

## **Petersburg House & Garden Tour Ryans' 'La Foret,' Built In 1964 Among 4 Private Homes To Be Opened Here**

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Pat Ryan was no stranger to the house at 1221 Woodland Road when she and her husband, Dr. James H. Ryan, moved in a year ago. In fact, she has watched the house change owners for 35 years. So when the couple decided to move from their Westover Avenue home in Petersburg to a single-story house, the Woodland Road house was the obvious choice.

Their house is one of four private homes in Petersburg that will be open for touring on April 20 during Historic Garden Week. A museum and bed and breakfast inn also will be part of the tour.

The Ryans named their property "La Foret" (French for forest) because it is situated on eight acres of trees and a horticulturist told them the house was not situated in the woods, but in the forest.

The house was built in 1964 by Dr. Clyde Vick and his wife, the former Susan Seward.

"She and I went to high school together," Pat Ryan said. "We were in the same sorority and the same clubs, but she died of cancer."

Vick remarried and his new wife, Barbara, was in the Cockade City Garden Club with Ryan. The Vicks later moved and sold the house to Marion and Patricia Peebles and Ryan continued to go to the house for garden club meetings.

"I came here for a party and saw that the house was still for sale and had been on the market for two years," Ryan said. "We were looking for a house where we could live all on one floor and this was it."

The blending of colonial and contemporary architecture give the house charm and livability.

Oriental pieces collected by Dr. Ryan's parents, who lived in Japan after World War II, are scattered throughout. An antique Japanese obi drapes the baby grand piano in front of the bay window.

In the foyer is a writing table that belonged to Nora Fontaine Maury Davidson, a Petersburg schoolteacher who is said to have inspired Memorial Day. Davidson took her students to Blandford Cemetery once a year to leave flowers on the

graves of Confederate soldiers. On April 26, 1868, Mary Cunningham Logan, wife of Union Army Gen. John A. Logan, saw Davidson and her students and began working for a day to be honored nationally to honor all dead soldiers. Gen. Logan took the proposal to Congress and succeeded in getting the idea adopted.

A spacious kitchen contains a sitting/television area with wing chairs, Oriental rugs, pottery and baskets.

An octagonal recreation room features a bounty of space. Long sofas create options for several seating areas, making it a multifunctional room.

"We watched the Army-Navy football game in here by moving all of the sofas to face the television," Ryan said. "But we also hold meetings for the Petersburg Area Art League {Dr. Ryan is president of the league}, with all of the sofas facing each other."

Ryan made the window treatments, which frame the panoramic view of the circular garden designed by Charles F. Gillette. A tiny building to the side of the main house was once a child's playhouse, but now serves as the "smallest art studio in the world," Ryan said.

Much of the rest of the yard is natural. Towering trees form a backdrop for azaleas, camellias and rhododendrons. The garden day tea will be held on the brick terrace here.

Another house on the tour is in the Ryans' former neighborhood in Walnut Hill. Jerry and Betty Wade Jones have lived in their home at 1746 Westover Ave. for 21 years. Mrs. Jones teaches earth science and chemistry at Prince George High School, and she has a habit of picking up rocks wherever she goes. Her interest is evident throughout the house.

"I do have one rock that is a museum quality specimen," she said. "It's of black quartz and I won it in the annual rock raffle held at the National Earth Science Teacher's Conference. I lugged it on the airport all the way from Kansas City."

The spacious butler's pantry with glass-fronted cabinets is one place Jones displays her rock collection. But she says you can find rocks in just about any cabinet or cupboard.

This large brick home, built in 1914 by Alexander Hamilton I, remained in his family until 1972. The front porch that once wrapped around one side is now a sun porch filled with bamboo furniture.

The front hall is actually a long room, where informal cotillion classes were taught by the Hamilton girls in the 1920s.

In addition to rocks, the house is filled with antiques and family furnishings, many handmade.

The library contains watercolors, several from travels in Australia and elsewhere and one by local artist Terry Lacy. A picture by another local artist, the late Hugh Humphries, is also part of the collection. Mary Bernard Hamilton's mural in the powder room remains.

But Jones' favorite room is the master bedroom because it is the most recent to be redecorated.

"Everything in it is me," she said. "If it's not done right, it's my fault. I picked out all the colors and materials myself."

The house at 14 Marshall St. was not even on the market when Bettie "Beth" Johnson Poarch first saw it, but it was love at first sight. The house is thought to have once served as the carriage house for the Ragland Mansion (now a bed & breakfast inn and also on the tour).

"I teach horseback riding for a living and go from barn to barn all day, so it's very appropriate for me to live in a carriage house," Poarch said. "I've had horses all my life."

Walking into the living room, you are greeted by a brick wall and fireplace, a Chippendale-style mirror with griffins and a Sheraton game table from the early 1800s.

The dining room features a 19th-century walnut table made in Petersburg, a hunt board and a collection of hunting prints.

Upstairs is the master bedroom and a den that once served as the carriage master's quarters.

"I love living in the city because of its history," Poarch said. "The New Market Race Course, which was a large and famous racetrack in the old days, once stood outside of Petersburg, and my great- great-great-great grandfather {William Ransome Johnson} raced 63 horses on that course. I also like living in a diversified neighborhood where I can walk everywhere."

The tour, which is sponsored by The Petersburg Garden Club, also will include:

The John Grammer House, 529 High St. Thomas Jefferson wrote the original deed to the home in 1781. The house was constructed in stages from other existing structures - 1785, then 1802 and 1803. Edmund Ruffin lived here six years while publishing a magazine, *The Farmer's Register*. In 1841, William Lea remodeled the house in Greek Revival style. Now the facade is being returned to its Federal appearance. It is the home of Parks Pegram Duffey III and Gerhard H. Oevermann.

Centre Hill Mansion, 1 Centre Hill Court, is a Petersburg museum that is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and is included with the tour ticket price for Garden Week. Completed in 1823, the house was the home of Robert Bolling, great-grandson of an early immigrant of the same name. More than 25 rooms reflect the architectural details of three distinct periods.

The Ragland Mansion, 205 S. Sycamore St., is now a bed and breakfast inn owned by M. Yolande Bezaka. The massive structure was finished in 1857 after several years of construction. Tobacco merchant Reuben Ragland was the original owner. Dominant features are the three-dimensional cornices and medallions, floor-to-ceiling windows, white oak and mahogany parquet and inlaid flooring, and marble mantels on 13 of the 15 fireplaces.

A luncheon and fashion show by Freda will be held at Grace Episcopal Church from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. for \$8. Reservations recommended. Call 768-0758.

#### GARDEN WEEK

When: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday.

Tickets: \$12 block ticket includes refreshments, admission to homes and all Petersburg museums. Single admission, \$4.

Details: 733-2400.