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The Orange County Register

# Doing their homework // Planning and research help Lake Forest couple give their home a classic Orange County remake.

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 Story appeared in **Life** section
 

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 on page **Cover**


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**ID:** 64567009
 

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**Illustration:**


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**Edition:** 1
 

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**Correction:**


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November 1, 2003

**Byline:**NICK HARDER

When Dick and Vivian Hamer started thinking about how they wanted to remodel their 30-year-old Lake Forest home, they did so with the same amount of research and dedication each puts in as a Realtor.

In one collection of files almost a foot thick are examples of everything they liked, from interesting kitchen appliances to color palettes and roofing materials.

"I had everything organized by subject," said Vivian, "so if we wanted to go shopping for a particular item, I'd simply pull out that file and off we'd go."

Not satisfied with just research from print publications, the Hamers thoroughly scanned the Internet for anything they might want in their remodel.

"All this really paid off," said Dick, "because we had a good idea of what we wanted and what things cost before we even talked with a contractor."

"I think that's one mistake people must make sometimes," Vivian said. "They just tell a contractor they want to remodel their home and don't have any definite ideas. How do they expect the contractor to know?"

So when the Hamers began talking with contractors about a year ago, they could tell them almost exactly what they wanted.

They interviewed four.

"One contractor was very professional and had high recommendations, but his price to do the work was way over our heads," Vivian said. "Another contractor said he had to have control over absolutely every aspect of the work or he wouldn't do it. That's not the way we wanted to go."

"We wanted some flexibility," Dick said. "We wanted to keep down our costs as much as possible by doing things like applying for permits ourselves, choosing and getting certain things like lights ourselves, anything that we could do and save money yet not interfere with the main construction."

Eventually they chose **Matt Curry** of PBCD Inc. because he allowed them this flexibility. And, by that time, the Hamers had definite ideas.

Probably the most important thing was to knock down a wall between the living room and family room, to create a more open feeling and allow a larger dining area.

Beyond that they wanted to:

Renovate and enlarge their kitchen with new flooring, lighting, appliances, cabinets and countertops.

Remove the old popcorn ceilings from the house.

Repaint and install crown moldings in all those areas.

Replace the old wood shake roof with a new composition roof.

Replace two sets of large sliding doors facing the back yard.

Install six new windows in the area to be remodeled and three bathrooms.

Install a concrete paver patio.

Erect a large patio cover.

Renovate the entire back yard.

Re-stucco and re-paint the entire exterior of their home.

What is the style that the Hamers wanted?

"We've attempted to create a somewhat modernized version of an early Orange County look," Dick said.

"It actually began to develop when I saw a photo of a '50s vintage model stove," Vivian said. "Dick saw it, said he liked it, too, and that got us thinking about how we would like things to look."

"I tried for a '40s and '50s look in the kitchen," Vivian said.

Besides the restored stove from that era, Vivian had a large black-and-beige checkered tile backsplash added and had framed originals of Orange County citrus crate labels hung on the walls. She also has a number of reproduction small appliances, such as a two-slice chrome-and-black toaster that looks like it would be at home in Harriet Nelson's kitchen. But the Hamers also included modern materials and conveniences. In the kitchen they included both granite and subway tile, along with the maple cabinets and older-style lighting fixtures, Dick said.

"There's only one thing that we didn't plan too well for," Vivian admitted. "We didn't realize we'd need as much new lighting in all those areas as we did."

Still, such problems were relatively easy to solve because they discussed them with their contractor while it was still early in the reconstruction phase.

And throughout the remodel, the Hamers agreed on most things, but not on everything. For instance, Vivian prefers the English garden look -- lots of beautiful flowers and shrubs. Dick prefers cactus and succulents. So, they compromised. Vivian has her flowers in the back yard, Dick his own cactus and succulent garden in their huge side yard.

"It's all a matter of working it out," Vivian said, beaming at her husband.

"You bet it is," he said.

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REMODEL AT A GLANCE

Who: Dick and Vivian Hamer

What: Remodeled their 30-year-old home

Where: Lake Forest

When: Construction took about six months.

Why: To update, enlarge dining area, open living and family rooms

How much: Original budget -- \$55,000. Actual cost -- \$65,000.

Contractor: **Matt Curry**, PBCD Inc. (949) 394-7783.

Doing their homework

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