



Photo courtesy of Home Front News

The challenge for BOWA was to add another addition to this Bethesda Tudor-style home, while maintaining its original 1930s look.

Bethesda Tudor Earns Builder Top Award

BOWA Builders, a 15-year old Washington-area design/build firm, moved a whole lot of earth for a client, leading to a project that earned them "contractor of the year."

The steeply sloping backyard of the 80-year-old Tudor-style home in Bethesda served as the stage for the project.

The owners wanted to complete the transformation of the house, which had already been modified by two previous additions, and create a substantially larger residence with all the charm of the 1930s original.

Starting with plans by Washington architect Amy Weinstein that date back to the mid-1980s, the project has proceeded through three separate stages.

Now the largest and most complex phase is in view, and the contractor must execute ideas that have been percolating among a team of designers and landscapers for more

than a decade.

Moreover, they must accomplish this in accordance with an extremely detailed set of drawings on a challenging site and on behalf of demanding owners and their hand-picked consultants.

Plans call for a two-story, chateau-style rear addition of some 2,000 square-feet. There are to be 15-foot ceilings and a Rumford-box limestone fireplace on the top level; and on the ground level, multiple entrances to a terraced garden.

Rounding out the wish list, the owners also want a lap pool and a lily pond, and they want it all to look like it was there from the beginning, part of a grand original structure.

Many contractors would look out over that ravine of a backyard and tell the owners that they were seeing a castle in the air.

They'd point out that the addition the owners described would cost far more than the existing house justified.

But tackling the difficult project led BOWA to highest honors for "residential additions" at the National Association of the Remodeling Industry 2001 convention in Dallas, Texas.

Headed by Steve Kirstein, BOWA's project team saw the project as a logistical challenge that required careful planning amid the confines of a mature neighborhood; but they didn't see the job as impossible, nor prohibitively expensive.

The key would be a series of retaining walls constructed prior to laying the foundation which would modulate the tolerances available in the various terraced sections.

The courtyard, the lap pool area, the garden section and the critical "new ground"

supporting the addition, all had separate soil compaction requirements.

A landscape and planting scheme by Yunghi Epstein and Joanne Lawson also demanded careful attention.

The first step: a "hillside excavation" some 15 feet below the footing of the existing structure, followed by a buildup of new ground to support the foundation of the new wing.

Fifteen feet below that level, a second excavation and fill operation would create a terrace for the lap pool and garden. Incidental decorative terraces would complete the effect.

During the project, this "controlled fill" would require several tons of earth and aggregates being trucked to the site sequentially, without restricting access to designated work zones during critical phases of construction.

The upper floor, a living room with adjacent dining room, would be suffused with light and symmetry through the window placement, the hanging fixtures and the cathedral ceiling.

To one side, a set of French doors, identical to the windows, open onto a small garden terrace, leading to a patio and then the lily pond.

The lower level, a pool room with two sets of doors leading to the courtyard and (a few steps down) to the lap pool, will be the center of casual family fun.

The fun, however, was just beginning. Indeed, extraordinary attention was now brought to bear on the architect's exterior design specifications.

The interior design plan by Marcia Hayman required careful research in the selection of materials as well as detailed craftsmanship:

- the redwood siding was hand-milled to match the oldest sections of the home;

- the Vermont slate roof was individually selected and then laid out to blend with the multicolored, aged-effect of the existing roof slates;

- the limestone facing for the fireplace was hand-carved at the Texas quarry site to create a curved profile identical to that used in the ceiling mouldings;

- all interior crown and casing treatments were custom-milled to accentuate original moulding used in prior renovations; the new mahogany French doors and arched windows were built to complement the custom front door installed in the 1980s.

But the project's crowning achievement in a literal sense are the new copper snow eagles, innocently perched on the slate roof. Before purchase, these ornamental ava-



The great room features custom-milled interior crown and casing treatments to accentuate original moulding used in prior renovations.

1930s Tudor Renovation

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lanche inhibitors, discontinued in the 1930s, were subjected to UV-ray analysis to make sure they would

age to the same rustic hues as their 70-year-old brethren.

An original structure with two later additions that have coalesced

with synergy around a third, the effect is of a smallish older home undetectably remade as an elegant manor house.