

Carpentry Goes to the Dogs

by Martin Holladay

The end of the dot-com boom may mean a decline in the market for spec mansions and starter castles. But there will always be millionaires, and the dog will always be man's best friend.

Until that changes, America's luxury doghouse builders — who fill what must be one of the construction industry's more specialized niches — will always have work.

In fact, luxury doghouses are just a small segment of the growing pet-care industry. According to *The New York Times*, among the businesses that have recently sprung up in New York City are Doggy Village, a \$1,000-a-year health spa for dogs, and Pet Chauffeur, which maintains five minivans to deliver dogs to their acupuncture and massage appointments.

Ron Smith, a designer/builder in Santa Fe, N.M., is familiar with the needs of high-end pets. He recently built a \$2,650,000 custom home that included a passive solar doghouse with tilted glazing and hydronic radiant heat.

"It's sometimes hard to believe that someone would spend this much on a pet," says Alan Mowrer, owner of the Denver, Colo., doghouse company La Petite Maison. The average cost of Mowrer's doghouses is \$6,000. "Most of the customers take this pretty seriously," he says. "For a woman with a Saint Bernard, we did a Swiss-chalet-style doghouse with marble floors and air conditioning. It was wired for power with underground service, and had halogen hockey-puck lights and painted interior drywall." Another doghouse, he notes, was patterned after a southern mansion, and had a round front entrance with columns and a paneled front door. The interior was finished with wallpaper and trimmed with chair rail.

Dinah Keeton, co-owner of Blythe Wood Works — a doghouse builder in Blythewood, S.C. — admits to a few reservations about the tendency of today's well-heeled dog owners to coddle their pets. "I think people are going too far," she says. "One man ordered an insulated doghouse for a Lab. But Labs love cold weather. The dog has fur. They don't realize that God gave the dog what he needs to be comfortable."



LA PETITE MAISON

Frankly, my dear, I don't give an arf. The custom doghouse above — built to resemble an antebellum southern mansion — is unfurnished, but does include interior chair rail and wallpaper. At right, a satisfied client relaxes on the front lawn.



LA PETITE MAISON