

# TAHOE

## *A Family Great Room*

BY MELISSA SIIG

**MERIT AWARD - INTERIOR SPACE**

**DESIGNER:** Greg Dorland

**BUILDER:** Dorland Properties

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Catherine Macfee,  
Catherine Macfee & Associates Interior Design

**SQUARE FOOTAGE OF ROOM:** approx. 1,000

**YEAR COMPLETED:** 2002

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TO 114 MOUNTAIN HOME 2006

Catherine Macfee & Associates  
Tahoe Quarterly  
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"A Family Great Room"



This stunning family space includes a conversation area (this image), game area (below right) and quiet reading spaces (far left) as well as dining room and kitchen. The adjacent bathroom (left) is paneled in birch bark. Courtesy photos



In designing the interior of Jay Watson's Squaw Valley home, Catherine Macfee received only one assignment: have it sleep and feed 12 people. Taking the work of designer and builder Greg Dorland, Macfee set about to establish a theme for the home. She found it in a private collection in Los Angeles where she discovered a nineteenth century English hunting cabinet – a walnut armoire with dogs and tusked boars carved into its face and a small deer trophy at the top – that now graces the living room. Because her client was a single man (but with 5 grandchildren), the piece gave her the idea for designing the home as a gentleman's hunting and fishing lodge in an Old Europe style.

"The idea was to mix antiques with custom pieces we were going to design for the space," says Macfee, principal designer of Catherine Macfee & Associates Interior Design in Orinda. "If you go through all of the spaces, that's what you'll see – a mix of the old and the new."

That eclectic blend of antiques and modern furniture, as well as a combination of Adirondack and Tahoe styles, met with approval from judges. The mix was particularly successful in the home's signature family space: a great room that links the living room, dining room and kitchen. The judges voted to single out the family room for a special Merit Award.

"Today, with the trend toward McMansions, it's common to compartmentalize people's lives," says one of the judges. "In contrast, this opened everything up. It can accommodate



Antiques from a variety of eras are used throughout the home, giving it the lived-in feel of a long-time family retreat. Courtesy photos

drapes and rugs, all custom made, exhibit the deep reds and warm golds that Macfee strove for in creating a gentleman's retreat.

"I tried to keep it on the masculine side and really understated," she says. "And I liked that it had a little more of a European twist – more dark, rich, brown colors."

The great room's other section revolves around an octagonal, tooled leather table next to the picture window. Macfee found the twisted piece of old-growth juniper that forms the base of the table, and then designed the top with applied pole and birch bark in the Adirondack style. Her inspiration for the table was a men's club or grill.

"It's a place for a cocktail," she says. "It's all about function; a place for 12 people to gather."

Just as in the sitting area she blended natural material and modern pieces with antiques. Under one window is a sixteenth

novels that Macfee found on her antique hunts. In accordance with the theme, she focused on European classics by the likes of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Shakespeare. She also filled sections with books by subject matter, such as hunting and fishing, old cars (Watson is an avid race car driver) and children's stories for the grandkids.

The dining room's centerpiece is reminiscent of a medieval castle – an 11-foot long table made from an old-growth teak slab, surrounded by 12 custom-made chairs of distressed, stained alder. "How do you accommodate 12 people? That's how we got to the table," says Macfee. "Everything is on a sophisticated level but still very family friendly."

Watching over the dining room table is a giant elk trophy affixed to the room's stone fireplace. The elk head was from one of the contractors, who had recently bagged it in the nearby Sierras. That worked out perfectly for Macfee, who was looking for a trophy but wanted the animal to be indigenous to the area. As always, there is one antique in the room – a nineteenth century Irish hutch with green and gold stained-glass panels.

The combination of the old and the

very large groups to very small ones."

Although the family room, or great room as Macfee calls it, is a single, 1,000 foot space, its L-shape makes it feel like two rooms right next to each other. This is also accomplished by informally dividing the room into two meeting areas with different focuses. The first space is centered on a large stone fireplace and stone and leather cubes that together form a massive coffee table. Macfee designed the leather upholstered cubes with fossilized fish stone from a quarry in Montana, so that they can be moved around. There are four pieces that can be downsized to two to create a more intimate setting. The table's stone surface is practically grandchildren-proof.

"It's pretty indestructible," says Macfee.

The oversized couches and comfy swivel chairs allow one to pivot back and forth from the sitting area to the picture window's spectacular view of Squaw Valley. "I really liked how nice the view was sitting in the living room," says another judge.

In keeping with Macfee's goal of mixing the old and the new, the area also has two eighteenth century, handmade moose chairs from England. The antlers serve as armrests and the fur as upholstery. The

*Although the room encompasses 1,000 square feet, it's still cozy - divided into comfortable compartments and L-shaped at its end.*

century, walnut chest from Italy that she found in San Francisco.

Our panel liked the way the clusters of sitting areas provide enough space for a large number of people yet still create intimate environments.

"The spaces were interesting because everyone could congregate up there, and different parts of the family could be doing different things but still be together," says one judge.

The great room is separated from the dining room and kitchen by a stairwell that spills out in front of a giant, tooled leather bookcase built into the wall. The custom-made bookcase, also in the Adirondack style, is stocked with first-edition classic

new extends to the kitchen, which has antique French fishing baskets and turn-of-the-century copper pots from the Grand Hotel in Paris. Adjacent to the kitchen is a distinctive bathroom paneled in birch bark.

While the eclectic choice of antiques seemed somewhat random to one judge, their use in the great room hit a true chord for most of the panel. "It came across as more honest to me," one judge says. "In a second home, the informality goes with eclectic collections of pieces."

Our panel enjoyed this great room to such an extent that they lingered long after our tour was completed, reclined in the comfy seats and couches, and enjoyed the creative vision of Dorland and Macfee. □