

High standards characterize pool-centric backyards

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BOWA Builders excels at creating
settings that differentiate

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As one Great Falls homeowner learned recently, all high-end pool-centric remodeling projects are not alike. In fact, the family pool this owner had constructed on their sloping lot just eight years ago was tilting so badly the water was spilling over one edge, and the pool's shell was in danger of a total collapse. Unfortunately, this longterm resident had assumed—as most would—that the appropriate soil compaction tests had been done.

After learning the hard way that all builders are not equal, late last year the homeowner called on McLean's BOWA Builders to rectify the problem—by tearing out the old pool and redesigning the entire setting from scratch.

“The demand for a finely articulated setting that finishes and completes a luxury home is at an all time high,” says BOWA president Josh Baker. “As the sizes, quality and styles of the outdoor

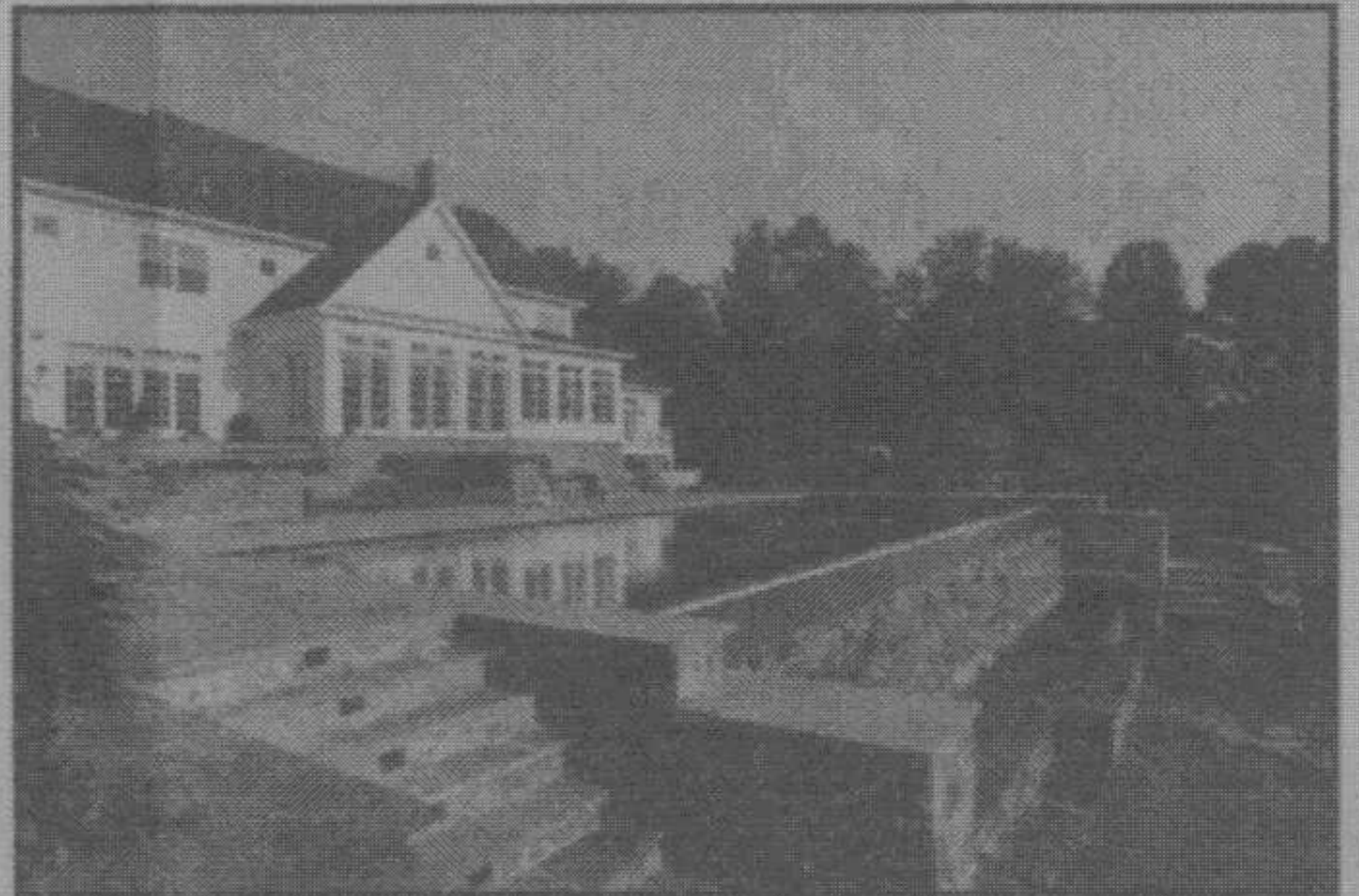


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The classic, if sprawling, Oakton farmhouse is paired with an endless pool and waterfall that overlooks the family's equestrian facility.

built-environment have increased, so has the list of desired features, and the complexities of executing cutting-edge requirements in an integrated way.”

BOWA is ranked as one of the nation's largest whole house remodelers mostly on the strength of about 40 large-scale custom homes and remodels per year.

“We pride ourselves on our ability to draw on hundreds of years of collective

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experience," Baker says. "This helps us anticipate possible problems and avoid surprises. It also gives our clients confidence."

One of the tools that keeps owner and builder on the same page is increasingly sophisticated design software. In fact, BOWA now presents 3-D designs of a proposed "aquascape" that not only allows an owner to "walk-

through" a virtual representation of finished scenarios, but even shows how the site will appear at different times of day.

"We can model positions for every project component," says Baker. "The size, shape, position and color of the pool; the effects of various hardscaping details, terracing and landscaping options; the project's relationship to the topography and its critical views. This gives our clients lots of control in the design and planning process", say Baker.

Of course, since the search for distinctive materials now spans the globe, the planning process can take several months.

"Our clients are requesting marbles and granites from all over the world," Baker says. "We recently completed pool decking in a Chinese granite never previously available in the U.S."

The trick to fulfilling exacting, large-scale wish lists, Baker notes, is a solid design team and a supervisor exclusively dedicated to the project from start to finish:

"We start by assessing the existing architecture and site conditions, including views, privacy, orientation and possible engineering challenges, then we explore lifestyle patterns, personal preferences, use requirements, ages of intended users, and much more. Design revisions can be frequent in the early stages since this is a developmental process, and the goal is help the owner determine exactly what they want."

The firm's Monument Award-winning Chateau-style manor house segues through a series of garden terraces to the linear simplicity of an Olympic-size pool ensconced in spacious flagstone surround.

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Photo courtesy/Home Fronts News

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Yet a recent McLean project includes a pool house modeled on classic Greek architecture.

"Remarkable originality emerges as our clients think through what they really want to convey," Baker says. "It is certainly a creative undertaking, but it's tempered by so many real world considerations."