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Young Couple Infuses Hip Mid-Century Modern Style into Webster Ranch



Nathan and Hannah Wilbur

Ages • He's 30; she's 28

Occupations • Nathan is an interior and visual merchandise designer. Hannah is a costume/dancewear designer at Weissman's Designs for Dance.

Home • Webster Groves



At Home with Nathan and Hannah Wilbur in their Crestwood home with a family room where they use 50's style furniture. (By J.B. Forbes/P-D)

BY AMY BURGER

SPECIAL TO THE POST-DISPATCH

05/09/2009

When Nathan and Hannah Wilbur were looking to buy their first house, they knew exactly what they wanted: a mid-century modern ranch. Lucky for them, the St. Louis area has a rich history and wealth of homes of this style, designed by some of the top modern architects of the time.

The Wilburs found just what they were looking for in the historic Ridgewood subdivision on the border of Crestwood and Webster Groves.

Ridgewood was built in 1951, consisting of 250 modern ranch houses designed by renowned local architect Ralph Fournier and built by modular home pioneer Burton Duenke. The January 1953 issue of Better Homes & Gardens described the Ridgewood model as "An Achievement in Small House Planning," and the magazine offered the plans through its Five Star Homes program.

• SLIDESHOW: See more of the Wilburs' home

The Wilburs purchased their comfortable Ridgewood ranch four years ago, and since

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moving in, they have developed an even greater interest in preserving the history of its modernist style. So much so that Nathan and his neighbor, Neil Chace, created a blog about Ridgewood's architectural significance: modernridgewood.blogspot.com.

"We just wanted to do something to spread awareness about the history of the subdivision," Wilbur said. "We want to promote appreciation and preservation of mid-century modern architecture in St. Louis."

The three-bedroom, one-bath ranch feels much larger than its 1,360 square feet because of the easy, flowing floor plan and vaulted ceilings. Floor-to-ceiling windows spill light into the open living room, dining room, kitchen area.

The Wilburs have a beautiful collection of mid-century and Danish Modern furniture, much of which they have purchased on eBay, Craigslist and at local estate sales. The original antique pieces are blended seamlessly with new ones such as the living room couch, bought at Design Within Reach in the Central West End, the dining set from Crate & Barrel and a George Nelson Saucer Bubble Pendant from ylighting.com in the dining room.

"Hannah and I have always had similar tastes, so it's nice to see those evolve together," said Nathan, who has a degree in interior design.

The modern furnishings are in keeping with the scale of the home's design, so they fit easily and feel very natural and comfortable. The result is a house that is not only beautiful, but functional and livable as well, making the most out of its space.

"There's definitely a renewed interest in pre-fab homes like this," Nathan said. "You can see examples of this in popular design magazines like Dwell and Atomic Ranch."

The Wilburs hope that by sharing their home and design philosophy, others will appreciate the style as well and help to preserve the many great local examples.

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