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CELEBRATING THE ARTS | JUNE 2018





HOME REMODELING

Irish Pub Meets Ritz-Carlton

11-STATE BEST OF CATEGORY WINNER | BY JOHN BYRD

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, and the son has graduated from college and moved into a place of his own. Seizing the day, Gilstrap and wife Joy decided it’s now their turn with their main goal to covert 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 Pub Meets Ritz-Carlton,” as he describes 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 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’s 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). The award is one of five regional CoTY grand awards presented to Michael Nash this year.

In accepting the prize, company founder and president Sonny Nazemian praised his company’s talent pool and its well-practiced cost controls. “We use a turn-key business model and can offer fixed price contracts

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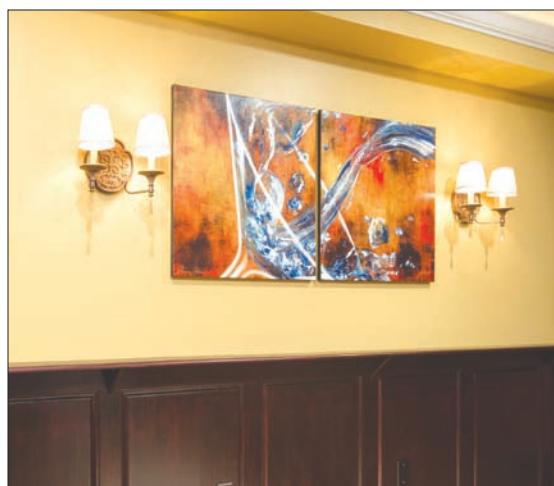
—Sonny Nazemian



because most of the work is executed by Michael Nash employees,” the remodeler observes. “Since the CoTY highlights remodeling solutions that outperform the limits of the budget, we’re usually well-positioned to offer better prices.”

For the Gilstraps, 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 that 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.
- A nearby electronic entertainment center is set off by a ledgestone-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, while 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.



Page 43: John Gilstrap described his vision for his home’s lower level as “Irish Pub Meets Ritz-Carlton.” The spacious family entertainment suite includes a TV-viewing zone with a hearth and an impeccably finished full-service bar..

Above: A ledgestone-wrapped fireplace topped by a 50” plasma TV provides a cozy spot for electronic entertainment. The Gilstraps use the space daily.

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

Lower left: Wall surfaces with scones were designed to display some of Joy Gilstrap’s collection of fine paintings.

Opposite top: A rain forest quartzite counter surface, dark cherry cabinets, and wood-grained porcelain tile reinforce the bar’s Old World ambiance; and A tray ceiling with copper tile paneling and LED lights is among the bar’s stand-out decorative elements.



• The new guest bathroom boasts a walk-in shower with a tumbled marble surround and 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. Wall surfaces were painted, respectively, in saffron and cerise to introduce color themes that were 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 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."



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