

FALL 2022

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BUILDING
happily
EVER AFTERS

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BUILDING happily EVER AFTERS



By Lucy Score

Every year, my partner Tim and I would pack the car with snacks, water, and family members then plot out the most efficient route to tour as many Parade of Homes stops as possible.

We oohed and ahhed over spectacular staircases, encouraged strangers to stand in cavernous tile showers with us to see how many people could fit, and salivated over finished walkout basements, all while fantasizing about someday building our own dream home.

Little did we know our happily ever after was closer than we thought.





♥ DREAMING BIG

A lifelong, avid reader, I began writing romance novels as a fun hobby to escape how dreadful I was at my actual real-life job. One book became two, two became three. Now seven years later, I am a full-time author with thirty of my own novels on my bookcase.

With the success of my books, Tim and I soon had the resources to build the kind of home we'd fallen in love with during Parade of Homes.

This is the story of how we met a builder, fell in love (with their company), and moved into our dream home...

♥ THE MEET-CUTE: HOW WE MET 'THE ONE'

We're lucky in this region to have several quality home builders to choose from and Tim and I already had a short list of custom builders who had impressed us during previous Parades. The plan was to "speed date" each builder on the list and then choose the best fit.

Our first appointment was with Musser Home Builders, a family-owned company that has been in business for fifty years. We met with Jeff Musser, company president, at the dreamy farmhouse-style Dillsburg headquarters. It was love at first sight. Well, it was for me, the starry-eyed romantic. Tim, the steely-eyed realist, was cautiously optimistic.

Jeff was open, charming, and honest. It was clear that he treated his employees like family. And with half a century of building relationships with suppliers and contractors, the company was well-positioned to weather any storm... including a pandemic.

I was sold.

Jeff's teeny, tiny dog Sophie with little bows on her ears helped seal the deal for Tim. [Disclaimer: Manly man Jeff insists Sophie belongs to his wife Beth.] Well, it was that and Musser's fixed price contract, which means there are no hidden costs or price escalations once the contract is signed.

We didn't bother scheduling "dates" with any of the other builders on our list. We had already found "the one."

♥ GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Musser Home Builders approached our design process like the getting-to-know-you phase all new couples embark upon. Although, unlike a new couple, the team was less concerned with our favorite movies and food allergies and more concerned with our thoughts on geothermal (yes, please!) and the depth of the front porch (deep enough to stretch out and read—or write—a book).

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Jeff and a designer came to our pre-dream home house and sat down with us to talk about what worked (home offices on separate floors, first floor master) and didn't work for us (the extra skinny, extra deep pantry cabinet that camouflaged all canned goods until after their expiration dates).

The entire plan was crafted around how Tim and I lived our lives. From our morning routines, to how we entertained to how we relaxed at the end of the day, every detail of the plan solved a problem or made it easier and more convenient to go about our day.

They also included a few heart-warming “easter eggs” just for us. Our closet is in the shape of a heart, a nod to my author logo. And my office is hidden behind a secret bookcase door. Shh! Don't tell.

Designer Carrie marched us through selections in a way that kept things fun and exciting, not eye-twitchingly stressful. Before we knew it, everything from flooring to trim had been picked. And this was all done prior to signing the contract, which meant we had the most accurate pricing possible.

It was clear to us that this wasn't a one-size-fits all build to Musser Home Builders. It was a one-of-a-kind dream home designed and built just for us. And that's how they approach every one of their projects.

Our Must Haves:

- Perfect spots for the Christmas tree and the litter box
- First-floor master or an elevator (We ended up with both.)
- Powder room with actual privacy
- Two large offices
- Gigantic laundry room with a large island and access to the garage
- Home gym
- Living room big enough to hold large chunks of our extended families at one time
- Swimming pool

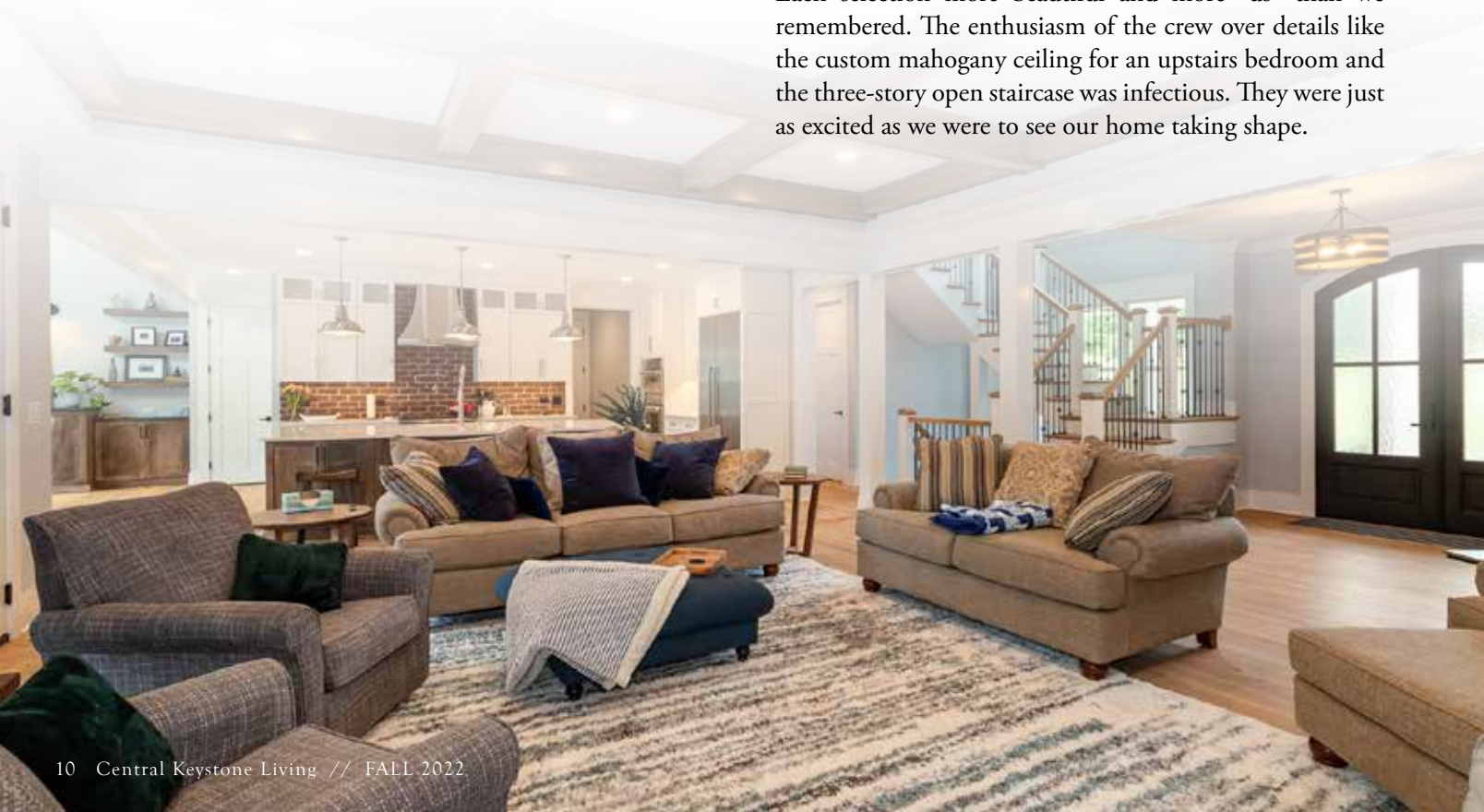


FALLING IN LOVE

Ground was officially broken on a frigid day in February and just like that, everything that had existed only on paper began to take shape before our eyes. We visited the site almost every day of the ten-month build and, in doing so, were lucky enough to meet many more members of the Musser Home Builders family.

Our foreman, Zach, was endlessly patient and knowledgeable. When a late season hurricane rolled through dumping eight inches of rain on the region, he was on-site at 10 p.m. to make sure our newly drywalled basement didn't flood.

Seeing it all come together in real life was like living a dream. Every room was bigger than I'd imagined. Each selection more beautiful and more “us” than we remembered. The enthusiasm of the crew over details like the custom mahogany ceiling for an upstairs bedroom and the three-story open staircase was infectious. They were just as excited as we were to see our home taking shape.





HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Just as promised, we moved in a week before Christmas. The first personal item through the door was the Christmas tree, which did indeed have the perfect location.

Since then, we have been blessed to share our home with an endless parade of friends and family. My mother's 70th and Tim's 50th birthday celebrations were held here. My brother's family enjoyed a poolside staycation this summer. And we were honored to host an open house for the Musser team so the crew could show off their incredible craftsmanship to their families.

Our relationship with Musser Home Builders didn't end there. They also walked us through the first several months of home ownership, answering our questions, troubleshooting on the rare occasions it was required, and coordinating any additional work necessary.

So, it was a given that we called Musser Home Builders when it was time to tackle the basement bar project. It was also Musser we contacted to expand the patio. And it will be Musser we reach out to when I convince Tim that we need a pool house.

Each time I drive up our winding driveway, I think back to all those Parade of Homes I was so excited to tour through the years. I still can't quite wrap my head around the fact that I get to live out my own happily ever after in one of them.

When it comes time to build your own dream, I hope you'll give Musser Home Builders a call. ■

