

Surrounded by Memories

BY CHELLE ELLIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANA FINIMORE

Many lazy summer days are enjoyed by Steve Patterson and his family at Patterson Pointe Lodge in Como.

Family cat, Biscuit, lazily naps on the sun-drenched porch.

Most of us tuck our memories away in a trunk and might run into them again years later by accident. What if you could surround yourself with memories from your entire life, the lives of your ancestors or people and places you admire? Steve Patterson has done all these things.

Patterson Pointe Lodge has taken nearly three years to build and many lifetimes to get just right. Nestled deep in Panola County, this lodge may hold

as many pieces of Mississippi history as a museum.

Patterson acquired the property from his family several years ago but "got busy with life" and waited until recently to start working on it. When the time came to renovate, he enlisted Lamar McVicker of Ocean Springs to aid in design and perform most of the carpentry as he expanded the structure upward.

"When I started on this place, my two children didn't care for it because



they couldn't see mine and my wife's vision. Now I can't run them off with a switch," Patterson jokes.

Everything in the lodge has meaning to Patterson and his family: "It was either inherited or acquired because we particularly liked it and wanted it to be in our lives," he explains.

Among these are things he had as a child or had been in his family stuffed away for generations in an attic.

Lumber and tin throughout the lodge were originally in old barns on the property. Windows and ceiling boards from the old family home now serve as cabinet doors and wallboards. An old iron bed that saw the birth of his great grandmother and great-great grandmother, reminds of their presence.

Some twenty or more stuffed ducks and five wild turkeys killed on hunting trips with family and friends adorn the walls; a stuffed raccoon perched high on a post acts as overseer.

A saber and other Civil War memorabilia collected since childhood enrich the dwelling with Southern history. Numerous photos, watches and guns are displayed on the wall, reminding Patterson of times past spent with family and friends.

When Patterson wants to remember his elementary school in New Albany, he only has to go as far as his kitchen.

"The school had a sale and we just bought some library tables and made counters out of them," Patterson points out.

However, family and childhood memories aren't the only recycled items in this lodge used mostly for fishing and hunting. Large timbers that make up the main beams of the living area came from salvaging an old cotton gin. Light fixtures came out





of Memphis' venerable Peabody Hotel.

Marble for the bar and doors are from the old Bank of Potts Camp that Patterson bought for the materials. In fact, a teller door is inset high in the wall of the living room area and serves as a vent for his air conditioner.

An admirer of Aberdeen author Ruben Davis, Patterson acquired a mantle from Davis' kitchen at auction. He resurrected the piece as the mantle surrounding his fireplace. While stripping the piece of a brown paint overcoat, he found a faux marble finish created in the 1900s.

"We think of faux finishes as being a new thing but they're not," Patterson advises.

Recycled items constitute a large part of the lodge. In the back of the lodge are found a large round stained glass window from Sugaree's Bakery in New

Albany and a stained glass door that once was in the First Presbyterian Church in Aberdeen.

Walk further, and you'll find an old solid-walnut ship's hatch as a cabinet door and an old family heirloom dove bowl used as a lavatory sink.

While the idea of recycling is relieving to our environmental conscience, it can be more costly than using new materials. So why would anyone go to these lengths?

Patterson claims his motivation was a combination of keeping things with his family's history and finding items that would look good in the cabin: "Part of the fun was scavenging for these things," he says.

"One of the more interesting pieces in my judgment is one that just evolved," Patterson says. A cupola above a breezeway was built as a multifunctional piece; it houses an old plantation bell and supports a weather vane. It also houses lights and has purple martin nesting holes drilled into it.

"The cupola is really gorgeous at night. It gets really dark out here and when you turn it on with the other gas lights, it really illuminates the place."

The cupola was built by Patterson and McVicker. The windows, which were painted red, came from the old home. The copper for the roof came off the Methodist Church in Como. They built the cupola on the ground then wondered, "how are we gonna get that sucker up there," Patterson says with a laugh. A boom truck was brought in to lift and steady the cupola as it was eased onto the roof.

Beneath the cupola, huge hardwood ceiling beams support the breezeway. One day, Patterson's wife Debbie



Steve Patterson



(Above) While some items in the lodge were found or recycled, many items matching the Lodge's rustic style came from The Loft in Senatobia.



(Left) Patterson's blue heeler, Elby, relaxes while Chesapeake Bay retriever, Lady, guards the porch.

(Below) The cupola over the breezeway is multifunctional as a bell tower, weather vane, lighthouse and purple martin house.

was visiting the Methodist Children's Home in Jackson when she saw workers pushing the beams from the chapel in the process of building their new facility.

"She got out there to stop the bulldozer – it looked like Tiananmen Square," Patterson chuckled, referring to the famous photograph of a Chinese college student standing defiantly in front of a tank during the 1989 Beijing protest.

The beams were saved.

Landscaping around the lodge is as impressive as the house itself. Tracy Taylor, choir director for Cherry Street Missionary Baptist Church in Como, and her choir members landscaped most of the property and continue to maintain it.

"Every now and then the church bus will show up,



twenty people from the choir will hop out and the next thing I know, the whole hill is mowed and edged," Patterson says.

As former Mississippi state auditor, Patterson hosts a lot of hunting and political events at the lodge. People always have questions and a friend recently told him that every time he enters a room, he sees something new. Whether it's the bird dog painting by Nashville artist Helen Nash hanging over the mantle or the big buffalo head looking over you, anything you see prompts a question.

"Everything has some story behind it," Patterson assures. No matter how unusual and impressive the place is, though, it's still home to Patterson.

"I've seen most of this stuff all my life. It's a retreat that's like home, as well," he reflects. ♦



A VISUAL FEAST

BY CHELLE ELLIS / PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANA FINIMORE

(Above) An exhibit of Holga photographs by husband and wife team, George Yerger and Leslie Addison.

(Right) Owner, Vickie Cook and her son, Will Cook who runs the gallery.



Flanked by corners of Oxford Square, Southside Gallery isn't exactly a hidden jewel, but one you'd hope to keep to yourself at least for awhile. As rich in history as the bodies of work it houses, Southside's building was originally a livery, complete with the bricked archways found throughout buildings on the Square.

The building, like its exhibits, offers a feast for the senses.

Southside has been a reliable outlet for Mississippi artists and their collectors since 1993, when Rod and Millie Moorhead opened the gallery. In November of 2002, Vickie Cook, a local CPA, bought the gallery and entrusted its operation to her son Will.

"We continue to represent the artists here prior to our ownership, as well as introduce new artists," Cook states.



(Above) Oil on canvas, by Robert Malone.

Southside's list of exhibitors has included such powerful talent as William Dunlap, Vitus Shell and Delta photographer Maude Schuyler Clay. An artist following in these footsteps might pinch himself to be sure he isn't dreaming. But don't let the big names fool you -- the gallery offers varied media and artists.

Each month, two artists are featured in the main gallery downstairs but what you find upstairs could be even more thrilling. The upper level displays the work of additional artists; but when you enter a smaller connecting room nestled in a corner, you'll believe you've stepped into a wonderland of Mississippi culture. The room is filled to the brim with folk art created by "outside" artists like Jimmy Lee Sudduth and Elayne Goodman.

In the art world, the term "outside" describes artists with little or no formal training. Elayne Goodman is an outside artist who created folk art while living on a farm, before she knew hers was an acceptable form of art.

She went on to become a registered nurse but returned to art at a much later age, honing her craft at the Mississippi University for Women. "A lot of people are attracted to her work," Cook explains.



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(Above) Oil on Canvas, Little Spring Creek by Jeff Allen

(Right) Mixed Media, Music with Rhino by Elayne Goodman



These attitudes breathe hope into the Mississippi artistic community, snuffing out the stuffy, snobby expectations one might have of an art gallery. By offering variety to the public, Southside may alleviate local artists' fears that their art isn't good because they lack traditional training.

"We are a true gallery, showing all types of art," Cook advises. "Southside is a good place for North Mississippi artists to display their work and we hope to contribute variety to the art community."

Currently, Southside is featuring "Oak Leaves" by Carlyse Wolfe, a Canton native who relocated to Oxford to attend Ole Miss, then stayed. This body of work includes embroidered paper cuts and monotypes on handmade flax paper and oils on panel.

"I usually do work from botanical shapes from nature," Wolfe explains.

This is evident from Wolfe's window installation of paper cuts at the front of the gallery. The delicate tangle of nature is her answer to the concerns of impermanence and the gradual aspects of these natural forms.

New Orleans husband-and-wife team George Yerger and Leslie Addison display their Holga photographs of familiar Southern and Mississippi scenes. Holga is a trendy form of photography created with inexpensive plastic Russian Holga cameras that create a strange yet appealing border around the print.

On June 23, Southside Gallery will host its "Summer Show" exhibit of recurring artists such as Sheri Fleck Reith, Bayard Morgan and Cedric Smith. "All are welcome and you can dress as you like," Cook offers. Displays of artists' works and current show information are on Southside's website – www.southsideoxford.com – or by calling 662.234.9090. ➔



Carlyse Wolfe with her oil on panel, Leaves

indoor herb gardens: Flavorful and Fragrant

BY CHELLE ELLIS

An indoor herb garden is a simple, inexpensive way to incorporate the look and feel of spring into your kitchen. It also provides easy access to fresh herbs for cooking.

Any herb gardener knows that the view and aromas these plants produce is as pleasing as their taste – perhaps greater. For instance, lavender and pineapple sage are two herbs with little purpose other than their intoxicating scents.

While growing culinary herbs produces satisfying and useful results, the logic of nurturing scent herbs is immediately recognized the first time you smell a crushed lemon balm leaf.

Before starting your garden, choose a window to locate your plants. The window should face east or west to capture sunlight daily, but be sure not to set your plants near a stove or heater where excessive heat could dry them out. Next, determine the style of pots and drip plates you will use.

Each pot should have an opening with at least a six-inch diameter to allow the plant to spread out and thrive.

Using one pot to grow several herbs is not recommended as one herb may inherit the taste of a different species growing beside it. Individual clay or terra cotta pots are ideal for herb gardening because they allow good distribution of water and air, plus they add an Old World look to your kitchen.

You should next decide which herbs you will grow. If you use a lot of herbs for cooking, you might want to start out with the spices you'd find in your pantry.

Oregano, basil and marjoram are ideal for Italian cuisine such as lasagna and spaghetti. Thyme, dill and sage are useful in a variety of recipes and are guaranteed to punch up the taste of chicken.

Use three times the amount of fresh herbs that recipes require of the dried versions.

The look and taste of fresh herbs is far more satisfying than the dried versions. Dry, bottled herbs are more expensive and have less taste than fresh herbs.



Whichever you choose, culinary herbs help flavor foods, a big plus if you are cutting back on salt, fat and sugar.

Researchers are also finding many varieties of dried and fresh herbs contain antioxidants that may help protect against cancer and heart disease.

After choosing your herb varieties, transplant to your pots small plants you can buy from a garden store, or get cuttings from a friend or neighbor. If you prefer to see the growth of your new babies from the beginning, you can germinate seeds in regular potting soil.

When planting from seeds, be sure to use the "compact" varieties, which are better suited for indoor growth.

Mist your plants daily, making sure not to over water them. The soil should be damp to the touch but never soaked, especially once your seeds have grown into sprouts. Excess water may cause sprouts to develop root rot, which stunts growth, yellows leaves and saddens owners.

Cooking with herbs is simple --snip off the desired portion of leaves, wash and chop them before adding to your recipe. You can use them as often as needed; the snipping actually helps promote further growth.

If you seek calming effects of the beauty and scents of these plants, choose a variety of rosemary, lavender, mint, lemon grass and chives for their beautiful purple blossoms. Finally, add a few chamomile plants to enjoy in tea while you relax in your kitchen jungle of blooms and exotic aromas. *



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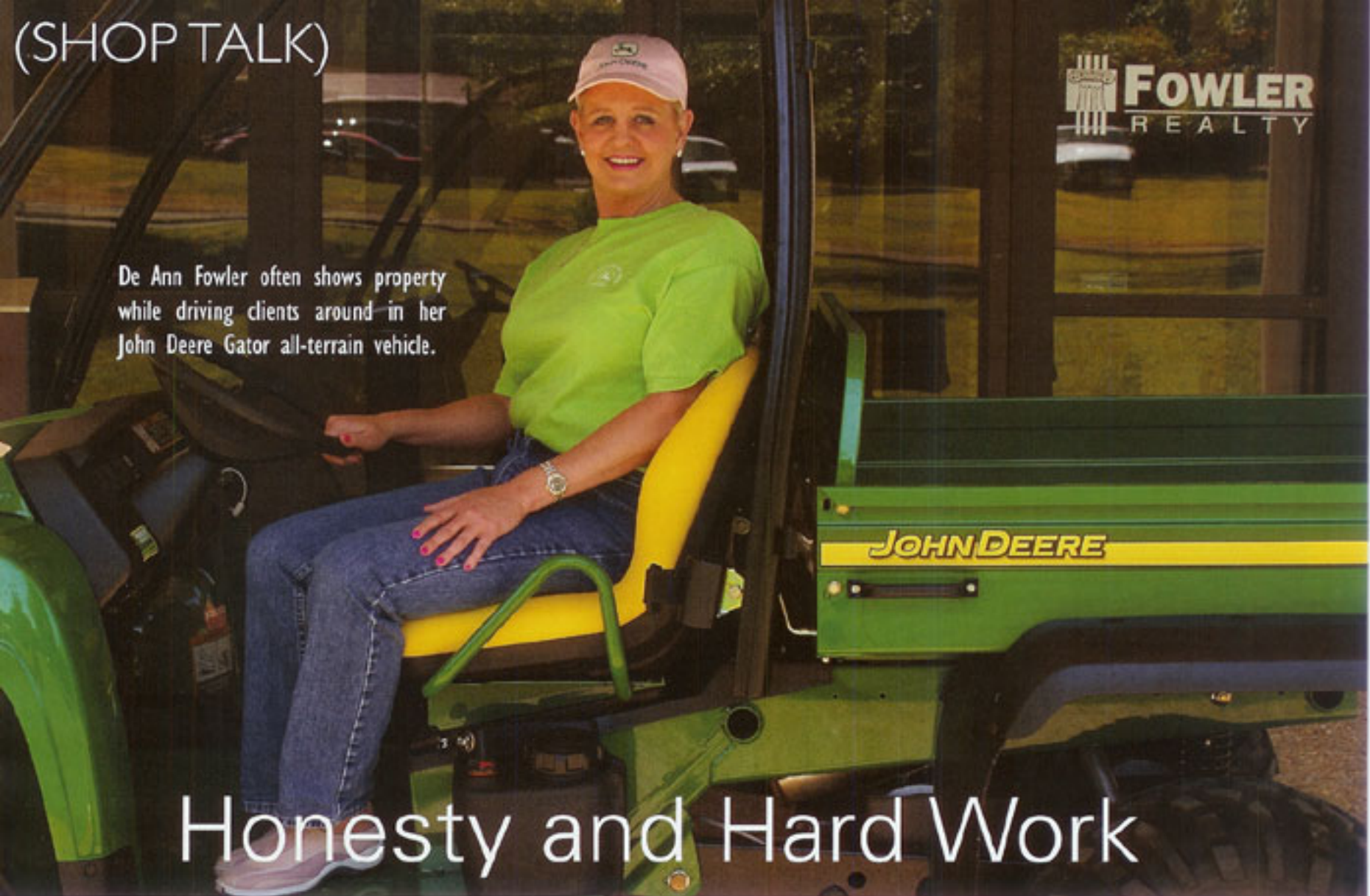
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De Ann Fowler often shows property while driving clients around in her John Deere Gator all-terrain vehicle.

Honesty and Hard Work

BY TIM SISK / PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHELLE ELLIS

Take a look around. You'll see DeSoto County is expanding by leaps and bounds. National statistics rate the area among the fastest growing in the country, evident by new subdivisions and new businesses seemingly opening every day.

In such a rapid-growth area, house hunters and business owners need a real estate agency that has their best interests at heart. Fowler Realty fits that criteria.

Fowler Realty in Olive Branch approaches business from a different angle, and that's just the way owner De Ann Fowler wants it.

"My thing is honesty and hard work. That's part of my raising," Fowler said. These principles guide the life and the business of the self-described "country girl" from Wheatley, Ark.

The daughter of a rice and soybean farmer, Fowler got into realty because of her father, Frank Given. He advised her to get into commercial real estate. That was ten years ago. For more than three years, she's been working in DeSoto County, and she's been in her Olive Branch office since February.

Fowler's company employs twelve realtors, and Fowler is very close with them all. The close-knit staff is predominantly female. Fowler says she didn't intentionally plan her staff that way, but it's worked out well. "They're like my

family away from my family," she declared.

Fowler deals primarily with commercial developments herself. One of her most recent real estate deals was the development on Church Road where McDonald's and The Boiling Point now stand. The other realtors in her company focus on residential work.

Fowler said her favorite part about working in real estate is meeting new people: "I love people, and I can just talk forever," she explained. Through her work in realty in DeSoto County, she's made a lot of friends and found a home she loves.

Her clients can't help but see Fowler's family-oriented country flair. After meetings with clients, Fowler enjoys giving them tours of property in an unconventional vehicle.

"I have a John Deere Gator I show property to clients on," she said, laughing about the all-terrain vehicle.

She also enjoys taking clients back home to Wheatley, where they duck hunt and bass fish on her father's 4,000-acre farm. Fowler Realty's dedication to family values is rapidly gaining notice in DeSoto County, and the owner couldn't be more pleased.

"DeSoto County is just wonderful," she said.

Fowler Realty hosts a barbecue 11 a.m.-1 p.m. July 19, and De Ann Fowler says everyone is invited. Call the office at 662.893.3947 for details. *



Dogwood Plantation: Next Best Thing to Home

BY TIM SISK
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHELLE ELLIS

Sometimes in life, families are forced to make tough decisions regarding the welfare of their elderly family members. When older loved ones get to a point they can't safely shower, cook and medicate themselves, an assisted-living facility is often the best option to ensure loved ones receive proper care.

For Grandma or Dad or that favorite aunt, moving into such a facility means giving up home and all the memories that go along with it. It is a tough transition for the entire family.

Dogwood Plantation Assisted Living Facility prides itself on making the transition from home to care facility easier.

Brothers Jay and Art Shannon own and operate four Dogwood Plantation facilities around North Mississippi, the newest of which opened in Olive Branch in April. Other locations include Corinth, New Albany and Fulton.

The Shannons started the company in 1995. "Our grandmother needed this type of service, and when we started looking around, we found out there weren't many homey places like this," Jay Shannon said.

The Olive Branch location can house 36 residents

at full capacity and, after being open only a month, already has 12 full-time occupants. Shannon said the size of Dogwood differentiates it from similar facilities: "The neat thing about Dogwood and what makes us different is we're small enough for people to know each other but large enough to offer services to residents."

Due to the personal atmosphere, Dogwood Plantation boasts a homelike living situation for residents.

One step inside the building on Old Goodman Road and a visitor realizes this isn't a nursing home at all. There are no antiseptic odors, no pea-green walls and no beeping heart monitors. What he finds are richly painted walls and sturdy furniture in warm fabrics. This is intentional, Shannon said.

"We can't replace home, but we want our residents to feel like we're the next best thing," he continued.

Through the amenities offered, Dogwood Plantation strives to recreate the comforts of home for its residents. The facility staffs full-time, around-the-clock caregivers who assist residents in bathing, laundry and eating.

They also ensure residents take their medications in the proper dosages at the proper times by keeping

a log in the onsite medicine room. A full-time cook prepares home-style meals for residents, including homemade biscuits and freshly prepared vegetables.

Scheduled local transportation is available and, in addition, Dogwood even boasts an onsite beauty salon for residents.

Residents live apartment-style, in spacious rooms similar to those in a college dormitory. All residents have private bathrooms with safety rails in the shower and large walk-in closets. Residents furnish the rooms with their own belongings.

"It's like bringing a little piece of home here," Shannon said.

To build community, the Shannons schedule events that provide opportunities for residents to interact with one another. "We'll have people come in and entertain us - church groups, Boy Scouts, school groups," Shannon said. He added there is a calendar full of activities the residents enjoy, including dominoes, bingo, and Scrabble.

Shannon said Dogwood Plantation is already known in Northeast Mississippi for dedication to the comfort and safety of its residents. He hopes to achieve the same notoriety in DeSoto County.

"We're owners and administrators but we also form



close friendships with residents and their families," Shannon said.

For more information about Dogwood Plantation Assisted Living facilities, contact their corporate office in Saltillo at 662.869.5150 or visit their Web site at www.dogwoodalf.com. ✽

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A Bluebird Lover's Paradise

BY CARL WAYNE HARDEMAN

Many of us dream of moving back to the country and enjoying living closer to Mother Nature. And there's no better place than the wooded hills of North Mississippi.

Paul and Elizabeth Woodruff and family have done just that near Nesbit. They returned to land once owned by Paul's grandfather, Everett Pounders. They built a new home there and have begun transforming the land into what has become a bird lover's paradise.

A large meadow and heavy woods with several small glades in them, connected by a trail, is exactly what most birds in North Mississippi want.

A few tall dead trees are home to species of birds that make their nests by creating cavities in the decaying wood. The Woodruffs' decision to leave them standing has given many birds a home.

The Woodruff place features a wide range of plants, including honeysuckle and blackberry vines in full bloom when my wife Mimi and I visited.

Bird watching opportunities come when we have

the time – and the place – to stop and smell the roses. Then we begin to see the wondrous birds we had never noticed but were there all along.

Paul Woodruff sees hawks, owls, indigo buntings, cardinals, blue jays, crows, mockingbirds, doves, goldfinches, house finches, woodpeckers, wrens, sparrows and hummingbirds around his home. He saw his first rufous towhee just this spring.

But it is the Eastern bluebirds that most thrill the couple.

I'm often asked how to attract bluebirds. Woodruff already has them. Their favorite habitat is a meadow or glade on the edge of the woods, which describes a large portion of the Woodruff tract.

The birds sit on branches and utility lines and poles, darting down to catch worms and bugs, often in midair. They follow Woodruff's mower as he cuts grass and stirs up critters for them to swoop and catch.

Paul looked online for information on bluebirds:<http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/start.htm>



Photo by Chelle Ellis

Woodruff plans to create a bluebird trail, as many have done all across the nation. These trails helped re-establish bluebirds from very small numbers in recent years.

A trail is formed by neighbors or residents in a given area or region installing series of nest boxes throughout their properties. Most people have probably seen the boxes – small wooden structures with slanted roof and a small hole – mounted on poles a few feet above the ground.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has installed and maintains many of the boxes around Arkabutla Lake.

Tena Taylor is listed on the bluebird Web site as the society's Mississippi contact. She may be reached at tenataylor@tycom.net.

You can join the National Bluebird Society and provide feedback that is compiled and shared online. The site offers good information on building and situating nest boxes.

Bluebirds are persnickety about where they nest. Boxes should be at least 100 feet apart, with a varmint skirt on the pole to keep out snakes, possums, raccoons and squirrels, all of which love bird eggs and baby birds.

The nest boxes should be within a few feet of a landing spot like a tree limb or bush. They like to fly to the landing spot and look around before hopping over to the nest box. It also provides fledglings a short first flight.

An interesting tidbit of bluebird lore is that the babies excrete fecal matter in little poop sacks the parents retrieve and take far from the nest.

Bluebirds may stay all year in your backyard; feed them suet cakes hung on a tree. I do, and have seen six roosting in one nest box in the coldest part of winter.

You can start your own bluebird trail. That's what Paul is doing – building and installing his nest boxes – and that warms my heart.

Write soon. Ain't God good! ❀

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