

A firm foundation

Builder remembers extraordinary first home, life with 15 siblings

By Debbie Burdick

Toll Brothers Inc. has an award-winning model home in Preston Village. Prospective home buyers who come to have a look around find a fire in the fireplace, freshly-baked cookies, slippers under the bed, a book on the night table and an afghan across the bed.



REINERT

Nobody lives in the house, but it is carefully decorated to offer a lived-in, yet meticulous appearance.

Ralph Reinert, vice-president of Toll Builders, Inc. of Raleigh, remembers some aspects of his childhood home just as picture perfect.

Young Reinert's school lunch, which he brought to a private religious school, was always waiting for him on the kitchen counter in the morning. There were always extras, as well, that his mother gave to local indigents who came by for a handout at the family's row house in Philadelphia.

When young Reinert had friends over, the clothes they took off in the evening were returned washed

and ironed the next morning. His parents never argued, at least, Reinert adds, not in his presence. When he was 16, his father presented him with a car.

These pleasant, but not extraordinary, comforts take on new meaning, however, with the knowledge that Reinert was a middle child in a family of sixteen. They were all members of a strict non-sectarian religion that made their orderly lifestyle both possible and necessary.

Reinert's large family managed with just one bathroom - they had appointed use times - and attended church five times a week. The car his father gave him, a '57 Chevy, was bought with money Ralph Reinert had given his father over the years for "room and board."

Reinert's early family life speaks also of either great luck or great faith, depending on point of view. His family belonged to the Faith Tabernacle Congregation. His father and grandfather were each in turn head elders, and at age 81, his father still is.

This small international non-sectarian religious organization doesn't believe in medical care. Reinert and his 15 brothers and sisters were all delivered by his fa-

ther, with the help of a midwife.

Of his family's religious convictions, Reinert, who is no longer a member of Faith Tabernacle, says, "I guess it's kind of eerie, uncanny. We never really had to go to the doctor. None of us ever had a broken leg or arm."

Reinert remembers his mother as "a saint." His father was frequently away on business, overseeing various Faith Tabernacle congregations, and his mother managed the household "without a complaint."

Reinert gives some hint of the discipline and fortitude involved in his family's lifestyle, however, when he notes sadly that his mother died when she was 66. "I think she was just tired," he said.

Reinert says that he eventually "grew out of" some of the restrictions of the religion, and his own history is more typical. He came to believe that there are good and bad people in all walks of life, and that "God gives doctors the ability to heal people."

So Reinert's recent history is more typical than his origins. He left his family to join the service after high school, and started doing carpentry when he got out in 1972.

That same year he married his wife of 24 years, Susan, and worked into a career as a construc-

tion project manager in Philadelphia. In 1992, he became a project manager for Toll Brothers, Inc. In 1993, he transferred to their Raleigh branch as Division Manager, and in 1995 became vice-president.

The Reinerts have two sons, one a student at UNC, and the other a high school junior.

While Reinert's life departed from an extraordinary beginning to take up a more mainstream lifestyle, he says he has never parted from the importance of family life. It was a big decision for him to move away from Pennsylvania, where most of his brothers and sisters still work in the construction businesses they started in together.

He compensates for it with frequent family get-togethers, which can include close to a hundred people. Reinert has 56 nieces and nephews. One of his sisters and one brother followed the family tradition of a large family, and they have 11 and ten children respectively.

Reinert's sense of values is closely tied to his family's background as well. Of the family finances he says "we never did without. We weren't rich, or poor. My father had access to a great resource of funds, but never took more than what we needed."



PROMOTING GOOD COOKING—Students at Weatherstone Elementary are proud of a new cookbook a school committee has compiled with the help of Prestonwood Country Club Chef Ed Kaminski. Students Krista Paoella, Alessandra Gutierrez and Nicole Gutierrez (from left to right) were among students assisting in the cookbook's sale.

'Cooking with love,' and a heap of parents' help

By Roxanne Powers

This past September the Weatherstone Elementary cookbook committee was dealing with more flurries than just those brought on by Hurricane Fran. Already dealing with a cookbook publication deadline scheduled for just one month after school started, they were in a near panic when Fran whirled through. They placed a call to the publisher of the cookbook only to be told the deadline couldn't be changed...no matter what!

Yet, in spite of Fran's hateful attempt to sabotage their tremendous efforts, cookbook committee co-chairperson, Sandra Gutierrez, says that Weatherstone Elementary students, their families, and the cookbook committee worked together 900 recipes in just 10 days. (Due to repetition, "Cooking With Love" was pared down to 750 recipes.) Says Mrs. Gutierrez, "I just can't say enough about what a terrific committee this way. I never had to ask anything of anyone but once, and it was done!"

Initially, the committee ordered only 350 cookbooks printed, only to quickly realize they would need more...in fact, 600 books were sold before the cookbooks were even printed; the committee quickly ordered another 400 books, many of which have also already been sold.

Many of the recipes in the book were developed by Weatherstone Elementary students - "Ants in a Log" by Krista Paoella and "Banana Confetti" by Alessandra M. Gutierrez are two.

Mrs. Gutierrez is quick to say how thrilled the committee is that Chef Ed Kaminski of Prestonwood Country Club agreed to be their featured chef, contributing many of his own recipes. Among those contributions are Carolina crab cakes, legacy chicken salad and his award-winning barbecue sauce.

If you're still not convinced that this is no dry-read, consider the following recipes: Play Dough, Recipe for a Happy Home, Witches Brew and Elephant Stew. To get



your copy of the book, just contact Weatherstone Elementary at 380-6988.

I thought you might enjoy these sneak previews for your holiday entertaining:

- Kris Kringle Salad by Frances Altman
- 2 (3 oz.) pkgs. cherry Jello
- 1 c. boiled water
- 1 qt. strawberries with juice
- 16 oz. sour cream
- 13 1/2 oz. can crushed pineapple with juice
- Melt Jello with water. Add strawberries and pineapple. Pour 1/2 of mixture into 13x9 inch dish. Chill. Cover with sour cream, then add other 1/2 of mixture. Store in refrigerator.

Cucumber Canapes by Gail Nichols

- Cucumber
- Rye bread
- Cream cheese
- Dry Ranch mix
- Fresh dill
- Cut small squares of rye bread. Slice cucumber. Mix cream cheese and Ranch mix together to taste. The spread cream cheese mix on rye bread. Top with cucumber and fresh dill.

(My own suggestion for the holidays is to use holiday-shaped cookie cutters to cut the bread in Gail's recipe. Miniature cutters could even be used to cut the cucumbers, and for even more holiday appeal, small amounts of diced red bell pepper could be placed on top! Happy Holidays!)

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