

## Sunroom addition is “Contractor of the Year” grand winner



**BEFORE** - The Sherrys had occupied the circa-1970s split-level for over 40 years. Now empty-nesters, the couple sought a plan that would work for entertaining extended family. To introduce the new sunroom component, the remodeler removed 30 feet of bearing wall on the rear elevation.



PHOTOS BY GREG HADLEY

### ■ Innovative space enlargement solution wins COTY for Michael Nash

BY JOHN BYRD  
SPECIAL TO THE FAIRFAX COUNTY TIMES

An addition with a vaulted ceiling skillfully integrated into a first-level floor plan reconfiguration has won a Washington-area “Contractor of the Year” Grand award (COTY) for Michael Nash Kitchens and Homes. The design solution – in which a seldom used rear deck has been replaced by a sunroom with flanking outdoor entertainment components – was executed in the Annandale home of Raymond and Barbara Sherry. The project was named “Best Addition Under \$100,000” by the Metro D.C. chapter of the Na-

tional Association of the Remodeling Industry in a ceremony held in mid-February.

In accepting the prize, Michael Nash president and founder Sonny Nazemian was quick to acknowledge his company’s high-performance design team, which grappled with several site and structural challenges.

“Developing a plan that fully utilizes overlooked space enlargement possibilities is our strong suit”, Nazemian said. “As a firm, we concentrate on achieving large improvements in functionality and design while adding comparatively little square footage. Our mission is always to expand what is possible within a budget by focusing the investment where it counts.”

For the Sherrys, the remodeling process began last year with a simple assessment of goals and priorities.

“We’re the original owners of this house, which we’ve occu-

**A 480-square-foot sunroom addition integrated into a reconfigured floor plan has won a Washington-area “Contractor of the Year” Grand award (COTY) for Michael Nash Kitchens and Homes. The project was named “Best Addition under \$100,000” by the Metro D.C. chapter of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry. The owners are Raymond and Barbara Sherry of Annandale.**

pied for over forty years,” Barbara Sherry says. “We’re empty-nesters now, but our daughter and three grandchildren live nearby, and we’re the primary gathering place for the extended family. Gradually, I had realized that we were not using our back deck much, and that our dining room was too small for entertaining. I also wanted a better view of our lovely backyard... but wasn’t sure

what could be done.”

Enlarging the dining room had always been a priority for Barbara, but given set-back requirements on the rear elevation, the feasibility of any large-scale modification was uncertain. Nonetheless, the Sherrys sought advice from Nazemian, who had remodeled their kitchen several years back.

“Once we assessed the site issues, several possibilities became

clear,” Nazemian recalls. “A sunroom off the back integrated into a reconfigured open floor plan would meet a lot of the stated goals. We could eliminate interior walls between the living room and dining room and open up sightlines. We also saw that a vaulted ceiling would make the rear elevation feel substantially larger.”

The core problem was the existing rear elevation, which

served as a bearing wall for the entire second floor. To make the proposed expansion feasible, Nazemian and team would have to insinuate a horizontal support beam balanced on vertical supports between the first and second floor.

Since the home’s primary living area is several feet above grade, excavating a foundation for

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The addition features a 15-foot vaulted ceiling and 30 feet of running window wall crowned by glass-facing arches. On the east side, double French doors provide access to a flagstone patio with a water feature. Gravel-covered trails link several garden focal points.



BEFORE - "The old rear deck had not been used much in years," said Barbara Sherry. What the couple needed in this phase of their lives was more dining space, better views and more natural light.

## HOMES

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the new wing presented an opportunity.

"Engineering necessity sometimes yields a space-planning bonus," Nazemian says. "By enlarging the foundation, we created a cavity under the addition that houses the adjunct HVAC system needed for cooling and heating the new space."

The larger task, however, was forming a new interior that would accommodate a 12-by-40 sun room with a 15-foot ceiling, and 30 feet of running window wall crowned by glass-facing arches.

"The structural issue was daunting," Nazemian recalls. "The sunroom would be the featured component in a completely open plan. To eliminate the rear bearing wall without relying on a middle post, the support beam would have to span a distance of thirty feet from one side of the room to the other."

To accomplish this, Nazemian specified an industrial-grade

I-beam attached to similarly calibrated vertical beams. The vertical supports are concealed behind opposite walls on either side of the open space. This is the component - entirely out of view - which now holds up the second floor.

"We're presenting an unusually wide and open area that incorporates almost half of the rear elevation," Nazemian says. "The lack of visible support is the defining effect of new space."

Barbara Sherry observes: "As one enters the house from the front, your eye moves out and up into an expanding horizon. It almost like an optical illusion, and pretty stunning."

Meanwhile, with double French doors and side lights on opposite elevations, the addition provides ready access to a pair of well-articulated outdoor places: a new Trex-clad grilling deck on the west side; a flagstone patio with water feature on the east.

From here, pebble-strewn trails meander past forsythia, hosta and old growth holly trees.

Back inside, natural light abounds in all directions. Saf-

ron-hued walls complement pearl-stained crown molding and off-white trim work. For added visual cohesion, the original oak flooring has been replaced with maple. Overhead, a Casablanca fan softly stirs the air.

"This is a spot to just relax and take in the garden, yet every gathering place in the new plan has its own identity, and a degree of privacy," Barbara observes.

"Effective zoning is the key to an open plan," Nazemian adds. "An open continuum needs to be scaled in a way that breaks down any appearance of excess volume. To accomplish this, we consider variances in ceiling height, the shape and placement of windows and built-ins, or the best spot for couches, tables, serving stations."

"The idea is to invite the eye to explore, highlighting gathering places and focal points within a panorama," he adds. "In this way, a comparatively small space becomes varied and exciting."

"My family really loves the improvements," Sherry says. "There's an abundance of quiet sitting places, yet it also supports

easy interactions and large parties. We're pleased at how well the changes suit out current needs."

For information call (703) 641-9800 or MichaelNashKitchens.com

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## Explore America's Neighborhoods: Georgetown, Washington, D.C.

BY GABRIELLE VAN WELIE

Think Georgetown and you probably think prime hangout for American University, George Washington University, and, of course, Georgetown University students. Countless bars and restaurants are to thank for this steady influx of youngsters that keep the area lively and engaging. Yet, that is not all there is to Georgetown, a neighborhood that has been recognized as a National Historic Landmark since 1967.

Before Washington even became a thing, 1751 Georgetown was already housing lumber yards, cement works and flower mills. Like many other historic neighborhoods, Georgetown is a conglomerate of cobblestone streets and 18th and 19th century architecture. The Old Stone House and the City Tavern Club are two of the olden-day buildings that are still standing tall.

Dumbarton House, a preserved, fully-furnished Federal period house is one of Georgetown's many notable architectural pieces. Tudor Place is another important landmark housing the famous Mt. Vernon collection, as well as a public garden spread across five acres. For extra points, the home was built by Martha Custis Peter, a.k.a., Martha Washington's granddaughter.

The Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, also built in the Federal style, used to be John C. Calhoun's home. This is the same home where the United Nations charter came to be in 1944. You know what else is here? Washington's famous cherry blossom trees!

The neighborhood has

enjoyed an extensive cohort of famous residents, including Thomas Jefferson and John F. Kennedy. In fact, there's even a self-guided Kennedy walking tour you can take. And if walking is your thing, there's also an African-American Heritage Trail you can venture out on. A major stop to look out for is Herring Hill, known for housing migrating African-American families after the Civil War.

And let's not forget showbiz. You can visit the iconic "Exorcist" stairs, as well as the bar and restaurant from "St. Elmo's Fire" during your self-guided film sites tour. There's also the Blues Alley, the oldest still-functioning jazz supper club in the U.S. The club's doors have welcomed icons like Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie and Tony Bennett. They will welcome you as well.

If you are planning a vacation any time soon, Georgetown might be just the place.

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