

# A Homeplace In The . . . WOODED PINES

*Our place was a home that people, including children, instinctively knew and loved. Its floors are worn like a violin string frayed from much use and suggests the musical patter of ten thousand little footfalls. The walls are cracked with the jar and thump of dancing feet whose jigs were danced a hundred years ago and roars of laughter from those who lived a hearty life and died just as heartily . . . . God rest their souls. — W.H.H. Murray, *How I Educated My Daughters**

BY NANCY DORMAN-HICKSON PHOTOGRAPHS BY COLLEEN DUFFLEY

66 **I**t has always been my inspiration, no matter where we lived, to somehow transfer that feeling [described by Murray] to any guest in our home," Peggy Dobbs says. Murray, a turn-of-the-century writer, is one of her favorite authors. She adds, "It helps to have a mate who desires the same thing."

Homer Dobbs agrees with his wife of 44 years. "We visited a friend recently who had just built a contemporary home," Homer says. "It was beautiful. But it just wasn't like our home, where you can throw your feet on the coffee table."

"Our house is like an old lodge," he decides, nodding his head at this apt description. "It's comfortable."

It's also country and deep in the woods of Shelby County, Alabama. "Every now and then, a deer or a turkey will wander through," he says.

Homer gives most of the credit for the warm feeling of their home's decor to Peggy. Not that he's above poking fun at his wife. "I had told Homer and a friend to pick up [a piece of antique furniture]," Peggy recalls. "They laughed about my telling them not to scratch it."

The old country piece was already scratched, even patched with a wedge of wood.

"Our society doesn't patch anything anymore," she says, acknowledging her love for old things. "We throw it away. But if something is worn down by somebody, it's got to have had some value, love, and respect."

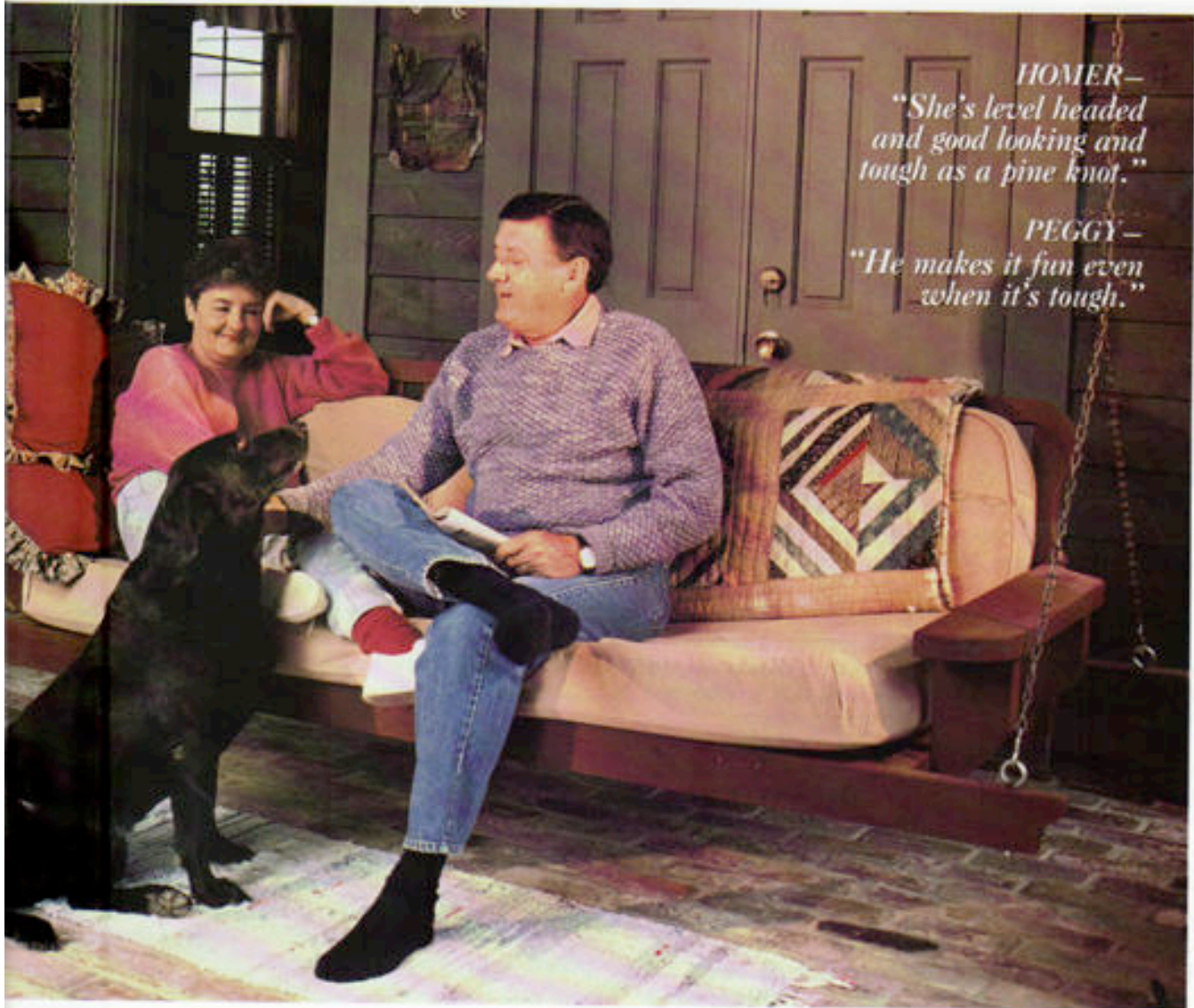
That sentiment has helped the family define "home." After 38 moves because of Homer's work as a contractor, the family has found it best not to become too attached to the board and brick of any one house.

Home, as they say, is where the heart is. Just what does that tried-and-true phrase mean to the Dobbses?

Well, even now, with their children, Pati, Niki, Jodi, and Lyn, grown and in homes of their own, Peggy and Homer still have several people living at their house.

One, the Rev. A.P. Williams, greets visitors when they come through the front door. This great-great grandfather of Peggy's was a circuit-riding minister covering the





HOMER—  
"She's level headed  
and good looking and  
tough as a pine knot."

PEGGY—  
"He makes it fun even  
when it's tough."

RIGHT: The shape of the kitchen was determined by the Shaker work table. The new-looking refurbished high chair belonged to Homer's dad. Peggy replaced tin panels missing from the pie safe.

BELOW: Peggy designed and made this St. Nicholas figure.



Homer made the primitive king-size headboard from two doors. For the portraits, the Dobbs girls wore the same dress made by Peggy's mother.



territory of Missouri in 1846.

Next to the reverend's portrait is a "worn" copy of the ordination papers of Lewis Williams, A.P.'s father and fellow circuit-riding minister.

Peggy created the leather-backed artifact by imagining the original.

These two men of the cloth aren't the only people from the past living in the home. In an upstairs bedroom, the Little League baseball uniform of the Dobbses' grown son is spread casually on a child-size bed.

A framed needle and piece of handwork are testimony to a childhood incident of Peggy's mother, Livia Hood. "She was running through the house with the needle and fell," Peggy explains. "She said that it was just like a

vaccination." After that, she had no trouble learning the intricate stitchery that had given her trouble before.

Peggy also loves handwork. "If I see something I want, I'd rather make it than buy it," she says.

Her old-fashioned canvas and cloth Santa resides in the house year round. The wool-bearded old man wears a fur-trimmed burgundy coat and carries a silver ball given to Peggy and Homer for their 25th anniversary.

In addition to Peggy's canvas figures, the house is graced with her delightful samplers. On one, Peggy fashioned three panels as she imagined her three daughters would have if they had lived long ago. Each segment has something that defines it as that daughter's work.

Homer, too, is included in one of Peggy's samplers. It shows an old man with a hat, a grey-haired woman with a cane, a black dog, and the words, "There are three faithful friends, an old wife, an old dog, and ready cash."

"I wanted to remind him of what he had," Peggy says.

It's clear that Homer and the whole Dobbs clan know what they have: love and respect for that which makes a house a home. It may come in the form of patched furniture, cherished handwork, or anything showing that a person's time on this earth has been well spent. After all, isn't that what home is about?



#### LOOKING FOR HOMES, SWEET HOMES

Do you live in or know of a great country home? We would like to share with our readers homes decorated in good taste. We also want to share a sense of why that home is special to its family.

Please send snapshots, along with a description of the home and the family. Include a daytime phone number. Send to "A Homeplace In," *Countryplace*, Box 2581, Birmingham, AL 35202. We can't return photos, so keep copies for yourself.