



A curved breakfast bar separates the kitchen from the living area of the new family room. A wall of glass panels in the tower office above the kitchen maintains the open feel of the home's floor plan.

old meets **BOLD**

A timeworn bungalow gets an up-to-date look

MARK CONNOR AND HIS WIFE, Lee, were drawn to their tiny 1930s bungalow more for its location in a prime Boston suburb than for its outdated floor plan. The small, boxy rooms—all on one floor—consisted of a living room, dining room, kitchen, two bedrooms, and a bath. “It was cramped—even for a couple just starting out, like us,” says Lee. “And the closets”—a Lilliputian 9 inches deep—“were useless,” she recalls. But the Connors saw the potential to expand the modest structure, and Mark, an architect, had a plan. ▶



Instead of just adding another story to gain space in their tiny 1930s bungalow (TOP), the homeowners added a series of rooflines that blend with its surroundings (ABOVE). The additions modernized the vintage house without changing its simple style and character.

Maximizing every inch of space, a slate fireplace tucks neatly under the backstairs. A recessed niche houses a TV and a cabinet for videos.





A truncated bay window in the great room at the front of the house (ABOVE LEFT) offers a display shelf above and a window seat below. It also echoes the window in the family room (ABOVE CENTER) at the rear



of the house. The master bedroom suite (ABOVE RIGHT) features a cozy fireplace and a loft above that Mark uses as an office. A glass door adds to the feeling of open spaciousness.

The 12-year project nearly tripled the living space of the 780-square-foot house, but Mark's innovative design ideas sometimes set him at odds with his New England neighbors. Even Mark's building crew—his 75-year-old dad, Jim, a former cabinetmaker, and his brother, Jay—didn't know what to make of the massive, curving windows, oddly angled walls, cathedral ceilings, and 32-foot tower that now grace the modest house. "Once I drew the plans," says Mark, "my father had to figure out how to make them work. I remember him shaking his head and grumbling, 'Can't you just draw a straight line?'" But a rectangular second-story addition was the farthest thing from Mark's mind as he searched for ways to blend the old structure with more cutting-edge, contemporary touches.

GOING FOR THE BOLD

Mark's ambitious plan began with a dramatic face-lift of the front facade. By appropriating half of a deep, closed-in front porch, he added 10 feet to the small living room. The solid outside walls of the remaining porch were replaced with pillars to create a new, par-

tially sheltered front entrance. Then, making it clear that this wasn't just another boring bungalow renovation, Mark wrapped the new living room with a bank of five casement windows—ganged together in a gentle arc—that was installed at an angle to the front wall, essentially truncating the front right corner of the house. "The neighbors were pretty horrified to see a window go in at an angle like that," Lee recalls. "Everyone thought we were insane."

Undaunted by critics, Mark and his family crew pressed on. The living room's low ceiling was lifted to cathedral height, and a small stained-glass window was punched in high in the gable-end wall. "When the light comes in, it's like being in a church," says Lee, who handpicked each piece of glass for the window's random pattern.

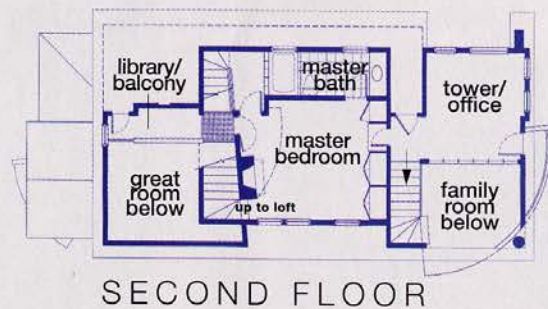
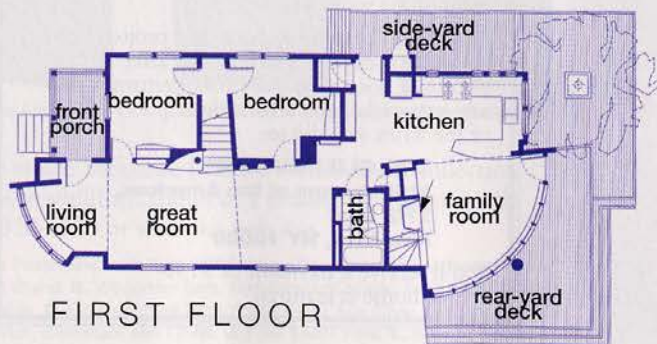
Next, Mark tore down the wall between the expanded living room and dining area to create a great room. A bathroom update came next, followed by a reconfiguring of the walls between the two down-

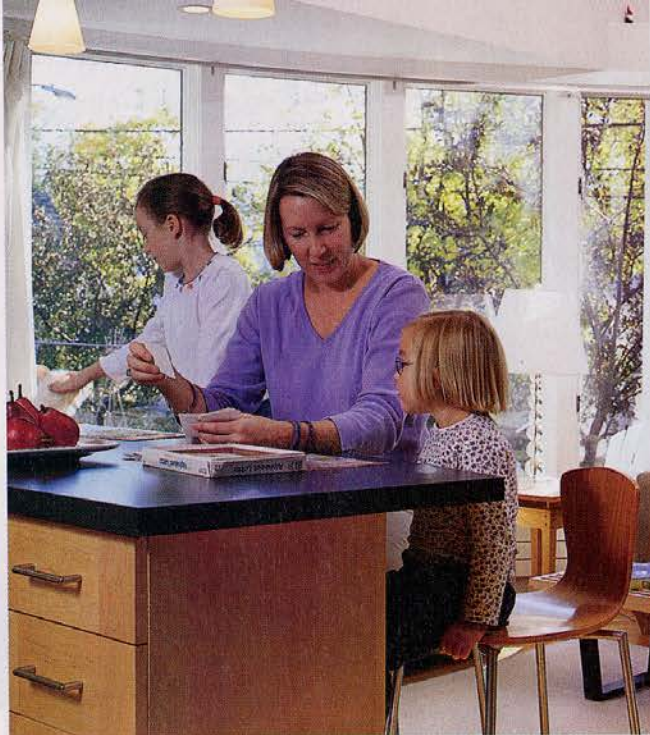
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The Plans

In the 12-year-long transformation, the original boxy house grew to 2,100 square feet of surprising curves and diagonals. In addition to a complete

new plan for the first floor, a master bedroom and second bath were added to the raised attic. And a tower office rose on the rear of the house.





The tower office provides garden views for at-home work. Lee and daughters Emily and Sarah (ABOVE) do homework at the kitchen's breakfast bar.



stairs bedrooms to make room for a staircase. "This was all in anticipation of a second-story master bedroom and bath that we'd build someday," says Lee. "Back then we called it 'the staircase to nowhere.'"

MORE CURVES AND A TOWER

By the time Mark and Lee had saved enough for upstairs renovations, their first child came along, moving shared family space higher on the priority list. So they put the master bedroom on hold and devoted the next few years to tearing out the old kitchen and incorporating that space into a new kitchen-and-family-room addition on the rear of the house. Mark designed a window-filled room where light would stream in and topped it off with a soaring cathedral ceiling. He also added plenty of built-in cabinets and niches—"to eliminate the need for extra furniture," he says. "This keeps the room feeling light and spacious."

Borrowing a statement from the front of the house, Mark ganged casement windows into a long curve placed at an angle in the back wall of the family room. This prompted more nervous comments from his neighbors, but Mark stuck to his plan and erected a tower above the kitchen addition. Accessed by a new back staircase, it became Lee's office. "It's like my own little tree house," says Lee, "because it nestles alongside the branches of our magnolia in the backyard."

THE FINAL STAGE

By the last phase of the project, the Connors had two young daughters, and they gave Grandpa Jim (now in his 80s) a break by hiring a contractor to frame the master bedroom and bath. Located in the 400-square-foot raised attic, the staircase to nowhere, built nearly three years before, finally had a place to go.

"I love how our house evolved," says Lee, who spent many hours experimenting with the pastel color scheme used throughout the house. "I painted it four and five times until I got it right," she says. "If we had done the renovation all at once, it might have turned out differently. But time gave us the courage to do more and more exciting things."

Even the neighbors have come to appreciate the couple's daring. Says Lee: "The most conservative people in the neighborhood have come around. They really like what we've done." ■

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