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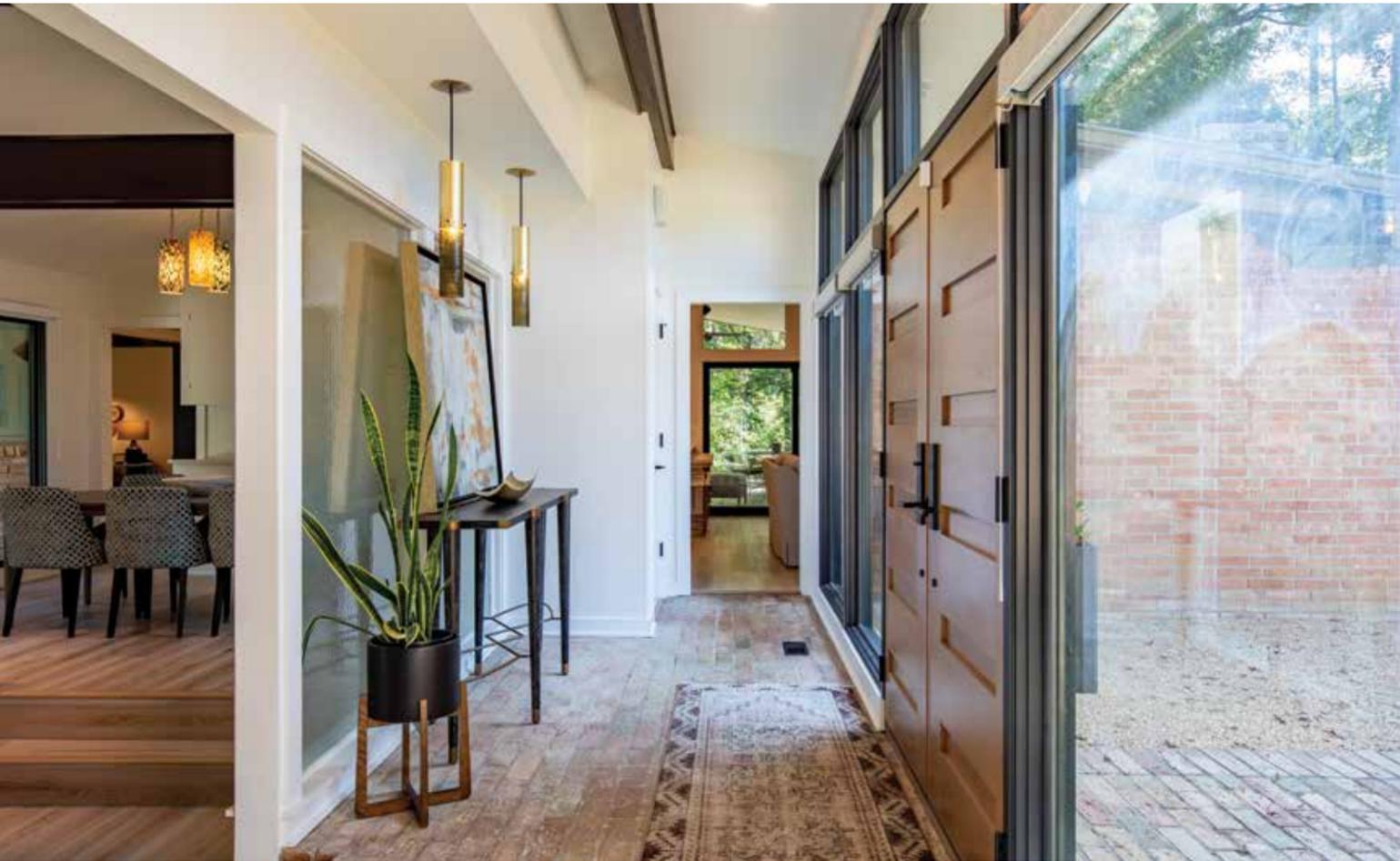
THE ART & MUSIC ISSUE

**CHEERS TO
50 YEARS OF TUPELO'S
GUMTREE FESTIVAL**

**SIX WINES
TO TRY
THIS SPRING**

**MODERN LIVING,
MIDCENTURY
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MODERN LIVING

AN INTERIOR DESIGNER INCORPORATES ELEMENTS OF HER FAVORITE DESIGN STYLE INTO HER FAMILY'S RENOVATED TUPELO HOME.

WRITTEN BY LESLIE CRISS | PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOE WORTHEM

When Mary Stewart was a youngster, she often spent time at the home of a friend in the Pinecrest area off Gloster Street in Tupelo. Today, she can look just across the street from the home she shares with husband John and their two boys — Tucker, 7, and 3-year-old Everett — and see that house.

“I don’t even remember noticing this house sitting here back then,” she said.

Stewart, an interior designer with Stagg’s for 10 years, had been living happily with her family in her grandparents’ ranch house. She’d infused into it some elements of the style she loves most: midcentury modern. She’d recently given birth to second son, Everett, and was ending her maternity leave and returning to Stagg’s.

“One of my co-workers told me about this house when I came back to work,” Stewart said. “She pulled it up online to

show me and the wheels immediately started turning. But I told her no, I didn't need a big project and we were good where we were."

Still, thoughts of the house did not leave Stewart's mind — though she'd yet to mention it to her husband. When she did tell John Stewart about the house, she knew what to mention first.

"The house has a basement/garage that's huge, and John likes to work on old cars," Stewart said. "That's what I shared first. He saw the house; we thought about it; and then it was like, 'OK, we guess we're going to do it.'"

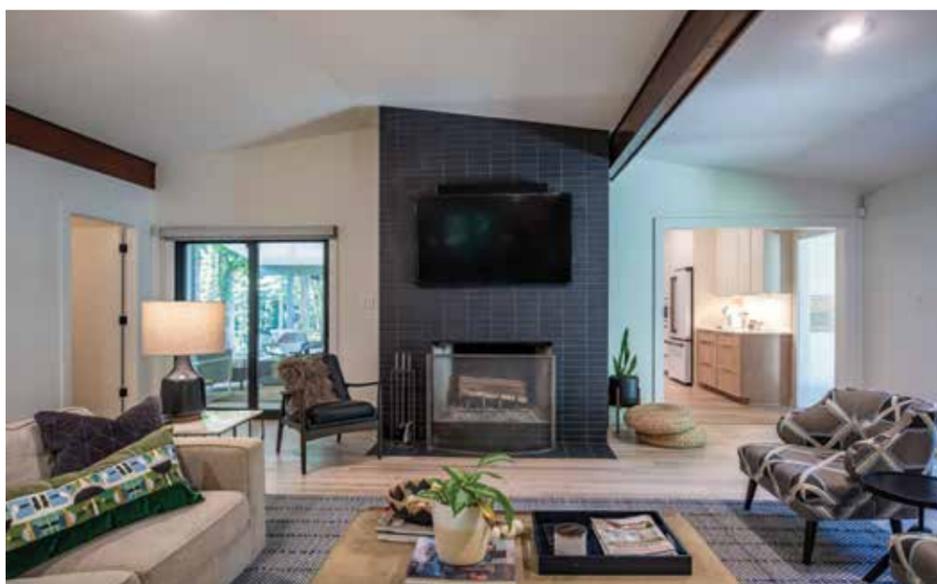
The Stewarts met as students at Ole Miss, and though John Stewart, a nurse, might not have been as devoted a fan of midcentury modern architecture or style as his wife, he has an appreciation for it.

"He trusts me to make good decisions about this sort of thing," she said. "He generally likes what I choose."

When the Stewarts made the decision to buy the house on Pinecrest, the house they were living in sold quickly. For six months the family lived with Stewart's parents, Bill and Karen Smothers, while renovations were done to their new house.

"Then we moved in and lived happily ever after and we're never moving again," Stewart said, laughing.

When Stewart met with contractor Tony





Miles, she already knew what she wanted to do in the house.

“I didn’t want to mess with too much of the architecture of the house,” she said. “Tony and I walked through, and I had a lot of photos of things I liked. Visuals always help.”

Some of the changes were small, others larger. In one of the bedrooms, there was paneling. Stewart wondered if the paneling should be left and just painted out or if drywall should just replace all. The decision was made to use drywall. The ceilings throughout the four bedrooms were textured, and drywall was also used to cover them.

“We replaced the windows and doors,” Stewart said. “And we used minimal molding.”

Midcentury modern style enjoyed a

peak in popularity in the middle of the 20th century, specifically in the ’50s and ’60s. The style’s characteristics include clean lines, simplicity of design with a lack of ornamentation, a color palette of earth tones, a connection to nature, large rooms with natural light, open space and lots of big windows.

“When midcentury modern had its beginnings, it was considered almost futuristic, ahead of its time,” Stewart said.

The largest part of the house renovation was dedicated to the kitchen, which was enlarged and a peninsula added.

The more than 4,000-square-foot house, built in 1960, features a huge open family room that was added to the house in the ’70s; the Stewarts added a wood-burning fireplace as part of their renovation. A spiral staircase, original to the house, descends

from the family room to the garage and finished basement. There are four bedrooms, a sunken formal living room and dining room and a cozy keeping room right by the kitchen with a wood-burning fireplace. Stained wood beams remain a part of the keeping room ceiling.

“I didn’t paint them as I had painted the wood beams in my grandparents’ house,” Stewart said. “I wanted these to pop like the mantel over the fireplace.”

The floors are white oak, as are the kitchen cabinets which were done by Tony McCarley of McCarley Custom Cabinets in Booneville. There’s not a lot of drapery in the house, but the motorized shades offer privacy when it’s needed, and they go all the way up so they are not noticed when open. It’s all a part of the midcentury modern architecture bringing the outside in with large windows and doors that allow for natural sunlight to fill the house.

“Midcentury design is just so easy on the eye, no fuss, and that really speaks to me,” Stewart said. “We love this home for so many reasons. It has such a great flow for our family. It is open concept just enough but also has rooms you can use separately for their own purposes. The elements of this house just give us a sense of calm and comfort that make it feel like home.”