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ACTION AND REACTION

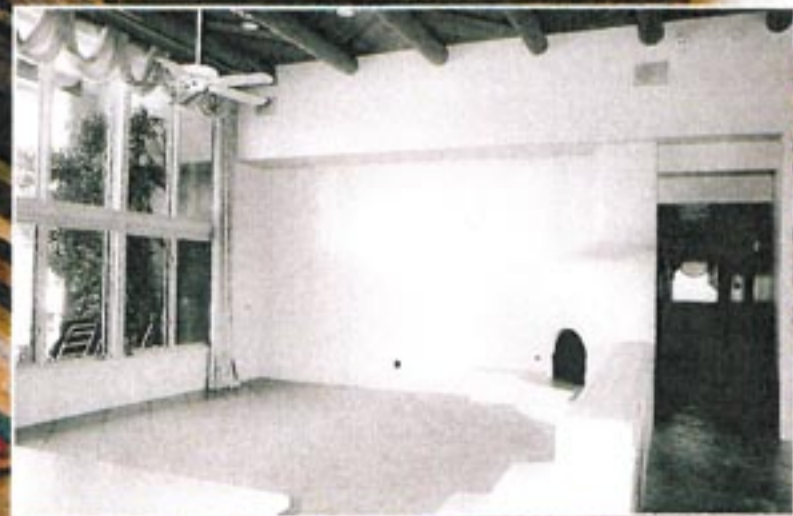
by Gera King
Photography by Werner Segarra

FOR every action there is an opposite and equal reaction. Home design, however, may be the exception, where one action can create multiple reactions. Homeowners Jennifer Lewis and Sandy Bender were thinking about a new granite counter in their kitchen... they ended up with a new kitchen design, and wall changes in the family room, dining room and entry, as well as built-in furniture. Traffic now flows easily through the spaces, and the house embraces both large parties and smaller private gatherings – a real plus for Sandy and Jennifer, who entertain family on a regular basis.

This Scottsdale house always had an odd floor plan. As owner of Filing Solutions – a company specializing in improving business organization – Sandy knows all about organization and how space *should* function for optimum use. Before the remodel, their entry opened awkwardly to the left onto the dining room. You couldn't enter straight through the foyer, because an oddly placed pony wall with wet bar cut off the family room. What resulted was a dining room open to the foyer; if a Girl Scout knocked on the door during a dinner party, there was no privacy while selecting your cookies. So the simple request to change the kitchen granite parlayed into an additional request for the removal of the pony wall. Along with these two changes, a myriad of smaller alterations followed.

Jennifer and Sandy contacted Keith Bolock, president of Shiloh Custom Homes, Inc., local builders with over 20 years of experience. He referred the pair to interior designer Janet Brooks, who has been designing high-end residential and commercial interiors for 27 years. After interviewing several designers, the homeowners agreed that Janet was the right fit. With her senior designer, Angelica Henry by her side, Janet worked closely with Keith on the new floor plan. The team marked major changes in blue tape laid on the floor so Jennifer and Sandy could visualize the plan better.

Hand in hand with remodeling comes redecorating; Janet gave her clients two options – start with the rugs or the furniture. They opted for the rug, so she coached them on the difference between a standard rug versus a really good rug – one that you want to (and can) keep for a long time. The oversized (17' x 10') Pakistani striped rug, found at David E. Adler Antiques and Oriental Rugs, became the base for the rest of the design. Vegetable dyed and hand woven, this wool rug has soft stripes of blue, rusty red, buff and gold – a perfect contrast to the flagstone that wraps around the fireplace and over the arched doorway. The remaining color choices were all made based on their cohesiveness with the cascade of shades that now covered the floor.





Taking custom to the next level, the leather sofas were designed based on the measurements of the people who would be sitting in them (most of the time anyway), assuring a perfect fit for Jennifer and Sandy. Both rocking and swiveling, the twin club chairs covered in a velvet stria (striped pattern) sit side by side, allowing for ease of conversation with guests in any of the three adjoining rooms.

True craftsmanship shines through in the dry-stacked (no mortar used) flagstone that envelopes the beehive fireplace, spilling over onto the archway that invites the eye down the hall. The fireplace opening was enlarged, and the entire shaft was reshaped stone by stone. Admiring this work of art in the late afternoon reveals a metallic sheen as reflections from the pool outside bounce across the stones.

The nearby foyer was given a sense of dignity by closing off the dining room; now there is a presence about the foyer – one has “arrived” when stepping into this cozy entry. Two log columns at the corners of the foyer were added, which relate to the beamed ceiling in the family room and kitchen. The circular ceiling is enhanced with metallic paint in a Southwestern design that glows with grandeur when lighting inside the cove moulding is turned on. Circular motifs are repeated in the ceiling and within the pattern of a large plate that hangs on the wall. A Southwest bench, filled with cushions and Indian blankets, adds a humble element to balance the aura of the room.

Jennifer shared her dislike of matching furniture with Janet; she made it clear that she *didn't* want her home looking like it sprang from the pages of a Pottery Barn or Crate & Barrel catalog. So, giving distinction to the large built-in buffet, which bridges between the kitchen and dining room, was achieved by finishing the wood in a distressed buff color – providing considerable contrast to the kitchen cabinets. The buffet counter is covered in dark copper, a common color element that runs through each adjacent room. In addition to being a beautiful piece of furniture, the buffet also discreetly holds an under-counter refrigerator, providing many serving options while entertaining.

With the removal and shifting of the walls, came the inevitable replacement of the floors. (Another example of one change leading to another.) Since 20-year-old tile can't be matched, 24-inch square



Mexican travertine was chosen to replace the flooring throughout the house – with the exception of the office that flanks the foyer. Herein lies 1936 reclaimed barn wood from Arkansas; wide planks of aged oak rich with character and tradition are filled with the mottling of nail holes, cracks, and saw marks. Aside from being utterly stunning, Jennifer testifies that the rugged floor is durable enough to withstand the wear and tear thrust upon it daily by their two Labrador Retrievers.

High above the new floors, a herringbone patterned ceiling with log beams, yellowed with age cried out for attention. A warm cinnamon stain was selected to update the look, coordinate with the rooms' colors and enhance the metallic motif of the entry.

The lesson here, I believe, is to be open to exploring design when considering a remodeling project. Try not to limit yourself to the initial cause; expect that doors of inspiration may open... doors you never intended to look behind. Though Jennifer and Sandy initially sought the aid of an interior designer to help them refresh their tired kitchen, they ended up with a real transformation treat – a warm, functioning and nurturing home. ●

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