

Teacher Turns Decorator; Goes Wild With Color

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

Julia Morrison seems perfectly sane, despite her recent 12-year stint as a teacher at Shallotte Middle School.

That experience could have sent her over the edge; what else could possess a woman to give up her job for the joy of wallpapering, then spend three months coloring a rug with magic markers, make rocks for a back-yard pond and hang vintage clothing on the walls of her "antique" room?

Ask for a tour of Morrison's newly-renovated home on White Street in Shallotte and prepare to feel your jaw drop completely out of joint. In each room you think you've seen the ultimate in home decorating innovation, but the next one is even more eye-popping.

Within the walls of her neat, unpretentious red brick house lies the handiwork of a woman who is creative, determined, and above all, having a barrel of fun.

"I've never done a house renovation before and it's tremendous fun!" she declared, explaining that her frenzy began two years ago when she decided to paper her kitchen. "My husband and I moved here in 1984 and bought this 30-year-old house from my parents," she said, "along with the Twilight Motel. Two years ago, I decided to put up new wallpaper in the kitchen



MORRISON DROWNS in ivy as her large kitchen surrounds her with the green climber on the walls, floor and cabinets.

and I just went on from there."

That kitchen is a joke to her two children, she said, because the ivy pattern she chose for the walls has taken over the room with a vengeance. There's an ivy-covered throw rug, curtains, dishes, bric-a-brac of all kinds, even an apron with ivy motif that the kids gave Mom.

When Morrison caught the decorating fever she decided to call a halt to her 27-year teaching career and renovate full-time. "I thought the worst I could do was mess up," she laughed.

Two years later, her beautiful, distinctive home is testimony to her creativity and the relentless pursuit of colors and patterns she was determined to find. In the course of building cabinets, creating window treatments painting, papering and making accessories, she found commercial work too expensive and did it all herself. "I just got a lot of 'how-to' books," she explained airily.

The predominant color scheme is burgundy and green, complemented by tall lush plants everywhere. The tour begins in the den, home of the aforementioned rug, whose burgundy background is so rich and natural, one would never imagine the color was tediously applied with red, blue and purple marking pens. "The background was white," Morrison said, "but I wanted burgundy."

Against painted green walls that

once had been wood-paneled, bright green-and-burgundy floral chintz covers a couch and chair, the same fabric used as backing for open cabinet doors.

The adjoining dining room is the only "unfinished" area of the house, according to Morrison. "They haven't invented what I want in here, yet," she observed. "I want burgundy, green and beige embossed wallpaper, so I tried painting on the burgundy, then applying beige paint with a sponge." The effect is startling, but effective.

A long hallway is something of a departure from the prevailing colors, being white with a wide stripe of floral (green and burgundy, of course) wallpaper running horizontally through the middle.

The first of four bedrooms Morrison calls her "psychiatry" room, "the only one I'm not pleased with." Its floral daybed does compete somewhat with the smaller floral pattern of the wallpaper, but one can be soothed by the piano and organ that complete the furnishings.

Next door is the "antique" room, whose charming decor is one of nostalgia. An antique bed is piled

high with a puffy white comforter and many white pillows; a baby doll from Early America, dressed in white, lies atop them. The green walls are hung with old family pictures, Morrison's christening dress on one hanger and her white tulle prom dress on another. A beautifully antiqued portrait of two granddaughters, caught playing "dress-up," hangs over an antique washstand, and the rocking chair Morrison's daddy was rocked in stands in a corner.

An adjacent bathroom has been "greened" with this decorator's splash of spirit and determination. To match dark green floor tiles, she said she sanded the original yellow formica countertop and sponged it with a green marbelizing kit, then layered on polyurethane. Result: a perfect match. "I made everything in this bathroom," Morrison declared.

Approaching the master bedroom, she warned, "I went wild in here and converted fire-engine red walls by browning them to burgundy." Against this still-lively color are green and red plaid in comforters and window treatment, all atop a stark white carpet. "Those drapes are really sheets," Morrison explained, "and I cut the deep borders off one of them to use in covering the window valance."

The master bath has an Oriental tone, though still red and green, and Morrison pointed out unique decorative touches she had created here, too.

Her favorite room in the house is one lovingly planned for the pleasure of seven grandchildren, ranging from two to 11 in age. Twin beds are covered with delicate floral spreads, the fabric also used in a lampshade and wallpaper border. Garlands of dried flowers are displayed on two walls and one corner of the room overflows with dolls, books and trucks. "I spent six months hunting for this striped wallpaper," Morrison said.

The house tour completed, this reporter needed a rest from amazement, but there was more in store!

(See MORRISON'S, Page 45)



HER FAVORITE room is this one decorated with Morrison's seven grandchildren in mind.



POSING IN HER own prom dress, Morrison illustrates the mystique of "the nostalgia room."

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