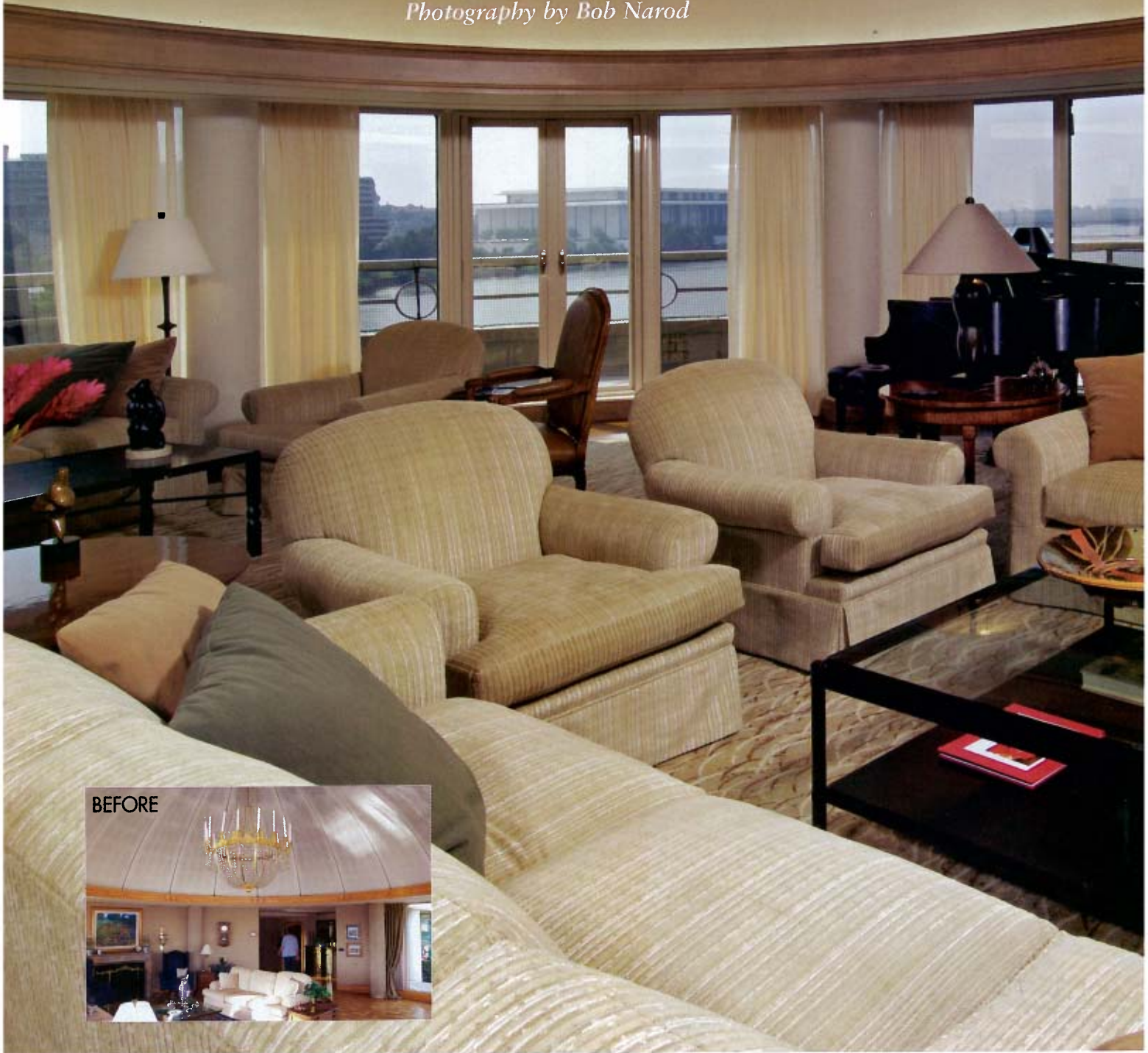


Fresh Start

A condominium renovation overlooking the Potomac garners BOWA Builders, Inc., a Contractor of the Year award for Entire House over \$1,000,000

*By Heather C. Jackson
Photography by Bob Narod*



BEFORE





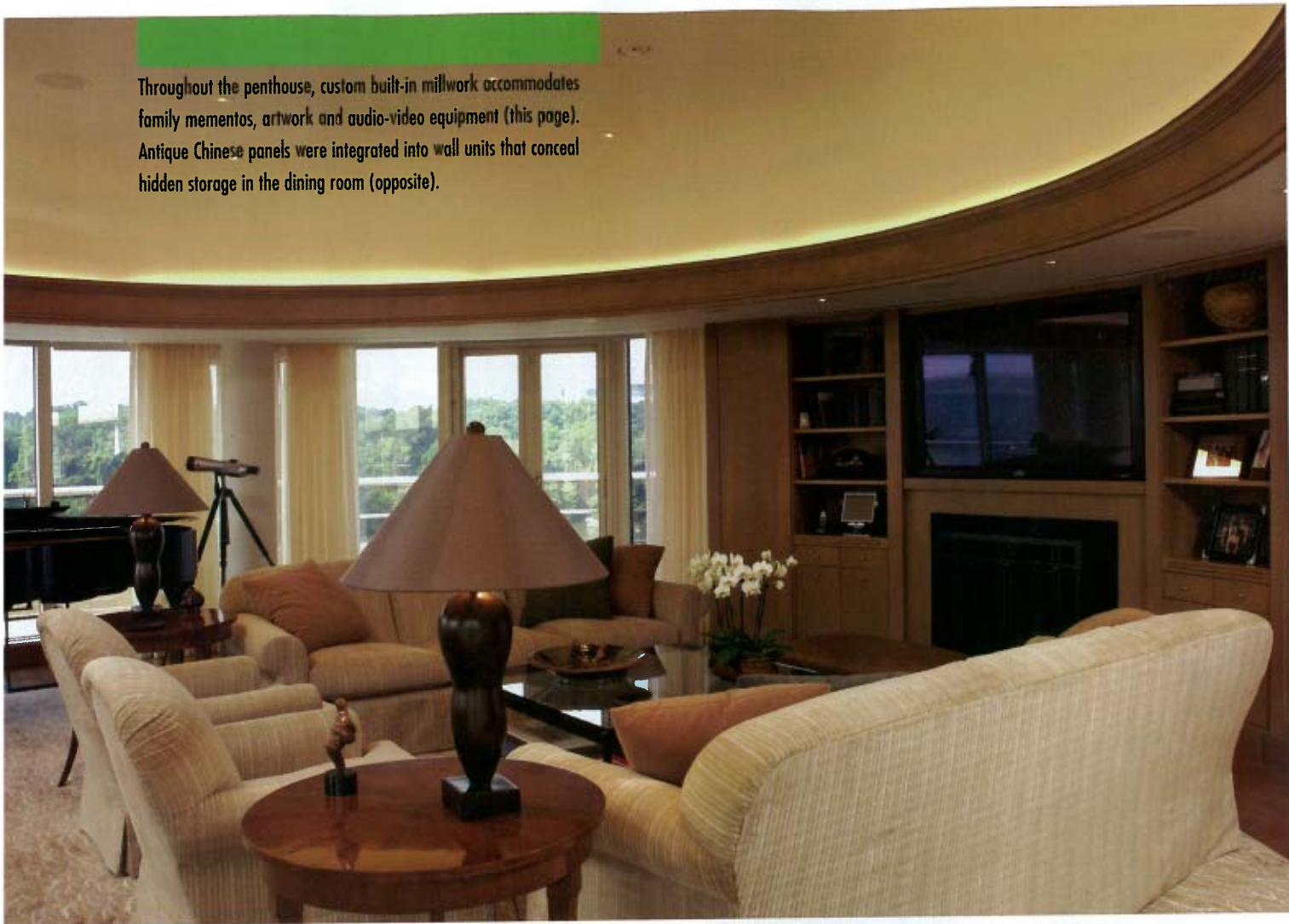
In the living room of this DC condominium, the cavernous 30-foot dome (opposite, inset) was lowered (left) to soften the acoustics. Warm, light colors and comfortable furnishings keep the room clean and elegant, allowing the view to be the focal point. Cream-colored walls and limestone flooring open up the entry foyer (above), which previously had been covered in heavy, dark paneling (above, inset).

With dramatic panoramic views of the Potomac that take in both Washington, DC, and Virginia, this penthouse condominium needed little to make it remarkable. However, the previous design was bold and dramatic—and not at all suited to a pair of empty-nesters who wanted a home that was peaceful enough for day-to-day living, yet sophisticated for formal entertaining.

The couple brought in BOWA Builders to renovate the space in a year-long project that required completely gutting and redesigning the suite. Rich Cassagnol, principal of BOWA Builders, was in charge of creating a warm, comfortable space, while working alongside the owners' long-time designers, Lee DeFord and Edna Sharp Gross of DeFord Sharp Interiors.

Renovation: BOWA Builders, Inc., McLean, Virginia
Architecture: Bill Neudorfer, Zaras & Neudorfer Architects, Washington, DC
Interior Design: Lee DeFord and Edna Sharp Gross, DeFord Sharp Interiors, Washington, DC

Throughout the penthouse, custom built-in millwork accommodates family mementos, artwork and audio-video equipment (this page). Antique Chinese panels were integrated into wall units that conceal hidden storage in the dining room (opposite).



“The project was two-fold,” says Cassagnol. “The clients wanted their

home to be a peaceful environment that provided a retreat from their hectic lives, while also serving as a beautiful, functional space for frequent guests.” The couple chose the penthouse because of its convenient location in the city. The decision meant moving from the family home in which they had raised their children, so DeFord was faced with the challenge of downsizing their living space and possessions, and highlighting their considerable art collection in the new residence.

The transformation started with the entry foyer. With only eight-foot ceilings, the heavy, dark paneling and poor lighting made it feel small and claustrophobic. They replaced the original paneling with light molding wrapped around creamy fabric wall panels. A new limestone floor helps make the space feel larger and inviting, yet maintains the desired level of formality. DeFord was also able to incorporate antique consoles that were favorites from the owners’ previous home.

From the foyer a hallway branches off and leads guests to the open living room and its panoramic views. This large round room is wrapped in windows facing the DC skyline, with the Kennedy Center directly ahead. Previously, an

ornate dome reaching 30 feet high filled the ceiling of this large space, amplifying every sound and creating a heavy echo. In order to create a less cavernous feeling—and to accommodate the owner’s piano playing—BOWA lowered the dome, changed its pitch and had the whole surface replastered in order to adjust the acoustics. Around the dome Cassagnol installed cold cathode lighting, which “provides an even glow all the way around.”

“We kept the room open, made it comfortable and preserved the views as the focus,” says DeFord, who was able to reuse existing upholstered pieces from the previous residence, recovering them in soft neutral tones. The mosaic wood flooring was replaced by wide-oak plank flooring and a soft patterned rug. Automated drapes and shades are connected to an extensive whole-house automation system.

One of the main concerns during the renovation was waterproofing, as the windows are exposed to heavy driving winds and rain. Originally constructed with aluminum frames, they were prone to condensation forming on the interior glass. Stone shelves were designed to run along the base



of the windows, with troughs cut in them to disperse any moisture inside and allow it to evaporate.

A new HVAC system was also a major part of the overall renovation, specially designed to address the clients' extensive art collection. "A lot of care was taken to ensure that proper humidity levels are maintained throughout the home in an effort to preserve their artwork and high-end finishes," says Cassagnol. It also makes it easy to maintain a constant level of comfort throughout the residence, whether it is just the two of them at home, or a large social function is underway.

While the main colors throughout the penthouse are light, neutral shades, the clients' plan for the library was to create a cozy, inviting space with warmer, darker colors. As such, the library features rich walnut millwork by Washington Woodworking. The firm provided all the built-ins, trim and closets throughout the home, with the exception of the kitchen cabinets. The library is the family's space to relax, read and watch television—it's designed to fit all the day-to-day activities. DeFord selected a soft Tibetan rug, coral chenille on the chairs and a pair of French chairs the owners' already had.

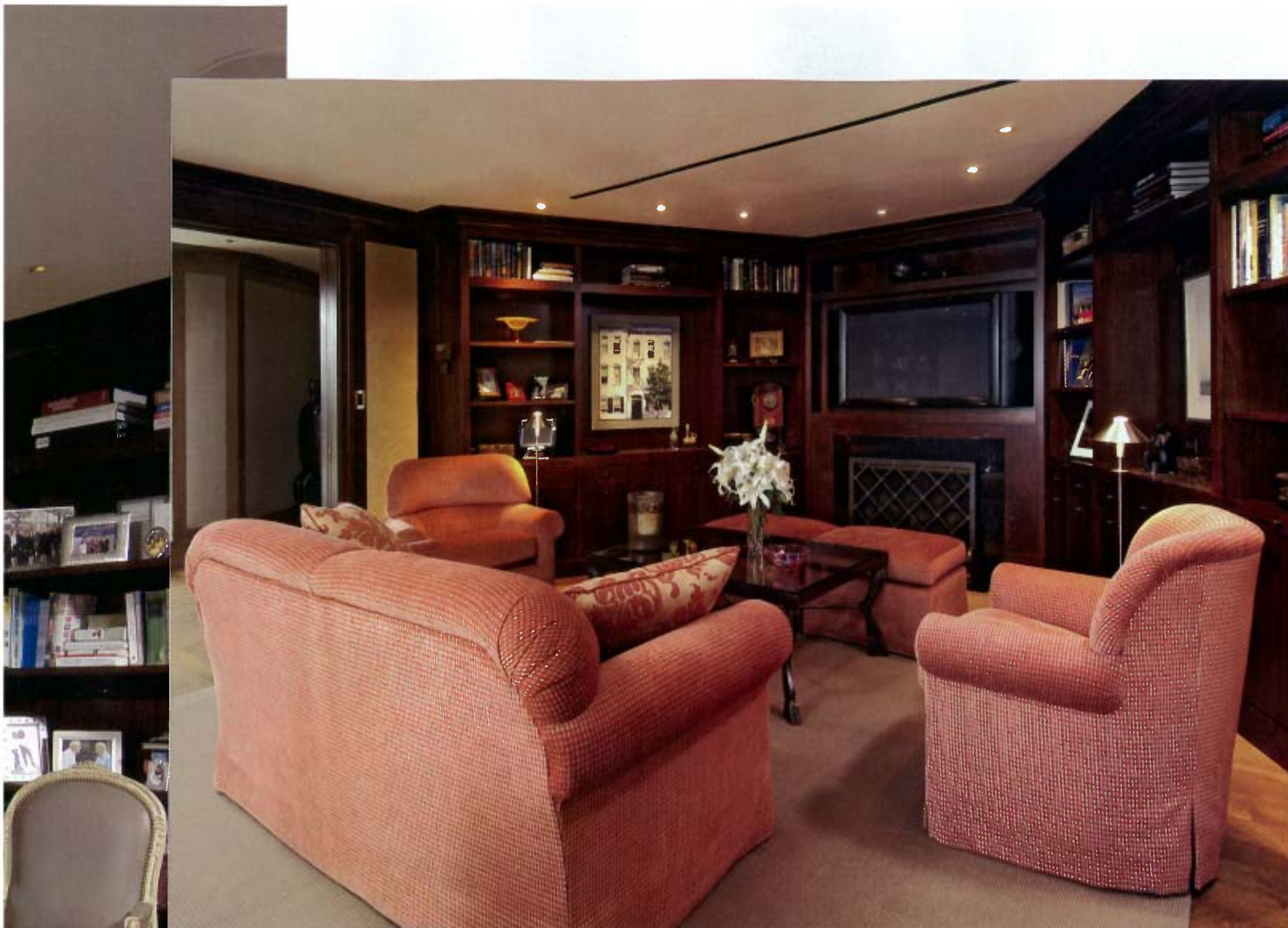
Throughout the space he incorporated their art and personal photos, adding to the intimate feel in the room.

The dining room returns to the brighter shades of the rest of the home, with light hardwood trim and fabric panels on the walls. Incorporated into the design are two antique Chinese panels that were purchased in New York. Custom molding was built to hold them in place, and rear-mounted luminescent panels lend the room a gentle glow.

Maximizing storage space—at a premium in condominium living—was also a priority. "We worked with the woodworkers to address the clients' needs by turning hollow spaces and nooks into much-needed storage with hidden doors," says Cassagnol. The Chinese panels in the dining room front hidden cabinets, as do the fabric wall panels in the foyer. The long hallways off the foyer were designed to not only provide circulation when entertaining, but are also a gallery space for the owners' art collection.

In the kitchen, the challenge was that "while it is a nice space, it's an interior room," says DeFord, so it had to be made inviting without the aid of natural light. BOWA





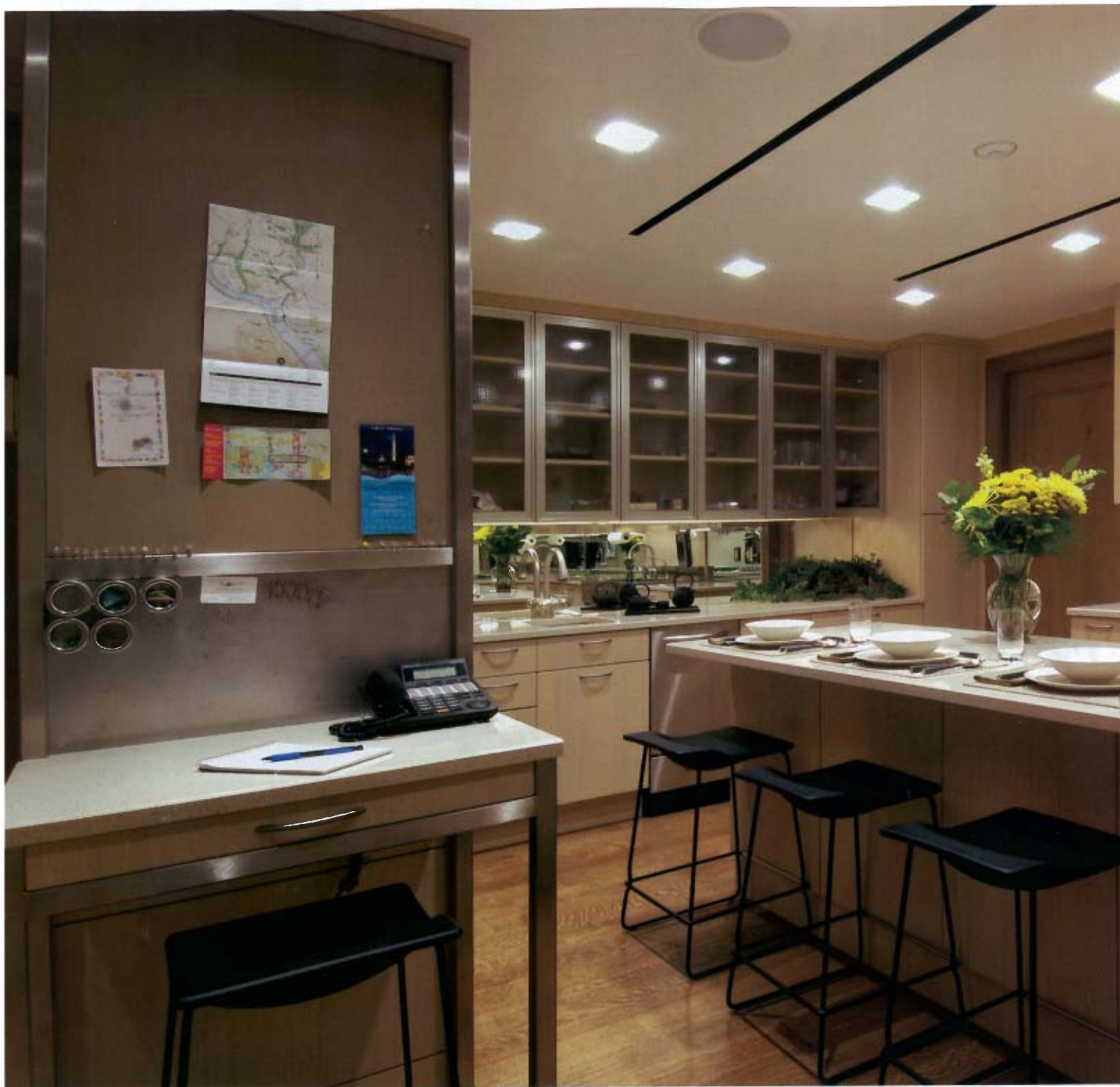
The library incorporates dark-stained walnut cabinetry and warm coral fabrics, which make it a cozy family room perfect for relaxing over a book or watching a movie (above). The custom game table by DeFord Sharp is a favorite piece, frequently used for intimate family dining as well as game time (left).

installed light-colored Downsview cabinetry, and DeFord added such details as a mirrored backsplash to help distribute and reflect as much light as possible.

“A lot of time and consideration

was spent on the lighting plan,” says Cassagnol, who emphasizes the bright work light that now fills the new kitchen. New York lighting consultant Caleb MacKenzie carefully mapped out every aspect of the home’s lighting plan. In addition to the kitchen, he developed lighting for the owners’ specialty art walls and entertaining areas. Multiple lighting schemes can be adjusted at the touch of a button for different occasions.

The original master bath was very intense, covered in dark green marble with “lots of mirrors,” says Cassagnol. “We created a completely different palette with soft, warm tones and limestone and glass tile.” The floor is now honed white Thassos marble with a custom mosaic insert surrounding the vanity area. Glass encloses the steam shower, which features a



pitched ceiling so that condensation runs off instead of gathering. A soaking tub near the window overlooks the Potomac, and an opening into the sauna allows natural light to filter through to the enclosed space.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges of the project was scheduling. Working in a mixed-used building such as this one, with retail and office spaces as well as other residences, there were a wide variety of demands and considerations regarding noise and moving equipment. “We did pretty well, thanks to good communication and working closely with the

building management,” says Cassagnol. It’s clear that the success of the project was the result of a strong partnership between BOWA and DeFord Sharp Interiors.

The final result is warm and elegant, exceeding DeFord’s goal of creating a space that is “comfortable but a great background for their art—and the views.” Above all, it is a sanctuary. Cassagnol agrees with one of the owners’ comments: when he walks in, “it just puts me at peace.” ♦

Photographer Bob Narod is located in Sterling, Virginia.



Light-colored cabinetry, a mirrored backsplash and custom lighting brighten the streamlined kitchen (above). The dramatic and dark master bath (right, inset) was redone in white marble and glass tile, giving it a bright, serene feeling (right, top and bottom).