

Home for the author



A fieldstone wall just inside the archway provides an appropriate backdrop for an English poker table;



A rain forest quartzite counter surface, dark cherry cabinets, and wood-grained porcelain tile reinforce the bar's old world ambiance.

■ "Irish bar meets Ritz Carlton" lower level solution wins (CotY) award

BY JOHN BYRD
SPECIAL TO THE FAIRFAX
COUNTY TIMES

Author John Gilstrap had waited long enough for a "destination place" in the lower level of his 5,500 square foot duplex in Fairfax. Gilstrap, who writes the best-selling John Graves novels, had purchased the home 11 years ago and promptly "finished it"--as a place where his son could shoot pool with friends.

Fast forward a few years; the son has graduated from college and moved into a place of his own. Seizing the day, Gilstrap and wife Joy decide it's now their turn. Main goal: convert the lower level into a family entertainment suite that conveys something of his Irish heritage and her interest in art.

It all begins with a detailed program. As Gilstrap explained to his chosen remodeler, he wanted an intriguing mix of interior design values. "Irish bar meets Ritz Carlton," as he described it.

Of course, it's not always clear what a remodeler understands about a homeowner's "wish list," but Michael Nash Design Build and Homes not only embraced Gilstrap's vision, but also ran with it-- demonstrating considerable creative aplomb along the way.

"I had actually interviewed several remodelers," Gilstrap recalls, "and they mostly tried to tell me what I wanted. By contrast, the Michael Nash people listened. It was an inspired collaboration from the start."

Also, not to be overlooked, the result is exceptional-- by definition, in fact, the makeover recently garnered a regional (11 state) "Contractor of the Year" (CotY) Grand Award for best "basement above \$100,000.00" from the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI).

For John and Joy Gilstrap, though, the deeper satisfaction is in the beautifully articulated entertainment space with its many well-defined, cleverly-integrated activity zones, to wit:

- A full-service bar perfectly replicates the signature component of a classic Irish pub. With its dark cherry cabinets, rain forest quartzite countertop, brass foot railings and hammer copper sink, the plan accommodates a microwave, a refrigerator, an icemaker and a dishwasher. Leather and mahogany stools provide comfortable counter access. Underfoot, distressed wide-plank, wood-grained porcelain tile reinforces the old world ambiance. Overhead, a tray ceiling festooned with copper tile paneling and LED lights brings the gathering spot into bold relief
- Nearby, an electronic entertainment center set off by a ledge-stone-wrapped fireplace topped by a 50" plasma TV embedded in a newly-wired AV cabinet
- A new archway with bench differentiates the foyer within an otherwise open floor plan; the re-designed staircase features wrought-iron spindles and cherry-stained handrails
- A fieldstone wall just inside

the archway provides an appropriate backdrop for an English poker table; the textured wall motif is developed further around the fireplace

- The new guest bathroom boasts a walk-in shower with a tumbled marble surround; there's also a custom-made hammered copper vessel sink over a distressed ebony vanity

To supply the bar with the critical utilities, the Michael Nash team removed portions of the original concrete slab, routing

new plumbing and electrical wiring to the designated foot print.

Meanwhile, cherry wainscoting on every elevation visually unifies primary activity zones. Existing vertical supports were, likewise, faced in matching ledgerstone.

The interior's "elegance," Gilstrap says, was his top finish-work priority.

As such, the design by Oliver Nazemian is understated, yet distinctive. Walls' surfaces painted,

respectively, in saffron and cerise introduce color themes that are further explored in fabric patterns, furnishings and throw rugs; a hammer copper sink behind the bar twinkles before a turquoise and gold-flecked backsplash.

There are also places for Joy's prized paintings, spotlighted by wall scones.

The upshot: Gilstrap says that he and Joy regularly entertain, sometimes hosting a soiree for a 100 or more. In the Christmas season, the couple's black-tie affair begins in the lower level then moves upstairs to the formal dining room.

Gilstrap says he also periodically throws a launch party when he finishes a new book.

"This is just a perfect place for all kinds of purposes," he summarizes. "We're thrilled with how well it suits our needs."

For information, call : 703-641-9800 or email: Michael-NashKitchens.com



PHOTOS BY GREG HADLEY

Best basement over \$100,000. John Gilstrap described his vision for his home's lower level as "Irish Bar Meets Ritz Carlton". The spacious family entertainment suite includes a TV-viewing zone with a hearth and an impeccably finished full-service bar.



Wall surfaces with scones were designed to display some of Joy Gilstrap's collection of fine paintings.



A new archway with bench differentiates the foyer within an otherwise open floor plan; the re-designed staircase features wrought-iron spindles and cherry-stained handrails;

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

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Vote by Absentee Ballot Now - May 16 at either:

McLean Community Center (MCC)
Administration Office:
6631 Old Dominion Drive
McLean, VA 22101
703-790-0123/TTY 711

Class Programs/Registration Office:
6645 Old Dominion Drive
McLean, VA 22101
703-744-9365

Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. - 11 p.m.
Saturday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Closed on Sunday

Old Firehouse Center (OFC)
1440 Chain Bridge Road
McLean, VA 22101
703-448-8336/TTY 711

Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
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Absentee voting affidavits and ballots must be returned to one of these locations by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, May 16.

Requesting Absentee Ballots:

You can pick up absentee ballot packages and vote at both MCC offices or OFC. You can also request absentee ballot packages by email at elections@mcleancenter.org or by telephone at 703-790-0123, TTY: 711.

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Hand delivered absentee voting affidavits and ballots must be received at either MCC location or OFC by that time.

If you have questions:

Contact 703-790-0123, TTY: 711 or email elections@mcleancenter.org

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