of the house with easy access to the yard. “The kids love the setting and the fact that they can play outside and run around in the woods.”

All in all, the Kohlers and their children have found their new house to be everything they wanted it to be. Says David, “I already love the memories we have of living in this house.”

Architect: Jack Arnold **Kitchen designer:** Dan McFadden

For more information, see sources on page 238.

