



The first floor of their home is loft style with ten-foot ceilings and exposed ductwork. The living and dining areas flow into the kitchen, creating one large great room with stained concrete floors. Shana and Mary Beth enlisted interior designer Gilbert Joseph Perez of Bespoke by GJCD to create a color palette for their home to define the open concept. A rich chocolaty-brown wall color in the living area lends drama and sets it apart from the dining and kitchen areas which are painted a bright, airy white that reflects the natural light pouring in through three large windows overlooking a compact, minimally landscaped back yard. A home office and powder room complete the first floor. Upstairs are two bedrooms with two baths, en suite.

Two of the women's favorite pieces of art are displayed in the downstairs home office. Mary Beth's and Shana's fathers both served in World War II. Shana's dad fought with the Second Marine Division in some of



Getting to Know Your Neighbors

Shana Ross and Mary Beth Reuter, whose home was recently featured on the Heights Holiday Home Tour, have called the Heights area home for more than 25 years. They first moved to the area in 1987, when they rented a townhouse on Rutland Street. "We lived in one of the first townhouse developments in the area," Mary Beth says. "I would have never thought those four little townhomes were just the beginning for the massive changes we've seen." Later, they bought a house in Timbergrove Manor, and about six years ago, Shana and Mary Beth decided to look for the quintessential Heights bungalow.

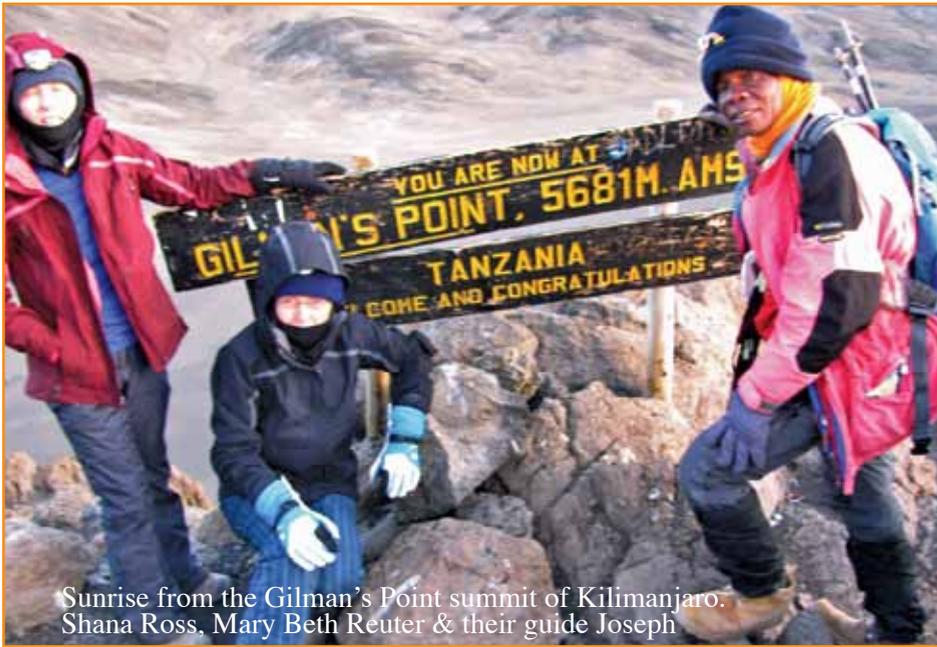
Searching for the Perfect Home

The couple turned to their realtor, Rhine McNeil, to find their next home, but they simply weren't seeing what they had in mind. That's when Rhine asked them to humor him and take

a look at a newly built contemporary house. "When we pulled into the driveway, I immediately hated it. I asked Rhine if he'd lost his mind," Shana reports. "Rhine, who's also a good friend, told me to 'get out of the car' and at least look inside before making any judgments," she laughs. She and Mary Beth are thrilled that they followed his advice.

Their current home, featured in this year's upcoming Holiday Home Tour, 'Carols by Candlelight,' is a contemporary design, custom built in 2005 by Sunset Homes for its original owners. Mary Beth and Shana purchased the house in 2007; the same year Shana opened Shana Ross Fitness Studio, seven blocks north on West 22nd street.





Shana adds.

When asked about their favorite parts of their home, Shana and Mary Beth agree that it's the way the windows bring the outside in. "Now that Mary Beth and I work together doing something we both love, we put in a lot of hours. It's so nice to come home and no matter where we are in the house, be able to see out. It's our own little sanctuary."

Making Their Professional Mark in the Heights

After 20 plus years in the oil and gas industry, Mary Beth ditched corporate life last year to join Shana full time as the co-owner of Shana Ross Fitness. "I was raised by a health-nut Mom," Mary Beth admits. "The transition to join Shana at the studio and continue to grow the business was a natural one." Shana adds, "We love being able to work and live just a few blocks apart."

the Pacific's fiercest battles—Saipan, Tinian and Okinawa. A portrait of him painted by renowned Marine combat artist Richard Michael Gibney hangs alongside a framed collection of beer bottle labels collected by Mary Beth's dad who fought in the European theater as a bombardier pilot in the Royal Air

Force of the British Armed Forces. "My dad was the typical English gentleman with that Monty Python sense of humor and Shana's dad, by his own admission, was a good 'ole boy from East Texas," says Mary Beth. "But when they got together, they had a great time and kept each other laughing with their tales. We sure miss them," she concludes.



The owners feel that one of the key features of the home is the surrounding lot. The builder was very careful with the six large trees, including three mature pecans, on the lot. They weren't just saved, but were fed and monitored for signs of distress throughout construction. "Even though the house is a contemporary design, it doesn't look out of place. The home's muted green exterior and the way it's framed by the trees fit the house to the lot instead of the other way around," states Mary Beth. "We love that the builder respected the lot and didn't bulldoze everything in sight,"

Their first big project as co-owners was to train and lead a group of baby boomer women to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Africa. Each of the women, faced with such life challenges as ovarian and breast cancer, HIV, rheumatoid arthritis, obesity, and the daily struggles of life, used the project as a way to reach others with the message that it's never too late to take charge of your life and your health. The project was inspired by one of Shana's long-time clients and friend Becky Pope, who is currently undergoing treatment at M.D. Anderson for her third recurrence of cancer. "It was the hardest thing I've ever attempted in my life," says Shana, who suffered from severe altitude sickness on summit night. "But my sickness that night was minor compared to some of the challenges the other climbers have faced and are facing," she firmly states. "Mary Beth and I were forever changed by the experience."



(L to R): Shana Ross, Mary Beth Reuter, Sheri Dawson, Jackie Doval, Pam Hilmes, Becky Pope, Deb Sanders, Venita Ray

Shana is writing a book about the project and the women who trained for Kilimanjaro, titled, "Choose to Climb"; a documentary film is also in the works.

But no matter where the gals travel, the two are always eager to return to Houston. As Mary Beth says, "The Heights is our home. We love the diversity of the neighborhood and the fact that when you walk or ride the bike path, people nod and say hi." Shana adds, "That's why we choose to live and work here. I can't imagine living anywhere else in Houston."