

THE RED RIVER VALLEY'S GUIDE TO INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR DESIGN

# DESIGN & LIVING

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COMPLIMENTARY



## BUILDERS AT HOME

Inside five local builders' personal homes, their families and their pursuit of the American dream.





By Tracy Nicholson  
Photos by J. Alan Paul Photography







DIETRICH HOMES

# TOM DIETRICH

**T**he home of Tom Dietrich, girlfriend Ali Kavanaugh and their three-year-old Schnauzer, Winston, gives a perfect view into the craftsmanship Dietrich Homes is best known for. Dietrich Homes founder Clay Dietrich keeps their father-son business centered around family, trusting in his son to be just as detailed-oriented as himself. At over 5,000 square feet, this builder's home is a true labor of love, maximizing its pond views and even adding in some hidden surprises.

At Home with Tom Dietrich of Dietrich Homes:

**Q** What made you choose this neighborhood?

**A** "I grew up in Moorhead, so I like the idea of coming back to the area to The Preserve at Horizon Shores. We had owned this lot for a while and I just loved the views of the pond and being able to have a nice, open area that wasn't overcrowded. There's a dock just down the way that we can fish off of. There's also a gazebo and walking path that go all the way around the pond."





**Q** What is it like as a builder to design and build your own home?

**A** "Before we built, the first thing we did was meet up here with Ali and Winston and kind of walked the lot. So, when we do something that has the ability to have nice views or nice features outside, we'll design the house, not only to be functional on the interior, but have the exterior kind of facilitate that. From there, we figured out where each room needed to be to best utilize the views."

"It actually went pretty fast, it took just under five months. There was a lot of weekend work by my dad and I. We were getting two weeks of work done in one week normally. There's some parts of our home that have melded in from our other houses over time. Being a builder, the layout of the house was easier, but picking out materials was hard just because we work with so many. We're doing different styles all the time, so I know of all the options. Some things got picked out just because we knew they were easy to clean. Other things got picked just for the way it looked. Heather in our office has something like six books of lights with over one thousand pages each, that can be overwhelming. Then we found out we like Restoration Hardware. If we found something that was crazy in price, we'd send a picture over to Heather and she'd find us something similar, but less expensive. That's the same thing we do for our clients."

**Q** Can you explain the hidden room behind the bookcase?

**A** "I always wanted one growing up but he (Clay) never let me have one, so when I saw this empty space under the trusses on the plans, I said, 'You know what we're putting in there!' The couch we got from an old house and we thought that would probably fit under there and it ended up fitting right under the skylights. Later on, we're thinking of adding open cabinets for kids toys and things like that. We do have it wired for a theater too."







  
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**Q What is it that draws you to the home building industry?**

**A** "Growing up, I built and did odd jobs here and there all the time with my dad's crew. When I went to college, I started working part time with them and really got to like working with my hands. When I got done with college, I figured if I sat down, I'd fall asleep at work so I needed to do something where I was moving and kept me going. I also like being really picky. When I first started managing, we were smaller and the economy was kind of slow. So, now I manage more people and do a lot more between our subcontractors and myself. My dad gets the house going at the beginning and I take over at the end and keep in contact with him and our office staff to coordinate everyone.

"Since we do everything custom for our clients, it's being able to take new ideas and make them happen and give them what they had pictured and what they thought. So, I always liked that it's a constant change for us. You have to keep up with the new things that are coming out, new ideas, new materials and new ways of building. We typically build six to eight homes a year. We used to do more, but lately we're doing bigger houses and less of them. So now we focus more on being the premiere builder in town."



"I kind of learned from the ground up and spent some time in the fire service. Then Tom went to school initially not really thinking about being a builder, went to business school and has a financial and marketing background. Sometimes, it's just how things work out. He ended up running the job sites and manages everything from sheetrock and on. He takes care of all the finishing work now. I'm kind of getting rid of some of the hats I wear – you have to eventually. So now, I do more CEO and office work. Tom has really transitioned into our chief operating officer. He's been out there long enough that I don't have to worry about anything anymore."

*Clay Dietrich, Dietrich Homes founder*





**Q What is your favorite space?**

**A** TD: "Inside, my favorite space is the living room and the sunroom. We really sit in there all summer long. I also really like the garage – it's where we keep my grandpa's '69 Thunderbird. It's never been rebuilt and has been in the family since 1970. The garage is about 1,474 square feet, a little bigger than planned. Dad drew it a bit bigger than what I originally started with."

AK: "In the summer, I'd say it's the sunroom. I love to go out there with Winston when I get home from work. The rest of the year, it's the living room – that's where I spend most of my time."



For more information:  
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