

KEEPING MOTHER NATURE AT BAY

by Cheryl Cease



Three years ago, Melody and Buddy Green purchased a gorgeous, two-story house on the Lynnhaven River in Virginia Beach because they wanted to live on the water. But the Greens soon discovered that whenever a nor'easter stormed into town, the liquid charms of Mother Nature became a tad too close for comfort.

During the first big storm "we literally had water blowing right through the locks," Melody says. "You could stand there and see this rusty water running down the inside of the door." At times, there even was water dripping out of ceiling light fixtures. As a result, the Greens' house had suffered considerable water damage in the dozen years or so it had been standing.

The couple wanted more than a quick fix to solve the problem. Avid entertainers, they also were interested in remodeling the first floor of their home to include a bar area in the back, the part of their house most susceptible to leakage. "We figured we could take care of two problems by taking off the bay window area, which was where we had a lot of problems from nor'easters and hurricanes," explains Melody, who began looking for a contractor to handle the remodeling project.

In the spring of 1999, the Greens hooked up with Jerry Edmonds and Lana O'Meara, the husband-and-wife team who own and operate Chesapeake-based Designs of Distinction Ltd. (Melody had been impressed with the couple's entry in the 1998 Homearama, a showcase of new homes sponsored by Tidewater Builders Association.) O'Meara and Edmonds sat down with the Greens, and together they drew up a plan that solved the water problem while playing up the riverfront location.

"Most of our clients have a basic idea of what they want, but they also want some help," says Edmonds. "The Greens wanted to have a bar area but didn't know how to do it, and they wanted the kitchen area more user-friendly. What I suggested was to add more space."

After a little fine-tuning, the final plan called for converting a too-tiny downstairs breakfast nook off the kitchen into a spacious entertainment area complete with a curving granite bar. Upstairs, the plan would transform an unused balcony off the master bedroom into a sitting area featuring majestic columns and a gas fireplace. Both rooms were designed to provide dramatic views of the river and easy access to an in-ground pool and deck area out back. The final goal was to

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▲ Tasked with the job of taking a nice home and making it spectacular, Jerry Edmonds and Lana O'Meara of Designs of Distinction Ltd. converted unused space and enlarged 100-small rooms to create more accommodating living areas. The husband-and-wife team headed up the project that included enclosing an unused balcony to enlarge the master bedroom upstairs and turning a small breakfast nook on the ground floor into an expansive entertainment mecca. When the job was complete, the previously adequate bedroom had been transformed into a luxury suite with a columned sitting area overlooking the river. To make things even cozier, a gas fireplace had been installed.

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properly install high-quality windows and doors to keep Mother Nature and all her attributes outside where they belong.

To accomplish this, the downstairs bay window and angled walls were removed, and the living space was bumped out and squared off, with the kitchen opening to the great room through a columned entryway. "The kitchen area also was made much brighter," says Edmonds, "because we added so much glass," including two sets of double doors and a pair of full-length windows.

The new bar area also was designed with columns, as well as a mirrored back to further open up the space. A sink and under-the-counter refrigerator were added to keep the area self-contained.

Upstairs, two walls that framed part of an outside deck were removed and the living area was extended, a pair of columns was added, and new windows were installed on either side of a gas-burning fireplace "to create a nice sitting area that offers a three-sided view of the river," says O'Meara.

"The remodeling has made our home a lot more relaxing and it makes entertaining a lot easier," says Green. It also has opened up views from a number of rooms that previously were obstructed by walls. "Now I can stand at my kitchen sink and look right into the great room."

And, adds Edmonds, from that very same spot in the kitchen, the Greens now have a bird's-eye view of the Lynnhaven River through the expanse of glass in their great room.

The project received a stamp of approval from the TBA Remodelers Council this past May, earning Designs of Distinction a REX Grand Award in the category for additions costing between \$50,000 and \$99,000. "The comment the judges made was that we gave the Greens functional space," says Edmonds. "And what pleased us is the fact that the addition blends perfectly with the existing home."

Although the project added only 300 square feet to the house, the work itself was extremely complex, note Edmonds and O'Meara. "With any residential job, the most challenging part is doing the demolition and getting the new job framed in," says Edmonds. "If you're going to have problems, that's when they occur." Indeed, in removing the walls of the Green house, the crew did find some additional damage that required repairs.

But there were other aspects of the job that made it a very challenging project, Edmonds continues. "The logistics of getting material in and trash out were difficult because we were on a limited site," he says. "Every board had to be hand-carried from the front to the back down a narrow grass pathway."

Even more difficult, adds O'Meara, was "trying to allow the Greens to have as normal a life as we could during the renovation process."

To accomplish this, says Edmonds, the remodelers worked in stages of "demolish, frame; demolish, frame" to keep as little area open to the elements as possible at any one time. That proved essential for a project that stretched into the heart of summer, the season when major storms traditionally come calling on coastal areas. "During the time we were opening up the entire back wall and framing it in, we had two nor'easters back-to-back, so we had to button up and go away and wait for the weather to improve."

But even that problem paled in comparison to getting the existing hardwood oak floors refinished with the proper pickled-oak stain. "The first product we put down didn't take," says O'Meara. The second attempt also was unsuccessful. "We finally had to get the manufacturer involved. This was something that just couldn't be foreseen."

The memory of that floor trauma still lingers for Melody Green. "Our floors were sanded down three times before they were able to get the finish to come out right," she says. "We went through the whole month of July when we had to be out of the house every weekend" while crews worked 12-hour days to fix the problem. "It took three applications, but we're fine with it now."

And Green has nothing but compliments for Edmonds and O'Meara who, she says, persisted until the floors and everything else about the project were the way she wanted them. "I was pleased by their immediate response to phone calls and complaints," she says. "And we were very pleased with the quality of the work. They made every effort to make the project as stress-free as possible." 🏠



▲ Greenwich Kitchen Center Inc. supplied the pickled oak cabinets to complement the flooring and TRINDCO provided the granite countertops. Beyond, several full-view glass doors and windows from Andersen allow the homeowners to enjoy the river view year-round, while also providing easy access to the backyard amenities.



▲ The Greens felt their first-floor breakfast nook was too small for the size of the home and that the original set-up didn't allow easy access outside to the backyard and beyond. Not to mention, this was the area of the home that suffered the most from water leakage. The remodel (pictured above) not only corrected the water leakage problem, it created a large room -- complete with a curved granite bar -- that was especially designed for summer entertaining. The bar provides extra seating and is equipped with a sink and an under-the-counter refrigerator.