

# Case Study

An idyllic waterfront retreat comes to life in the hands of Pyramid Builders



**T**eamwork is an important aspect of a successful building project, as a Northern Virginia couple discovered when they decided to build a home along Annapolis' Duvall Creek. They hired architect Jeff Halpern to create the plans and Pyramid Builders to make them a reality—and the result was a successful project during which everyone understood each other. "They wanted the house to be a summer/weekend home," says Mark Sanders of Pyramid. "Later on, they plan to retire there."

Given their plans for the future, it's not surprising that the couple went all out on their wish list for their new home: In addition to a sprawling, traditional-style house, the three-and-a-half-acre property now boasts a swimming pool, a pool house with kitchen and bar, a boathouse, an outdoor kitchen and more.

For Pyramid, the biggest construction challenge was the domed foyer of the residence, which is 20 feet at its highest point. "It required a tension ring at the top and the whole thing was covered in decorative plaster," Sanders recalls. The exterior is a combination of stucco and stone, topped by a slate roof complete with decorative finials at its ridge. Custom-designed wrought-iron work adorns the front doorway and balcony rails.

**ARCHITECTURE:** Jeffrey H. Halpern, Halpern Architects, Annapolis, Maryland. **CONTRACTOR:** Mark Sanders, vice president; Herb Severn, project manager, Pyramid Builders, Annapolis, Maryland. **INTERIOR DESIGN:** Susan Gulick, ASID, Susan Gulick Interiors, Reston, Virginia. **LANDSCAPE DESIGN:** Walnut Hill Landscape Company, Annapolis, Maryland. **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Anne Gummerson.



## Trade Secrets

FROM MARK SANDERS

- Establish a team early to build your home. The builder or architect you start with should recommend the other team members such as the interior designer, landscape designer, pool contractor, etc. Previous familiarity will enable the communication to go smoothly between team members.
- Insist on seeing recently completed projects by the builder you are considering—then visit a home that's five to 10 years old to see how it has held up over time.
- Look for professionals to work with rather than taking on tasks like decorating yourself. Your project will look more finished.
- Try to stick with natural building materials over synthetics as much as possible. Or use a combination of both—for example, stone veneers and real stone interact well together.