

Love Story

A modern makeover in Annapolis
delivers luxurious, one-level living

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Even in the dead of winter, a newly renovated home on the banks of the South River shines. Strong, horizontal lines define the dwelling and its landscape. A mix of white nickel gap siding, gray corrugated zinc and stained mahogany signals that despite its humble origins, this is no ordinary bay shack. Seemingly on cue one February morning, swans surrounded the home's pier as if they too were clamoring to get a good look at the one-of-a-kind refuge.

The project marked a new beginning for the house—and its owners. Lee and Mark Miller were both widowed following decades of marriage. After meeting online, the two began a courtship and in 2020, they wed.

Intent on creating a home that celebrated their union, the Millers decided to overhaul the Annapolis bi-level that Mark, a retired business executive, had acquired in 2012 as weekend getaway. “I think it dates back to the ’50s,” says Lee, a former real estate agent. “It was a little fishing shack that was added onto over time.”

Renovation Architecture: Peter Miles, The Drawing Board, Inc., Annapolis, Maryland. Interior Design: Katalin Farnady, Farnady Interiors, Annapolis, Maryland. Kitchen Design: Jonas Carnemark, CR, CKD, Konst SieMatic, Bethesda, Maryland. Renovation Contractor: Glenn Larson, project supervisor; Meredith Hillyer, vice president, Lynbrook of Annapolis, Inc., Annapolis, Maryland. Landscape Architecture: Matthew Rhoderick, McHale Landscape Design, Upper Marlboro, Maryland.



Previous spread and this page: Leathered granite anchors a fireplace wall in the family room. Custom seating promotes easy conversation and heady views—reflected in the wet bar’s mirrored backsplash (opposite, bottom). The round coffee table and pedestal table are from the designer’s Farnady Collection through Niermann Weeks. In the front yard (opposite, top), McHale Landscape Design created Corten steel “shelves” of turf to complement architect Peter Miles’ overhaul.



The home suffered from low ceilings, run-of-the-mill finishes and choppy interiors that failed to capitalize on expansive views out to the Chesapeake Bay. Recognizing a diamond in the rough, the couple wanted to transform the main level into a haven for single-story living while reserving the lower floor for a steady stream of visitors—including their four adult children and eight grandkids.

Mark proposed taking the residence in a modern direction. Lee, whose prior homes leaned traditional, took a leap of faith. “I’m all in,” she responded, “but we have to find the right team

first.” Following conversations with a handful of architects, they landed on Peter Miles of The Drawing Board, who in turn introduced them to Katalin Farnady of Farnady Interiors. The owners then tapped Lynbrook of Annapolis for construction and McHale Landscape Design for an upgrade of the one-third-acre site.

Miles completely reimagined the exterior and the 2,850-square foot main level. “The home had been expanded with multiple roof slopes colliding at awkward angles,” he explains. “The renovation simplified the roofline with a low slope, except for a shed roof that lifts up the family room wall and opens it to the water.”

These pages: The open floor plan offers unencumbered water vistas through Marvin windows and accordion doors leading out to the screened porch. A sculptural Luke Lamp Co. fixture floats above the Bernhardt dining table. The kitchen features custom touch-latch cabinetry by SieMatic. Calacatta Crema marble graces the waterfall island and minimalist hood. Additional workspace, appliances and cabinets beyond the wall ovens keep clutter at bay.



“THE VIEW IS THE GREATEST ARTWORK IN THE HOUSE; IT KEEPS ON GOING.”

—KATALIN FARNADY

A foyer wrapped in slatted-mahogany panels leads into an open space combining the kitchen, dining and family room. Accordion doors afford seamless passage to a screened porch, backyard and dock. Hidden doors in the foyer paneling lead to a functional core where Miles consolidated a powder room and mudroom off the garage. A home office for two is reached from here or the kitchen.

Eliminating two small main-floor bedrooms made way for a generous primary suite. Accessed near the foyer stairway, it features a large bedroom and separate baths and dressing rooms for each newlywed—along with infinite bay vistas.

The interior plan took shape at weekly design meetings, which began during covid and continued through the 18-month construction phase. “Katalin and I worked together closely to make sure interior materials warmed up and helped define each of the spaces,” says Miles.

Taking cues from the exterior, Farnady developed a nuanced tableau, focusing on a monochromatic palette enlivened by rich textures, patterns and hints of the unexpected. “When an architect gives you floor-to-ceiling windows and they’re focused on the view, you have to keep the interiors somewhat minimal,” she notes.

In the family room, she offset pale oak floors and creamy upholstered seating and rugs with a dramatic fireplace wall of Black Diamond granite. Meanwhile, the open kitchen boasts a waterfall island, counters and even a range hood sheathed in Calacatta Crema marble. “For me, the secret to keeping a monochromatic interior interesting is paying close attention to details—both architecturally and decoratively,” explains the designer. “I played with sizes, shapes and textures, adding different materials and finishes to keep each room unique.”

Eye-catching materials and lighting dress up even the home’s everyday areas. Clockwise from right: An Uttermost fixture and Mica wall covering by Kravet animate the mudroom. The powder room boasts a sink in Bora Bora marble and Schumacher wallpaper. A graphic Lee Jofa wall covering takes the owners’ home office in a bold direction. Farnady designed and Konst SieMatic fabricated the cabinetry in all three spaces.





In the primary bedroom, Bernhardt swivel chairs are positioned for gazing at passing boats and birdlife. Flanked by Kravet night tables, the custom bed is upholstered in leather. A fixture from Jones Lighting adds a sculptural touch.

The open layout and clever kitchen design foster easy entertaining. Collaborating with Jonas Carnemark of Konst SieMatic, the team avoided upper cabinetry near the island in favor of unobstructed views. Around the corner from the oven wall, additional cabinetry, workspace and appliances await.

The Millers joined Farnady on field trips to High Point Market and local showrooms in search of the right mix of furniture, finishes and lighting. “It was clear that they wanted comfortable furniture with fluid lines,” the designer says. In the family room, custom seating, bespoke tables from her eponymous collection and a wet bar cater to gatherings large and small.

“Giving the team free rein” was key to the project’s success, says Lee Miller, “because you don’t know what you don’t know.”

Lavishing attention on every detail elevated spaces beyond the ordinary. Miles traded conventional baseboard molding for reglets with a precise, grooved reveal and installed acoustical ceiling panels to absorb sound. Farnady played up the home’s minimal backdrop with dramatic textures and glamorous lighting—from the office’s geometric Lee Jofa wall covering to the bedroom’s freeform chandelier.

Executing the plan was no easy feat for the builder. “Contemporary trim details are clean and crisp, but at the same time can be involved and time-consuming,” says Lynbrook’s Meredith Hillyer. “Unlike a traditional home, there are no extra layers that can disguise an out-of-true condition. It’s one and done.”

McHale landscape architect Matthew Rhoderick echoed the architecture in his innovative exterior plan. “We jumped in with a palette of materials that is often underutilized in waterfront properties,” he says. “Evoking an industrial feel with Corten steel, dark-stained concrete and trimmed architectural plantings, we were able to make the entryway the star of the show.” Corten steel carries through to the backyard, where it edges pathways to the pier.

Embarking on married life together, the Millers couldn’t be happier with their finished home. “As a realtor, I’m jaded—but this is my favorite house ever,” reflects Lee. “We watch the sun rise every morning and the place sparkles like a diamond. And every evening we get the most incredible sky—it’s on fire. Thanks to our expert team, we were able to translate our wishes into a stunning home.” ■

SOURCES OF NOTE

Hardwood Flooring: elitehardwoodflooring.com. Windows & Kitchen Door: marvin.com. Paint in Main Living, Dining & Kitchen Areas: sherwin-williams.com. Wall Ovens: geappliances.com through adu.com. Bedroom Rug: starkcarpet.com. For a complete list of resources, see homeanddesign.com.