



A Hillside Hideaway on Lake Gaston

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BILL O'NEILL

That's what it's all about! The "kids," says Rob Putnam from the deck of his beautiful home high up on a hill overlooking Lake Gaston. He stands with his arm around his wife Sylvia's waist taking in their

home that nestles neatly into the tree-shaded hill on the south shore of Lake Gaston.

"We have had six or seven homes on the lake and one on the coast at Topsail Island in the past eight years," he says. "Some were too small or in a busy section of the lake where we couldn't really enjoy

our waterfront. Pat Carroll of South Shore Realty has been our agent over the years. She found this one for us and we have been here for about three and a-half years and it is perfect for us and for the kids. They didn't like the coast and preferred boating and water sports to fishing so we came back here."



The "kids" he is referring to are Zach and Nick, 18- and 20-years-old respectively. Zach has just completed high school and will be attending North Carolina State University for Mechanical Engineering in the fall. Nick is a student at Wake Tech where he is studying Welding and Metallurgy. Two large but very friendly eight-year old dogs, Coleman and Casey, make up the rest of the Putnam family.

The Putnams live in Chapel Hill, but they manage to get to the lake almost every weekend. During the week, Rob is the Director of Communications for the International Lead/Zinc

Research Organization, and Sylvia is the CFO for Trio Clinical Research. Both are located in Research Triangle Park.

The boys and their friends enjoy the summers since they spend most of their time wakeboarding and waterskiing. There are also two "standup" Jet Skis that they can spend hours on as they hone their skills.

Besides the two Jet Skis, there are three boats to choose from when they want to be out on the water – a 25-foot Bennington "Tri-toon" with a 200hp Yamaha for general cruising, a Malibu Inboard Sportster with a 350hp engine for wakeboarding and





waterskiing, and a 12-foot Triumph/Logic with a little 15hp putt-putter.

“When the boys were younger they spent most of their time in the little plastic Logic but now that they are older it mostly sits on the trailer in the driveway,” Rob says. “They took that little boat all over the lake back then.”

Sylvia and Rob look forward to the quieter days of the fall and winter when the lake is less busy and the air crisper. When the fall comes and the leaves drop from the trees surrounding their home they have one of the best views on the lake.

The house sitting on a hill offers a great view but sometimes the many steps required to get down the steep incline to water level may be challenging to some people. Rob and Sylvia solved that problem by installing an Incline Tram that can handle four people and runs on rails up and down the hill to the boat dock.

The home wasn't quite perfect when they bought it but the Putnams added a large living room with skylights and floor-to-ceiling windows that provide an expansive view of Lake Gaston. In fact, all of the rooms including the basement rec room in their 3,800-square-foot home have a view of the lake.

Another change was the creation of a large kitchen as the main room of the home with plenty of space for Sylvia's cooking creations. Sylvia loves to cook, and the kitchen with its wide expanse of countertops and eating areas is the perfect spot for entertaining guests. The main room features a two-story high brick fireplace and plenty of windows to let in the light and the great views. The fireplace pro-

vides a nice spot to cozy up to the fire on the cool evenings in the colder months at the lake.

Most of the family's indoor time is spent in the main room where there is enough space to handle the largest crowd of guests.

The laundry room and a guest house are located in a separate building over a two-car garage that never sees any cars since it has been converted into Rob's workshop.

“The boys spend their time on the water, Sylvia likes to cook and I build things here in my workshop,” Rob says. “I'm in the process of custom building our kitchen cabinets to match the woodwork in the main room of the house.”



The only room that is intentionally darkened is the second floor movie studio that the Putnams created. It features a DVD projector and a wide screen that can be easily seen from the rows of recliners that face it in a stadium seating arrangement.

“It is perfect for those rainy days when we can't go out on the lake,” says Sylvia.

There is also a quiet room in the home just off of the main entrance. It is lined with beautifully stained, wood built-in library type shelves and is a perfect spot to get away from it all when things get too hectic.

“We love it here and we wish we could spend more of our time here but for now, it's all for the kids,” says mom. 🛶