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## Close to home after tour in Iraq

A son returns to the U.S. and builds a place on family lot

By JOHN BYRD  
Home Fronts News

A top remodeler converted the 1950s split-level into a standout duplex that works for the extended family.

After completing a seven-month tour in Iraq with the Marines, Mike Paigo returned to the Northern Virginia home he had shared with his single mother, Elisa. Consisting of Elisa's three-bedroom primary residence and an attached studio Mike had occupied before enlisting, the duplex offered mother and son both family togetherness and privacy.

"My late parents originally lived in the studio," Elisa recalls. "But since Mike was planning to get married, he and his wife, Bonnie, wanted to remake the space into something of their own."

The house Elisa has lived in for over thirty years is a classic 1950s style split-level. In 2005, Elisa had remodeled her kitchen, so when she needed ideas for enlarging and upgrading the studio, she returned to the same firm — Michael Nash Kitchens

and Homes — now directly contacting its president and CEO, Sonny Nazemian.

"I knew this was going to be a special project," Elisa recounts. "I'd interviewed a lot of remodelers the first time around. Michael Nash's combination of design skills and performance impressed me. Everyone was interested in my satisfaction, and the majority of the work was done by the firm's employees — not subcontractors. Since the addition would be more complicated than a kitchen, I wanted assurances."

After it was determined that local zoning ordinances would permit the studio to be substantially enlarged, Nazemian and team developed a plan to convert a small, single-story studio apartment with a small bath and kitchenette into a two-story, 1,800 square foot residence with three bedrooms, two full baths and one powder room, as well as a garage and utility room.

"The design struck me as the real challenge," Elisa attests. "Adding rooms is one matter; a plan that really



Photos Courtesy/John Byrd

Typical of circa-1960s space planning ideas, the Paigos' studio apartment sequestered the kitchen from other rooms, making an already small room feel cramped.

supports personal lifestyle requirements another."

### Casual, contemporary

The four-month remodel began by enlarging the studio's existing footprint and gutting the interior entirely. The first floor, which was converted into an open floor plan, was extended back eight feet. An attached garage and utility room added another 9 feet by 28 feet, bringing the new footprint to 29 by 28 feet.

"Our goal was to create a functionally separate dwelling for Mike and Bonnie that would also support th

The first floor is now an open floor-plan comprising a living room, dining room, L-shaped corner kitchen and powder room. Consistent with the young couple's interest in entertaining, the emphasis is on visual continuum and a casual, contemporary ambiance.

"It is very modern, which is what we wanted," Bonnie said.

Adds Nazemian: "The open floor-plan is really emerging as a dynamic component of the modern home. The creative challenge is to develop a kitchen-centric entertainment area that has been thoroughly mainstreamed by cohesive interior design, yet is also highly functional."

Beautiful hardwood floors are installed throughout. Natural maple cabinetry with glazed finishes meet an array of storage requirements while adding harmonious decorative accents to the interior design scheme. Vivid colors — reds, burgundy and blues — are used to define activity zones. In addition, oriental screens are employed as

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"I love the feeling of spaciousness," Bonnie says. "It's ideal when we have guests over."

### Interior design

Elisa notes that the search for ideas

architecture of the whole structure," Nazemian says.

Adds Elisa: "It's an ideal solution, really. We all share the same address, yet it's two separate homes. That was important to us."

To meet new space requirements, the existing roof was removed so the structure could be "popped up" to accommodate a second level consisting of a front-facing master bedroom with master bath, two additional rear-facing bedrooms, a hall bath and a two-unit hall-access laundry.

was substantially expedited in the remodeler's showroom:

"Mike and Bonnie had researched ideas in lots of magazines," she says. "But the showroom put all the options before your eyes and fingers, and the design staff was there to answer questions and direct. Very helpful."

Not surprising, these design process advantages are reflected in the Paigos' finished remodel. The kitchen, which is Bonnie's favorite part of the home, is formed as an L around the first floor's rear left corner. An island with several stool seats meets everyday dining needs, but is also a useful "gathering zone." Recessed and dropped pendant lighting provides accent illumination at appropriate spots throughout the first level.

"We love to entertain here," Bonnie says. "The space plan really supports that. We gave the designers our feedback on color schemes, and then they put it all together into a coherent solution. The result is impressive."

Upstairs, the master bathroom includes a spacious Euro-style walk-in

spots throughout the first level.

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Upstairs, the master bathroom includes a spacious Euro-style walk-in shower with a bench. Thoughtfully selected mosaic-tile finishes provide distinctive detailing.

### Unifying front elevation

The front elevation includes a wall of windows and a double French door that connects the master bedroom suite to a 6-by-12-foot wrought iron balcony. The facade was clad in 50-year-old brick that was selected to match the exterior of the mother's home.

The new residence is completely autonomous, with its own dedicated heating, air conditioning, electrical panels and water heater.

"The construction crew's performance surpassed my already high expectations," Elisa says. "Even the cleanup was timely and first rate."

Adds Bonnie: "We have friends who thought our wish list couldn't be met. Well, this solution has worked out for everyone. And we now have a home of our own."

Michael Nash staff periodically offer seminars in addition planning and design at the Fairfax showroom. For more information visit [michael-nashkitchens.com](http://michael-nashkitchens.com).



Michael Nash's open floor plan adds square footage and converts the new space to a kitchen-centric entertainment area. Screens are used as 'zone dividers,' but the new plan emphasizes spatial and visual continuum.