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The house Russ Glickman purchased new in the 1980s featured an L-shaped porch. Anticipating emerging family requirements, Glickman designed a wheel-chair friendly Victorian-style porch that wraps the house on two sides and includes a gazebo and a pagoda.

## A Family Home

Through life lessons, remodeler Russ Glickman has become an acknowledged expert in accessible design.

BY JOHN BYRD  
THE ALMANAC

“A traditional house can adapt to all kinds of special requirements,” said remodeler, and longtime Potomac resident, Russ Glickman. “We’re now seeing more demand for plans that will serve all the members of the family, and through all the phases of their life. The challenge is in thinking through foreseeable needs, and planning for contingencies.”

Glickman, president of Glickman Design Build and a nationally recognized expert in a whole catalogue of accessible design solutions, has learned these lessons from a variety of life experiences.

First, as a certified specialist who recently received a Chrysalis award in the Universal Design category, he has consulted in home adaptations throughout the metro area.

But, foremost, as a father and grandfather, he’s come to regard the 21st century home as an essentially malleable accommodation that — with proper design — can serve a homeowner’s whole life requirements no matter how challenging they may seem.

Glickman says he first discovered this new way of thinking in the late 1980s when he and his wife, Anne, bought a spacious two-story center hall Colonial shortly after their third child was born. The 3,200-square-foot, four-bedroom house featured a spacious first level with den, a large front porch and a 1,000-square-foot unfinished lower level. It was soon apparent, however, that some of the home’s existing layout might prove problematic since the newborn, Michael, would probably have some mobility challenges.

“When a child is small you can carry them from an upstairs bedroom to the kitchen or bathroom,” Glickman recalls. “But because the doctors were still learn-

ing about Michael’s condition, we didn’t know what adjustments to the home’s physical space might be needed.”

With two older daughters and a dog, the Glickmans maintained a busy, playful household. As a builder and a father, though, Glickman began looking ahead at ways to reconfigure the house that would work better for everyone.

This became a particular priority when, by 4, Michael was diagnosed with cerebral palsy and it was clear that he would need a wheelchair.

“We thought it would be easier for Michael if we moved his bedroom to the first floor — so we converted the den for



When Mike Glickman (now 24) was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, remodeler Russ Glickman gradually began specializing in accessible design.

this purpose. Once he learned to operate his motorized wheel-chair, he would be able to move about the first floor on his own

volition.”

While these adjustments were underway, Glickman was also busily designing his “familyplay time” masterpiece, a 1,200-square-foot porch that wraps the house on three sides. Complete with unobtrusive ramps that segue to a paved walkway custom-sized to Mike’s wheelchair, the porch features two spacious gazebos, an outdoor kitchen, a wisteria bower, a hot tub and several ground level exits that access a pond in the rear of the home.

“It’s essentially a Victorian design,” Glickman said. “Very welcoming and spacious. It’s a place where the whole family can enjoy the outdoors together.”

**PART OF THE CHALLENGE** of maintaining a special needs household, Glickman said, is recognizing when it’s time to make a change, and providing supportive considerations.

When Michael was 14 (and had reached the appropriate stage of emotional maturity), Russ and Anne decided to build out the home’s lower level so that Michael would have his own “bachelor pad.”

“It was really a big step. A move towards more privacy and independence,” Anne Glickman said.

The finished lower level now includes Michael’s master suite, quarters for overnight guests, and a well-appointed family room.

Michael has his own patio situated next to the pond in the rear of the house. It’s a great spot for the entire clan to watch the sunset.

To facilitate Michael’s mobility, Russ Glickman re-graded a slope on the north side of the house, making it easier for Michael to move from his private entrance in the rear of the home to the front porch — which is accessible by a custom-designed ramp.

Glickman also changed the home’s original dining room into a parlor, converting the former living room into an outsized dining room that opens directly on to the side porch.

Although older daughters Caitlin and Rebecca have left the nest, both siblings live nearby, and frequently come over for cook-outs and other family occasions.

Michael is active in a United Cerebral Palsy program, which he attends daily.

Glickman says his son may eventually move to a group home — in which case, he and Anne may adapt the house for their own next phase, a plan that could include an elevator.

“A home is a kind work in progress — with a lot of chapters,” Glickman said.

“It is best when it can be periodically revised — so that it works for everyone, and in every phase of their lives. I see Americans somewhat returning the idea of a family home. It’s a very stabilizing way to embrace the future.”

## A Primer on Roofs

BY MIKE DENKER  
AND TODD MCPHEE  
SPECIAL TO THE ALMANAC

“At least we still have a roof over our heads.” This old saying causes me to muse about roofs.

When the dark English philosopher Thomas Hobbes said, “Life is nasty, brutish, and short,” he might have also added “damp.” One of the miracles of contemporary life which we usually do not appreciate is our dry homes.

Some might say roofs are not a sexy topic. I beg to disagree. Roofs can be and often are the beautiful crowning glory of a home. Many roofs require careful

### HOME WORK



Mike Denker, left, and Todd McPhee.

craftsmanship and careful attention to detail. Roofs show pride or neglect; they reveal the owner’s wealth or poverty. Our modern roofs are made of every conceivable material from wood, to stone, to ceramic, to rubber, to metal, to asphalt, and they vary in color across the spectrum. A roof replacement, which may need to be done every 20 or more years in the life of a house, is one of the more expensive and predictable kinds of periodic maintenance. It is possible to delay replacing your roof by several years if you pay careful attention to the few areas that begin to have trouble first. Professional roofing companies would prefer of course to sell you a new roof.

Finding small leaks is challenging, time consuming, and they are not really possible to guarantee, while replacing a whole roof from their perspective enables them to provide a warranty. My company employs a roofing specialist who has become an expert in repairing old roofs, and his detective work often begins with a crawl in the attic searching for water stains.

Roofs shed water typically because they have a “pitch” or a degree of steepness. Roofers will designate a roof as a 6/12 or a 4/12. The first number in inches is the “fall” of the roof for every 12 horizontal inches. In a steep 12/12 pitch, for every 12” of horizontal distance the roof drops 12”, which describes a 45-degree angle roof. If you feel proud of your roof, it may be because you have a steep one. A steep roof is naturally more eye catching. If all you care about is water run

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