

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

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Wild Kingdom Close to Home

By Cathy Dausman



Displays create a museum-like atmosphere in expansive Lamorinda trophy room.



Photos Cathy Dausman

John Doe's is the house that big game built, whose trophies once walked the earth. In fact Doe designed his house several years ago specifically to accommodate what he calls his "passion" for wild game hunting.

Doe is not his real name – he is sensitive that animal activists might take offense. But the Lamorinda man who shared his story, and his very photogenic trophy room, speaks like a naturalist with a reverence for animals both living and dead.

A tour of Doe's trophy room reveals the depth of his passion. A moose head, nicknamed "Morris," and "Jeffrey," the 8-foot-tall giraffe head, dominate one wall. The remaining animals are preserved whole and seemingly poised to take flight momentarily.

An impala, bush buck, stein buck

and klipspringer sniff the air for predators. A jackal jumps and claws at a small game bird, while a tahr (Himalayan mountain goat) and a pair of Dall sheep literally climb the walls.

A menacing Cape buffalo – "a dangerous animal," said Doe – locks eyes with visitors. Doe said there are actually more "closet hunters" in the East Bay than one would think. Just how did a local city boy raised in Oakland, whose father "never hunted a day in his life" become the globe-trotting hunter of today?

"I think it's genetic," he said simply. Doe's fascination began "out of the blue" watching Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom as a boy. He started fishing with his best friend, whose mother took them on trips. He learned fire arm safety and target shooting with .22 rifles as a Boy Scout. ...continued on page D4