

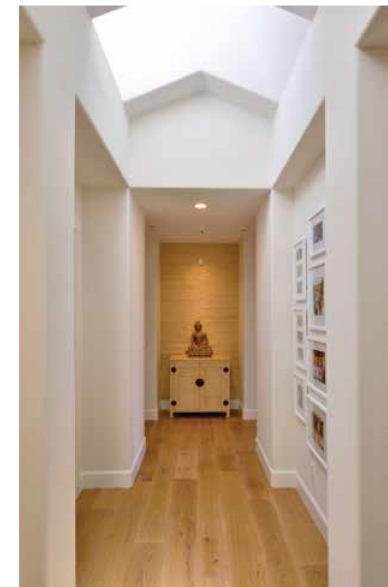


# NO FUSS, NO MUSS

A family-friendly makeover encourages laid-back living in a casual, comfortable atmosphere

BY EVA DITLER • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTIN MANN





**F**amily photographs that fill walls with happy smiles tell the tale of a La Jolla home's interior remodel — a makeover energized by the joy of kith and kin, with an emphasis on fun and relaxation.

"Very little needed to be done on the home's exterior," architect Trip Bennett says. "We refined the stucco color, refinished exposed overhangs and added chimney caps to bring in a little more Spanish Colonial Revival style."

The interiors lacked the easy-living, dressed-for-comfort impression the homeowners desired. Closed-off, dark rooms cast a forbidding gloom. Early '80s finishes exuded a dated, weary look. And multiple additions weren't cohesive.

Clockwise from far left: Knocking down walls created a great room. Lift-and-slide glass doors expand the interior space to the outdoors, where the pool's basketball hoop evidences the home's emphasis on family fun. A Buddha statue finds an apt home atop a chest at the end of a hallway.

Previous spread: An upgraded landscape reflects the home's Mediterranean ambiance. A deck off the master bedroom affords an ocean view.





"The first discussion in the initial plan was about the chopped-up interior public spaces," Trip says. "By reconfiguring the center section of the house, we ended up with a large family room, kitchen and dining room that connect with each other."

Interior designer Alison Dorvillier specified the new finishes, custom cabinetry and flooring. And, Trip says, she "pulled the palette together."

The contractor also played an integral part in actualizing a remodel that contained numerous grading difficulties.

"One of the most interesting things was the challenge of working in a tight space," Jesse Lyons of Murfey Construction says. "The house is on a corner lot on a hillside. Being able to do all this work, with the way the house sits, was one of the great accomplishments of the project."

Another intriguing agenda challenge was attaining an "I'm-on-vacation" feel — which makes itself evident as soon as the rustic front doors open to reveal a sun-filled living space that looks out expansive glass doors to the backyard pool's emerald waters. Adding fountain features and classically patterned tiles enlivened what had been a typical pool. These inclusions, along with the switch from a series of French doors to 20-foot-wide, lift-and-slide glass doors vastly improved the view.

To the living room's east, a removed wall opens the area to a transformed kitchen/dining space. Raised ceilings add a sense of volume to what was a cramped, separate room that hadn't inspired cooking. By stealing space from an office (now situated on the other side, between the kitchen and garage), a casual dining area sits prettily partnered with the kitchen. Both face pool views, while the window over the kitchen sink looks out toward the Pacific.

**The formal dining room was transformed into a billiards room, where a traditional English spectator sofa encourages cheering players on from the sidelines.**



Taking space from a home office, the expanded kitchen/dining room invites family and friends to gather. With its ease of function and professional-quality range, the kitchen also inspires cooking. The arched opening leads to the new office.







Left and above: In a freewheeling home that's not too ritzy, the biggest splash may come from the backyard pool and its California Pottery Works tile, also installed on the outdoor fireplace. The family enjoys table tennis, played on the top tier of the back yard, underneath market lights.

A curved staircase just beyond the dining area leads up to the master bedroom, where an ocean panorama beckons from the moment one awakens. Removing an unused fireplace enlarged the master suite and added space for a his-and-her closet. Expanding a small deck just outside the bedroom resulted in enough room to include a day bed. A retractable awning provides shade when needed.

More bedrooms, including two guest-rooms and a children's suite with twin bunk beds and a sky blue-hued bathroom, can be found downstairs. Overnight visitors have easy access to the pool, living room and kitchen without fuss or bother should the homeowners still be upstairs enjoying their own cozy, seaweed retreat.

Also downstairs, on the other side of the hallway from the living area, two indoor play spaces stand side by side in the spot where a den and the original living room had been located.

"The homeowners repurposed what had been the living room into a formal dining room because it was the only big room they had where they could all sit together," Trip says.

Family fun time includes lots of games and sports. In one recreation room, billiards take precedence; in the other, board games win the day (but at night, a Murphy bed can come out of hiding to accommodate an extra guest or two). Outside, a pingpong table awaits challengers.

"In the rear corner of the back yard was a two-level patio with an ocean view," Trip says. "We raised it to the higher level to make one larger, single space and then added a trellis with a retractable canvas system and a pingpong table for legendary family tournaments."

Dubbed "The Eagle's Nest," the area, which includes a wet bar, small refrigerator, custom awnings and made-to-order lighting, became one of the homeowners' favorite spots.

On the front side, a second split-level patio — also converted to a single level and also with a vista to the sea — link the game rooms to a guest bedroom.

Visual connections between rooms and views are among the makeover's primary assets. But they travel hand-in-hand with a new, easygoing style that reminds one of the familiar and cherished. ❖