

## Sweet Home Alabama

■ **Michael Nash Hillside Solution adds space for grand foyer, gracious southern living**

By JOHN BYRD  
SPECIAL TO THE  
FAIRFAX COUNTY TIMES

Huntsville, AL is a pretty small town -- yet it has three historic districts and more homes in the national register than most places twice its size. Growing up in such a community, Gina Jones is understandably attracted to welcoming porches and grand foyers--hallmarks of the antebellum style.

Alas, when Jones relocated to Northern Virginia several years ago, the place that came closest to suiting her family's needs was an Oakton contemporary-- one of four on a private drive at the top of a hill.

Like most successful transplants, Jones adapted to her new setting just fine. But after occupying the house for a few years, certain shortcomings became apparent.

"I was looking for a larger master bedroom, a guest room... and I really wanted a front porch and a foyer," Jones recalls. "The foyer was important in my childhood home. It's where the house begins."

A practical problem with the last part of the vision, however, was a steeply sloping grade immediately outside the existing front door. The more Jones learned about her home's inherent site problems, the more the search for new square footage became concentrated on the rear elevation.

"We wanted to stick to our budget," Jones recalls, "so the remodeling proposals we received were all focused on the back of the house."

It was at this juncture that Jones met Sonny Nazemian, president of Michael Nash Kitchens and Homes, and an innovative remodeler with a knack for finding unexpected solutions.

"Sonny's plans not only made our new façade feasible-- but actually created more square footage than we'd thought we could afford," Jones explains. "Naturally, we were thrilled."

The project's main challenge was engineering a structural template that would allow for a front-facing addition on a sharply sloping front yard. Because of its formidable downward-thrusting weight, a two-level addition tradi-



PHOTOS BY JUNE STANWICH

The new Georgian style façade includes a brick-surfaced porch, an Adam-style entry and a second level balcony with balustrades. Michael Nash resolved inherent site problems by deploying deep footings as foundation support, eliminating the need to excavate.

tionally must be offset by an eight to ten foot foundation. Nazemian's team, however, proposed an alternative every bit as effective, but a lot less expensive.

"We re-graded, leveled and re-compacted the whole front yard," the remodeler explains. "That may sound simple, but the site changes are very carefully calibrated. This allowed us to specify deep footings for structural support, eliminating the need to excavate."

Naturally, the plan required working closely with Fairfax County building inspectors. But Nazemian says the option saved his client substantial sums, money which was used to increase the project's size and scope.

With the site satisfactorily prepared, Nazemian next concentrated on the addition itself, converting the existing front patio into a 14-by-26 foot footprint for a two level enclosure.

The lower level now accommodates a spacious foyer with ten foot ceilings, a first level guest room and a full bath. On the second level, the remodeler co-opted one of three existing bedrooms to form a substantially larger master bedroom suite.

Best yet, the new-site's plan permits a top item on the wish list: a 25-by-6 foot, two-level front porch that Jones says, evokes the graciously welcoming facade of her childhood home.

Inside, the new interior faithfully explores late 18th century decorum in detailing appropriate to several period collectibles and antiques.

Beginning with an Adam-style front door, bordered by sidelights and a Palladium window, the foyer is a perfectly articulated anteroom embellished in hardwood flooring, crown molding and embossed knee high panels. Two Doric columns on either side of a stair accessing the main living area are both decorative and structural.

Adjacent to the foyer, the new first level addition provides for a home office that doubles as a guest suite with a private entrance. The suite includes a full bath finished in Brazilian slate-tile, granite countertops and cherry cabinetry; practical, yet aesthetically pleasing.

"When the homeowner's goal is creating a seamless addition, our interior design department is invaluable," Nazemian says. "We can provide a whole catalog of inspirational ideas

based on recent work; this makes it easier for homeowners to think through the many possibilities." Upstairs, the new front-facing master bedroom is more than double the size of its predecessor.

The master suite opens out onto the upstairs porch with a stunning view of wooded acreage abutting the property.

In a corner of the master suite, Nazemian installed a gas fireplace, elevating it for visibility from the bed.

"It's a Bed and Breakfast fireplace," Jones reveals, "and it's also an effective heat source."

The master bath features a double vanity, a soaking tub, a walk-in shower, heated floors and towel racks. Structured porcelain covers the floors, shower and tub surrounds; the cherry cabinets have granite countertops. Warm cream-colored walls confer a restful ambiance ideal for soaking.



The new interior faithfully explores late 18th century design elements-- presenting a period-appropriate setting for several collectibles and antiques



BEFORE: Jones purchased an Oakton contemporary with a deeply sloping front yard that seemingly made it impossible to add on to the front elevation.

Other interior touches were introduced to better rationalize the existing rooms. Standard oak floors and wall-to-wall carpeting were replaced with richly stained Brazilian wood; a rich and well-balanced transformation throughout.

Remodelers were so impressed by the project that it was named the Washington area's best residential addition (in the \$100,000 to \$250,000 category) by the National Association of the Remodeling Industry in their annual "Contractor of the Year" (COTY) competition.

"It's the details that make the

whole house so cohesive," Jones observes.

To give the eclectic architecture a unifying cast, the exterior elevations are clad in cedar shake and painted vivid Wedgwood blue. "It just works beautifully," Jones says. "And it feels like home."

*John Byrd has been writing about home improvement for 30 years. He can be reached @ 703/715-8006, www.HomeFrontsNews.com or byrdmatx@gmail.com. Send photos of interesting remodeling projects to: b2b@homefrontsnews.com*



### Seven Secrets of Killer Home Décor

CONTENT BY KIM & JAVEN HOUSE  
SPECIAL TO THE FAIRFAX COUNTY TIMES

Want to make your home look like you hired an interior designer? Steal some of the secrets interior design pros recently shared with House Beautiful and your abode will be cover-story ready in no time:

Choose a color scheme. Boston-based designer Gary McBournie says to start with a basic color scheme for the whole house then let it play out a little differently in each room.

Paint your window trim. Who said windows need to be white? Designers suggest trying shades of green to have window trim blend with the outdoor scenery or even black so that at nighttime, trim virtually disappears.

Offset deep colors with white. Celebrity designer Joanna Gaines says to try saturated colors by balancing them out with white so they're less overwhelming. For example, paint the top half of your wall a deep green and the lower wainscoting a bright white.

Invest in the sofa. Designers agree that one area not to skimp on is your sofa. Put your money into a well-made statement piece that will last for years.

Keep neutrals interesting. Neutrals can add a great look, but keep it interesting by utilizing a variety of textures and finishes, such as matte lincens, soft velvets and shiny silks.

Mix up your tableware. Add interest to your table setting by mixing various sets of antique china and silverware.

Pair your patterns. When using patterned fabrics, more is actually more, says designer Meg Braff, so don't be shy about using a variety of patterns in one room. Just be symmetrical about your approach so there is the same textile on the other side of the room. For example, use one of the same patterned pair of throw pillows on chairs placed on opposite sides of the room.



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