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The red brick exterior, accented with white shutters and columns are elements of the Georgian Revival that was popular in Wichita during the 1930s.

Restoring History

Left: The Persian rug comes from the Beggs' personal collection and establishes the rich color palette used throughout the room.

Below: A sundial among the perennials reminds garden visitors of a period when Wichita relied entirely on hard work and the forces of Mother Nature to bring in an abundant crop.



Maybe being a visitor in your town home isn't such a bad deal after all. As president of Wichita State University, Don Beggs and his wife Shirley, along with CJ, their one-year-old Russian Blue cat, are living in the 6,800-square-foot, Georgian Revival-style home that has been both refuge and showcase since the time it was built in the 1930s.

"We moved in December of 1998 and for three years, I didn't touch anything," says Shirley. She wanted to be certain that when she began to put her personal stamp on the home that she did so with respect for its history and purpose.

She also wanted to be sure that all of the generous private donations offered for the redecorating were not wasted on impetuous decisions. "I feel that lots of time people who live in public homes go in and spend money really fast without having a feel for the home," she explains.

When Shirley began the project, she established an excellent relationship with the senior designer Vicki Flores at Accent

Interiors. Four years later, the women are still working together on the various aspects of the interior.

"I was so fortunate to find Vicki," she says. "We work beautifully together because she knows everything that I like as far as colors and putting together the right fabrics."

For Flores, the challenge was not only to develop the warm, rich color palette, which reflected the tastes of the owners, but also to provide them with intimate spaces in a home that must also host a multitude of people.

"One of the things we did was to rearrange a lot of the way the rooms were being used for their function and for the Beggs' lifestyle," explains Flores. For example, the dining room, which Shirley says, "Used to be a very small room and could hardly seat more than 10 people," was turned into a living space for Shirley and Don.

The living room was then recreated as a formal dining room, which now seats 16 people and houses a baby grand piano.



When asked about any restrictions that she may have faced during the redecorating, Shirley says she didn't feel limited at all. "I really don't have anyone telling me what I can and cannot do here," she says. "The Kansas Board of Regents is wonderful to work for. They hire good leadership and stay out of their way."

One very definite fringe benefit of

sharing your home with the public is the access to fine art and paintings from the University's Ulrich Museum of Art. The WSU Foundation established the relationship and even Flores enjoyed being able to work with the fabulous collection.

"We based a lot of the design on the art pieces in the home," she says. Shirley and Don were able to choose their favorite paintings and as Flores points out, "They get just as much viewing here as they do at the museum."

In the foyer, for example, visitors are greeted by a 19th century still life by artist Bella Russell. The big bowl of painted fruits, sitting on a table draped with a delicate shawl, immediately introduces all the rich colors that the design team worked with throughout the home.

The house sits on five acres of what Shirley calls "exquisite landscaping." She credits the campus physical plant with maintaining the gardens. The fresh flowers are available in a seasonal array and she always appreciates being able to bring the outside in for special arrangements and special occasions.

Shirley is especially fond of the winter holiday season which allows her to host many visitors and also to show off her

personal collection of authentic German nutcracker dolls.

Throughout the downstairs living area and the upstairs bedrooms, upholstery and especially draperies are an integral part of the overall aesthetic. "The thing I love about decorating with Vicki is that she can take a pencil and draw something on a piece of paper," which is then brought to life by the talents of her in-house seamstress. Because of this dynamic, the window treatments throughout the home are each unique and different.

In the kitchen, which had been modernized before the Beggs' tenure to include Sub-Zero refrigeration and a Thermador stove, there is a delicate combination of white blush accented with elegant black lines. The ladies, inspired by the soft corals of the cabinets, decided on a monochromatic theme for the tile flooring. The effect is a very peaceful, smooth flow from one station to the next, with just enough accent elements to make the room pop.

This space can be used to whip up an informal dinner for Shirley and Don to enjoy while watching a favorite movie, or it can be called upon to host larger parties. "The most interesting part of this home is that it has multiple uses," says Flores.



Although alumni have donated many of the furnishings, Shirley also has several special pieces of her own. Her collection of Woodard wrought-iron furniture, for example, graces the solarium, which was added in 1999 and is a favorite room of CJ the cat.

Instead of being troubled by the fact that this home is really on loan from the people of Kansas, Shirley and her husband enjoy every moment of it. And, along with their designer, they have made changes, while still honoring the traditional elements of the home.

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Perhaps Flores best explains the approach of her client and friend. "She's really working with the University to let people know that the home belongs to the state of Kansas. She's just the caretaker of it right now." |



Top left: Peacocks are right at home in this room with plenty of color.

Bottom left: A favorite of overnight guests, this "yellow" room is the perfect place to be awed by the beautiful design.

Above: Several unique nutcrackers sit waiting for the holiday season.

Above right: In the kitchen, meals are prepared for small groups and large parties.

Right: A baby grand piano adds elegance and artistry to the formal dining room.



