

A Portland bungalow gains much-needed storage

Posted by [ldahl](#) September 03, 2009 00:19AM



Torsten Kjellstrand/The Oregonian
Alison and Jon Rettmann's renovated bungalow better accommodates their family.

Alison and Jon Rettmann bought their 1916 one-and-a-half-story bungalow in part for the coveted Laurelhurst neighborhood, a treasured cache of well-crafted homes built at the height of America's Arts and Crafts movement.

But their home suffered from an uninspired paint job and an abundance of generic 12-inch-square ceramic tiles in the kitchen and bathrooms, part of a superfluous cosmetic makeover done with a quick sale in mind.

Worse, the built-ins that should be every bungalow's birthright were nowhere to be found, most likely removed sometime in the 1950s when cleaner, sparer spaces of the midcentury modern movement became vogue.

"We really liked the light, and the floors were still beautiful," Alison says. "But for a bungalow, it had no built-ins."

It was up to the Rettmanns, along with design/build firm [Craftsman Design and Renovation](#), to bring back the charm and function associated with these modest, well-crafted homes. They had no desire to alter the original footprint and structure of the house -- they liked the floor plan and size. They simply needed storage space. There were just three closets in the entire house, not nearly enough for a young couple starting a family.

Here's how they created storage where there was none, and did so in a way that honored and enhanced their home's Arts and Crafts heritage.

"Everything just grew organically from our conversations," says their designer, [Chelly Wentworth, of Craftsman Design and Renovation](#). "Alison was so open to everything, we just kind of fed off of each

other."



Peter Eckert/Eckert & Eckert

Photography There wasn't room for a full breakfast nook, but designer Chelly Wentworth created seating anyway with this ingenious built-in perch.

THE KITCHEN

The Rettmanns wanted a place where guests could perch and sip wine while they cooked. So Wentworth increased the size of the doorway between the kitchen and the adjoining sunroom to produce an ingenious alcove with built-in bookshelves and a padded bench big enough for two.

"It's such a nice addition, and it was something that we didn't even think we could add," says Alison.



Torsten Kjellstrand/The Oregonian Metolius Ridge Tile of Eugene provided this one-of-a-kind backsplash; designer Chelly Wentworth came up with built-in storage for the Rettmanns' collection of chef's knives.

Neville's Custom Woodworking did all the custom casework in the house, fashioning cabinets out of natural cherry. Using flush inset doors, traditional exposed metal hinges and ceiling-high cabinets created a seamless, built-in look.

The backsplash behind the countertops and stove highlights the handcrafted work of [Eugene-based Metolius Ridge Tile](#), while a built-in pantry boasts a custom leaded-glass design that plays off the geometric circles and lines in the tile backsplash.

Now the kitchen -- updated for convenience and reconfigured to allow a greater connection to the rest of the

main floor -- exudes artsy charm.



Torsten Kjellstrand/The Oregonian New built-ins hide unsightly litter boxes and help contain odors while providing easy access for felines.

THE SUNROOM

The adjoining sunroom -- a drafty afterthought added sometime after the original house was built -- basically housed cat litter boxes and bike gear. (The Rettmanns, both medical doctors, commute by bike to work year-round.) They wanted to link it visually with the kitchen to create more seating and overflow for guests. The couple envisioned a cozy "breakfast room," where they could soak up some sun while sipping their morning coffee. The generous built-in benches provide plenty of room for Saturday-morning lounging.

"We made the seats extra deep because Alison pictured it as a place she could fill with pillows," Wentworth says.



Peter Eckert/Eckert & Eckert Photography Both Alison and Jon commute by bike year-round, making functional storage a must, including slate floors and a built-in bench for slipping off wet shoes.

The room's second function would be a well-organized (and newly insulated) mudroom lined with cherry built-ins to house everything from coats and bike gear to those litter boxes, ingeniously camouflaged with a hidden flip-down door and a small built-in exhaust fan, which otherwise would be relegated to the

basement.

"I really didn't want the basement door open all the time with a child in the house," says Alison.

Slate tiles set in a mock Versailles pattern gave the room still more style and function. The boot bench was designed to store shoes, helmets and other cycling-related sundries.

By linking the sunroom to the backyard with French doors and a back deck, the Rettmanns had a perfect place to stow the stuff of life without compromising their sense of style and order.

"I am not a clutter person," says Alison.



Peter Eckert/Eckert & Eckert

PhotographyThe craft room upstairs has its own set of built-ins, including a pullout work desk that stores neatly out of sight when not in use.

FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT



Peter Eckert/Eckert & Eckert Photography A twin bed pulls out of the wall and into a queen when the in-laws visit, making use of underutilized eave space.

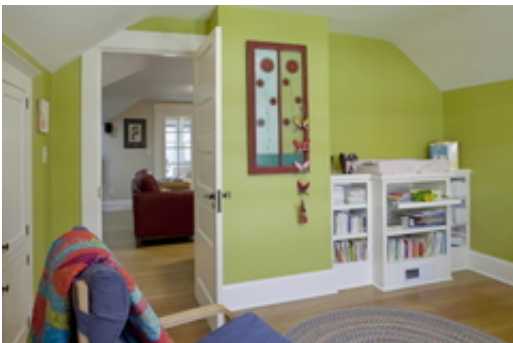
Upstairs, an oversize landing had served as a makeshift family room. Now the entire back wall is a custom built-in media center with bookshelves on either side tucked into the eave space behind the wall.

The small bedrooms on either side of the media room got their own custom built-ins added into eave space, giving an added sense of spaciousness and purpose.

Since Alison likes to quilt and knit, she got a specialized built-in, complete with a pullout table on undermount glides that hides her cutting mat, and plenty of drawers to house her craft supplies.

Wentworth is especially proud of the couple's custom trundle bed, a clever space-saver that took advantage of still more underutilized eave space. A queen-size mattress tucks into a giant drawer on rollers that slides back into the wall. By day the room serves as a cozy seating area, and French doors help link it visually to the media room.

"It slides two-thirds of the way in and is a little wider than a couch, so you can lounge on it," says Alison.



Peter Eckert/Eckert & Eckert Photography Upstairs, the couple's ode to the efficiency of built-ins extended to their daughter's nursery, where a changing table can someday

transform into a desk.

The baby's room across the hall has similar touches, including a built-in wardrobe and shelves that can be removed to create more hanging space as the child grows.

On the opposite wall, the built-in changing table with a pullout surface will morph into a writing/computer desk as 6½-month-old daughter Siri grows up.

-- *Ruth Mullen*; ruthmullen@news.oregonian.com

Categories: [Home decor](#), [Home design/remodeling](#), [Living Top Stories](#)

Comments

Footer