

# PARAGON

When Joe and Suzanne Cunningham embarked on blending their families in marriage, they shared a singular priority to focus on the happiness and success of their three high-school aged children. Moving into a new custom built home designed especially for their needs would eventually help them sew everything together not only for the kids, but also for themselves as future empty nesters. They found a beautiful lot on a ridge overlooking Lake Wylie and started designing their home with architect, Chip Carpenter.

## SPOTLIGHT

After some preliminary meetings, Chip presented a French 'Eclectic' Country style home exuberant in form and varied in materials that thoroughly delighted them. Based on their needs, the plans provided for spacious areas for entertaining inside

and out. Their collaboration had some rules: "Chip was very meticulous and would not let us deviate from the style at all," comments Joe with a laugh, "...but looking back now, we are actually grateful that he was so insistent." It is in fact that very consistency in flow,

materials and character that makes the home so appealing throughout. Together as a team, we created solutions that maintained the aesthetic quality of this venacular. As you approach and enter the

▼ *Front elevation detailing*





▲ The New Living Room



home, stand out features are the rustic paneled shutters and wall of glass along the waterfacing side of the residence. This was an important focal point for Joe: "I'm an outdoorsy guy and wanted to see nature from every room. Year round, my favorite place to chill after a long hard day at work is the veranda."

Since Joe's brother had built a home years earlier on the same street, Joe had some subs already lined up for cabinetry and custom doors. However, when it came to the construction, he wanted to carefully examine the builder he would eventually hire.



He says his due diligence paid off: "We could not have picked a better builder. Grainda was amazing to work with through all the ups and downs. I liked the weekly updates. Our other home was lingering for sale in a depressed market, so I was a stickler about staying on budget and Grainda was mindful about that. Despite it all, they cut very few corners. They want to build an excellent product in the end



▼ The grand salon facing the veranda and a detail photograph of a custom door with a traditional peep window



and I find that to be a rare commodity these days.”

The respect is mutual. “Suzanne, a school-teacher, was a huge asset from a design standpoint. She has a great eye for interior design. She knows exactly what she wants and she was a pleasure to work with. Her vision, teamed up with our expertise, really made a beautiful finished product,” explains Jason Tanenbaum.

As is often the case, great ideas come sometimes late in the process. As the Cunninghams’

began to imagine the traffic flow in the house, they realized their children would need to cross the house to access the upper floor. “We realized as an afterthought that we needed to add a second stairwell to the plans,” explains Joe. Grainda’s team worked creatively to make that possible. It was too important to overlook.

The home is designed with the future in mind as well. Everything the couple needs is on the ground floor – convenient for their retirement years. An unintended benefit is that they don’t





have to walk past the empty bedrooms of their now college age children. Another plan for the future was to make their son's lower level bedroom adaptive. The hallway and doorway to the bedroom and bath were widened to be wheel chair accessible, in the event they ever needed to convert the suite for their aging parents to move in to.

A possible Grainda first is that teenagers had a big hand in decision-making and selections. All three were in charge of the direction of their individual bedroom and bath suites. One daughter insisted on having a window seat for reading. Another wanted a dramatically tall barrel ceiling soaring over her bed. Their son was interested in earthy tones and materials. He selected slate tiles for his bathroom.

Our team enjoyed working with the kids and particularly with son Walt, who would rush to the job site after school to see what had been completed that day. "Grainda was generous with their time and explained things to me," says Walt "My love for building only heightened from there and I hope





▼ Clockwise from top left: Views of the kitchen, side elevation, barrel ceiling bedroom, faux windows and foyer



to build just like they do one day." Walt plans to study Building Sciences in college and we are proud to have perhaps played a role in that.

On this project, everybody involved contributed some kind of creative touch. When it was discovered that exterior windows would be in conflict with the vanity and shower of their daughter's bathroom, project manager, Skip Richter came to the rescue.

He recommended creating faux windows with closed shutters –

as you often see in France. The resulting expression underscores the beauty of the style and turned a blank wall of stucco into something quite admirable.

"That is one of my favorite exterior views of the home, even though you only see it from the driveway!" explains Joe, "If I build another home, I would never even consider anyone other than Grainda Builders."

When one talks about happy clients, this is a testament to achieving our number one goal. ↻

## THE A-TEAM

Hardwoods:  
The Hardwood Company  
Realtor:  
J. Arlegui, Keller Williams  
Roofing:  
Alpha Omega Construction  
Stucco: Charlotte Plastering

# HAPPY CLIENTS

OUR PRIORITY NUMBER ONE

## BUZZ

Every now and then you will see this column in our issues, when we have something to buzz about.

At GBI, we have been moving quickly and busily this year. The client experience in building with our company has always been a major priority for us...our priority number one really.

We strive to make improvements in this area whenever possible. Along these lines, we have added David Webb to our team as Project Development Manager. David has spent 15 years with a national home builder in sales, marketing, construction and customer service. His contributions have long been recognized and well, we coaxed him to step out of a large corporation to make these same endeavors on behalf of our organization, vendors and clientele.

David will be involved in sales and marketing, estimating, trade partner development and product research. He will help clients conceptualize their dream home and be an instrumental part of the GBI team as they bring it to life.



*David Webb*  
Project Development Manager

Other buzz worthy news is that we have launched Buildertrend, an online cloud-based program that optimizes communication between our A-Teams and clients.

Clients simply login on our website contact page to view their schedule, documents, photos, warranties and updates; and also manage change orders, selections and team communications. 🔄

▼ *Buildertrend makes it easier for our team to share construction updates with our clients, including images like this one photographed at a Grainda job site.*

### JOE'S MAINTENANCE CHECK LIST FOR YOUR HOUSE

Replace furnace filters  
once a month

Clean gutters to prevent  
unnecessary roof leaks  
from leaves and winter  
ice build up

Check weather stripping  
around doors/windows  
and replace if necessary

Close crawlspace vents  
(if applicable)

A hard freeze could  
burst pipes. Turn off  
outdoor spickets prior to  
first forecasted freeze

Check fireplace  
chimney for soot  
build-up and clean  
professionally if needed

Schedule irrigation  
winterization  
(if applicable)



# SECOND TO NONE

OUR VERY OWN “NORM ABRAMS” OF CUSTOM CABINETRY

## Q&A

**Q** Grainda Builders keeps you quite busy. How far back does your relationship go?

**A** Ha, that is true! I had worked on a cabinet project for a customer and when she decided to build a new home with Grainda, she insisted that I do the cabinets in the new home. The buyer of her previous home had stated that she bought the home because of my cabinets. That was ten years ago and I'm their go-to guy now.

**Q** What distinguishes Grainda Builders in the building industry?

**A** I am probably not the first to say that it is their loyalty to excellent craftsmen and vendors. It creates the type of solid teamwork that gets us through any challenges we may face. The other quality that really stands out to me is that they really know how to build. They didn't just pass a test in order to depend on their subs to get it right. That is not true building on a masterclass level. Grainda directs and guides their subs. Big difference. Finally, it's about their consistency of work, use of high quality materials and their unwavering effort to produce a first class product.

**Q** What is the production process in building custom cabinets?

**A** It takes us about eight to twelve weeks to build these cabinets. I measure three times before we start cutting the wood to make absolutely certain that what is being framed matches the plans. Everything is from scratch and in my fourteen years owning Rowan Cabinets, I've only had to take back three. The bare wood is painted with two coats of primer and four coats of paint or stain



*Darrell Efir, Rowan Custom Cabinets  
Our Master Cabinet Maker*

using Cremlin spray machines – the same automakers use. We produce \$25-30,000 worth of cabinets per week. Custom cabinetry represents a significant investment in a custom home project and we want to ensure that homeowners get the very best hand-produced product.

**Q** Why are inset cabinets now all the rage?

**A** Ten years ago, cabinets used to have exposed hinges. Then it became standard to use hidden European hinges for overlay cabinet doors to appear more like furniture. Inset cabinet doors are fitted inside the opening for a clean, striking line. It requires absolute accuracy and craftsmanship. That's where we come in.

**Q** If a homeowner is thinking about putting custom cabinets in their home, what is your advice?

**A** It's very important that they shop and settle on their appliances (and placement) first, because that impacts the design and spacing of the cabinets around

them. Same goes for countertop material and style selections. All these decisions should not still be in flux when our production starts. This helps avoid dead space that isn't functional, costly reworks and for example, a fridge that is too close to a corner. Starting with a good layout process to visualize everything is really helpful to homeowners and an approach that a luxury builder like Grainda prefers.

**Q** How has cabinet height changed over the years?

**A** What has happened is that the standard kitchen cabinet height of 36" started to extend into custom-built master bathroom vanities, powder rooms and even throughout the home over recent years. Some families with young children still prefer to have 32" height in secondary bathrooms. The beauty of custom cabinets is that if a couple wants a 39" high vanity in their master suite, we'll gladly build it.

**Q** What are the biggest challenges you run into these days in custom cabinet design?

**A** Our biggest challenges are for example how to fit these popular 48" ranges and massive hoods on a 6 ft. wall! The appliance selections really drive our design process in these custom kitchens.

**Q** From your perspective, what is trending right now in custom cabinet orders?

**A** In terms of coloring, for sure it's light and white. White cabinets especially are having a big comeback. Then in terms of construction, the inset cabinet despite its cost seems to be irresistible.

# WHITE MARBLE MADNESS

A TIMELESS LUXURIOUS SURFACE SINCE ROMAN TIMES

## TRENDS



▲ One of the Italian quarries, where Calacutta, the 'Ferrari' of white marble is harvested for popular surface applications

White marble is classic with its veining and luxury. It instantly makes a statement that exudes elegance, sophistication and style. Now with new sealants on the market like Dry-Treat and Bullet Proof, marble is marching back into a growing trend away from the darker and visually busier granite surfaces that were once standard luxury choices for over a decade.

Freddie Hood, President of Bottega Stone, an importer of fine natural slabs of marble and quartzite in Atlanta and Charlotte, explains the drive to select marble: "Interior designers and homeowners are attracted to the timeless soft look. It looks brighter, bigger and adds high-end refinement to a living space. It is also flexible in style. It can be finished and fabricated to look elegant and traditional, or sleek and modern. It is probably one of the better investments you can make in your custom home now."



The new sealant technology is particularly significant due to the fact that marble surfaces are more vulnerable to staining and etching. Some commercial applications seem to welcome the natural weathering and patina that marble surfaces endure as if the aging is like a fine wine or ancient sculpture. But homeowners today have options. Fabricators can polish or hone the surface. Honing is recommended for most

kitchen installations. The sealants, which need to be professionally applied, come with a 15-year warranty against etching by acids.

Just like hardwoods, maintenance and refreshing are common. A homeowner can have a fabricator come out to re-hone or re-polish a marble countertop.

Another natural counter surface that is also quarried like marble is quartzite, which is harder and therefore more durable. Quartzite is a good option for a homeowner who desires an off-white or different coloring. But if you are looking for that pure white and alluring visual movement in the grain, marble is in a class by itself. People are noticing.

There are many types of white marble and they are sourced all over the world. Calacutta is one of the rarest and in the industry often referred to as the 'Ferrari of White Marble.' 📍

## GRAINDA