



Anne and Gary's

Mid-Century Modern Home

About Us



We are Anne and Gary Olson, and this blog is about the renovation of a modest Mid-Century Modern home we bought in La Grande Oregon in the autumn of 2006.

Both of us are fascinated with the “futuristic” design of this 50+ year old house. Our goal is to retain the essential character of this wonderful house without turning it into a museum piece.

Our other goals are to renovate using green principles and to incorporate the use of solar technology.

Not surprisingly, we both share a love of old houses, home renovation, gardening, and Oregon.

Anne grew up in La Grande and is excited at the prospect of returning home. She is the true gardener of the family and loves plants and flowers, both the indoor and outdoor varieties. She also has a strong interest in house design and architecture.

Gary grew up in Portland and has only recently learned to love La Grande. He enjoys vegetable gardening, building garden structures, and doing anything that

involves digging holes. His hobbies also include web design, Linux, podcasting, and building computers. Although this blog is a joint project, Gary manages its technical aspects.

We see our blog as a tool for connecting and sharing information with like minded housing buffs, the Mid-Century Modern movement, alternative energy advocates, and the good people of La Grande.

1 - We Buy An MCM

Our new home from the front

September 24th, 2006

This is the front view of our new home in La Grande.



It doesn't look like much, but it gives you a general idea of what the design of the house is. We've figured out that the house design is "Mid-Century Modern". We're in the process of learning what that means, exactly.

The deck you see has a very nice view of the Grande Ronde Valley. From the back yard you have a view of a very steep hill.

The house sits on the edge of the La Grande City Limits and on the Urban Growth Boundary. We also learned the hill directly behind us is a "geographic hazard area", which isn't as ominous as it sounds.

What it means is that if the Urban Growth Boundary is ever expanded it will be very expensive to build there. In other words, no McMansions will be built and our back yard view will be preserved.

This is extremely important to people who have fled the urban disaster the Portland/Metropolitan area has become.

Comments

Linda M. Says:

November 22nd, 2006 at 3:58 pm

Hi Anne and Gary,

I just visited the Blog, and since I grew up in La Grande I am so very happy for the both of you to return to God's

Country. I know that I hated when I had to leave in 1973 when Larry took a position with Tektronix in Portland. What culture shock that was. I love all of your ideas that you want to incorporate into your "renovation". Since we have been remodeling for the past 3 months, I know what a challenge it can be, but good luck and keep me posted.

Your childhood friend from La Grande,
Linda

Views from the front and back

September 25, 2006

This is a picture of the view from the front of the house.



It's not spectacular, but it is quite nice. From the backyard (which is pictured below) you can walk up the hill and the view is quite spectacular.

Since the emphasis of Mid Century Modern style homes is for many larger windows, the view from the living room is quite expansive and impressive.

We anticipate spending lots of time looking out the front windows.

The front yard is filled with old juniper bushes that we will eventually remove. We will probably put in some kind of a terraced front garden similar to the one the next door neighbor has. It is quite nice.

We have never had a home with so many views before.

We are really looking forward to it.

The second picture is of the view from behind the house looking up a steep hill.



The house is cut into a steep mountain that looms up behind it. The property sits on the edge of the La Grande city limits and the Urban Growth Boundary.

Even if the Growth Boundary is expanded, which is unlikely any time soon, there is little chance the property above us will be developed. The uphill land is designated as a "geological hazard area", which means it would be very expensive for anyone to build on it.

Coming from Portland, where houses are being crammed into every nook and cranny, this is something we value highly.

Comments

Richard Jones Says:

May 17th, 2007 at 4:18 pm

I am trying to locate a picture and/or floor plan for a mid century home I've been in a couple of times in Selma Alabama. The house was built in the 40 or 50's with flat and shed roof combination with clerestory windows in 2 sections of the house. It's difficult to explain the design of this house and there really isnt anyway of drawing it for you. Is there a site or someway I might be able to locate a picture of this house. The house was completely remodeled and the flat and shed roofs were replaced with gable roofing. Thanks for your help

Anne & Gary Says:

May 18th, 2007 at 4:20 pm

We would suggest you check out the Mid Century Modern Homes section of the forum at the Lotta Living site.

The url to it is: <http://www.lottaliving.com/bb/viewforum.php?f=4&sid=f4118ebf71a7eef0c487cdc0419ac1e4>

Gary & Anne Olson

It's Ours!

November 12th, 2006

Here we are in our new home! Note the camp chairs we're sitting on. Those and the Murphy bed which came with the house are our only furniture. Note also the mid-century modern details: floor-to-ceiling glass, clerestory windows, and expose beams. Finally, note also our dog Molly and our cat Elroy. Our other cat, Gertrude, was hiding under the covers on the Murphy bed.



We love our new home! We are especially enamored with the big, spacious living room and its nice view across the Grande Ronde Valley during the day and of the lights of La Grande at night.

Fortunately, the living room doesn't need much work. The floor, which looks similar to 50's asbestos tile, was put in by the previous owner. We will be painting the walls and fireplace.

We plan on using YOLO Colorhouse no-VOC paints. Using their family cards (paint chips), we have chosen several colors from the Air and Stone series. Next we'll be getting the poster size color swatches to narrow our choices. We like that their color palette is fairly limited; too many choices can be overwhelming.

See our Lotta Living post with a question about the paneling which is on the fireplace wall and also on the dining room wall. We wonder if both the paneling and the bricks of the fireplace were originally unpainted. It's too late now. We stripped a lot of paint in our home in Portland and just aren't ready to tackle anything like that again.

We're very excited about working on our new home and look forward to sharing ideas and information with the rest of you mid-century modern house enthusiasts out there.

Comments

tracy Says:

November 13th, 2006 at 3:50 pm

Wow...Stunning home, just stunning. The living room windows are To Die For. You found an utter gem 😊

I'm contemplating a move to LaGrande...I've been in Seattle, Yakima, Newport... and Eastern Oregon is hollering...

Found your site from lagrandeonline.com...Mid Century Modern caused my ears to perk...

So – just had to shout out...I am in total awe of those windows 🌟

Best of luck...

Anne & Gary Says:

November 17th, 2006 at 3:54 pm

Tracy,

We can't argue about the house being a gem, we certainly agree that it is. Now we have to figure out how to polish it.

Let us know the next time you are in La Grande. We'll have you over so you can see the windows up close.

Gary and Anne

niece jennifer Says:

January 25th, 2007 at 4:04 pm

well i am sooooo excited for you guys. i hope i get to see it sooner than later.

niece jennifer Says:

January 25th, 2007 at 4:07 pm

oh and of course, I am VERY HAPPY about the whole solar power, green living aspect of everything...can't wait to hear more about all of that!

Happy Holidays

December 14, 2006

It's always difficult getting house projects done in the holiday season, but we thought adding a holiday wreath to our new mid-century home was a step in the right direction.



This house has an unusual design. In December, we spent quite a lot of time figuring out how it is laid out. The design involves several boxes that are put together in an interesting way. Mostly this is because of the way the house is laid out on a hill, but partly it seems to be a quirk of the designer.

We need to figure out how each part of the house is connected to all the others before we can decide where to go next. It is going to be quite the challenge.

The house has been fairly extensively remodeled in ways that don't particularly work for us. We are spending quite a bit of time thinking through how we want to use the fairly limited amount of space the house offers. We are probably going to do an extensive remodel of the bedrooms and bathrooms, but haven't decided on the specifics.

The prospects are exciting. With January quickly approaching, our house adds a flavor of anticipation to the celebration of the New Year.

With that thought in mind, we'd like to wish everyone a Happy Holiday.

2 - We Settle In

Dishes to match our floor!

February 6, 2007

We may not have much furniture but we now own a wonderful set of mid-century modern dishes.



We were poking around in Deco to Disco, an MCM shop on Hawthorne Boulevard in Portland, when we spotted an intriguing set of dishes. The black-on-beige pattern matched our living room floor!

Well, you gotta start somewhere

The set must have originally had service for 16 as there are 16 bread and butter plates. We are fortunate there are still 12 dinner plates.

We love the arty shapes and the heft is wonderful

The dishes are "Ebonette" from the Edwin M. Knowles China Company, 1954, the year before our house was built. A piece of this glazed earthenware is in a collection at the Dallas Museum of Art.

We have rounded out the set with several black pieces from Goodwill.

We especially love the little teapot.



The set has this wonderful 3-tier serving tray.

Time to make canapés.



Fireplace color dilemma. Any suggestions?

February 25, 2007

We are trying to figure out what to do with this fireplace.



We don't like the blue and would prefer restoring it to the original brick. However, that doesn't seem very practical. The paint has penetrated deeply into the pores of the brick and it seems unlikely it will ever come out.

Even if it could be removed, it's unlikely we'd be enthusiastic about removing it. Over many years we stripped, stained, and varnished every window, door, and piece of molding in our Portland home. Enough is enough.

We are probably going to repaint it a light color.

We have a few questions.

We are pretty committed to the YOLO Colorhouse no-VOC paints and will probably stay within their color palette. The wall behind the fireplace is now painted Clay 4. We are contemplating painting the fireplace Grain 5.

Does anyone have any tips on successfully painting an already painted fireplace?

Especially one with deep indentations from brick to mortar.

Also, is it best to us semigloss paint (as it now is) or move to flat?

What are your thoughts?

Gary & Anne Olson

Comments

Mary-Frances Main Says:

March 9th, 2007 at 4:11 pm

I would think there would be a "fireplace paint". There's a house next to us that has painted brick that's kind of a creme color with a maroon stripe and it looks really hip and 50's, but is painted brick. Maybe something like that? That's an exterior, but I would think it would work inside too.

Carl Says:

December 19th, 2007 at 4:22 pm

Hire someone to sandblast it.

Quinn Smith Says:

December 27th, 2007 at 12:09 pm

A person with a new idea is a crank until the idea succeeds.

We start painting

February 25, 2007

Although we seem to be spending most of our time getting settled in and planning, we are starting to do some actual work on our home.

We've spent a lot of time thinking through the color palette for the living/dining/kitchen areas. Since they are functionally one space, we want the colors to work together.

We're eager to get rid of the blue which you can see in the panel behind Gary, as well as on the fireplace. We like the drama of the red but want to use the warm Yolo colors.



As you can see we've started repainting the back wall of the living room/dining rooms in Clay 4 of Yolo paints. Though the color looks pretty orange in the picture, it has a nice warm tone in real life. We're contemplating using some of the grain series as well. Stay tuned.

We're getting set to have some much needed electrical work done and have also made a preliminary call to the local solar/alternative energy guy about what our options are.

Things are moving along slow but sure.

Comments

niece jennifer Says:

February 26th, 2007 at 4:09 pm

it's looking soooo cool! how exciting!

The fireplace finally gets a new coat of paint

April 6, 2007

After careful thought, and considerable input from our friends at the Lotta Living Forum, we finally chose a paint color.

The fireplace is now painted and we are very happy with the way it looks.



Of course, colors on web pages look different than they do in real life, but this picture gives you an idea of what it looks like.

The next step is to paint the trim.

We still have a long way to go, but we are really happy with how it is turning out.

Comments

niece jennifer Says:

April 9th, 2007 at 4:15 pm

I LOVE IT!!!

Are they mid-century modern?

April 11, 2007

While sitting in the living room, looking out over the beautiful Grande Ronde Valley, three deer slipped around the house and peered at us through the living room windows.

They wandered into the back yard before we could get a picture, but we did manage to capture them with the camera.



We've also seen wild turkey in the yard, but have not managed to get a picture of them yet. Since we are on the edge of town and have mountains to the west of us, there is a lot of wildlife.

People see deer as pests, but to us they are still a novelty, so we like having them around. When the gardening season begins we may feel differently.

Deer usually wander down from the hills around dusk, particularly when it has been snowing. It was unusual to see these deer in the early afternoon.



Our dog Molly is fascinated by the deer, particularly their smell, and is always eager to follow their trail when we take her for a walk. It almost makes up for the fact we don't have a fenced in yard for her to roam around in like she has back in Garden Home.

Thrift store heaven

May 7, 2007

We love looking at thrift stores and garage sales for things for our house. We like the idea of reusing (as in reduce, reuse, recycle). Thrifting saves a lot of money, and there is the thrill of the hunt!

We drove over to Baker City to check out the furniture consignment shop. We didn't find any furniture, but we did find the Salvation Army store.

We looked hard for something we needed; we just didn't find anything. We were about ready to leave when we remembered to check out a little back area behind the children's toys.



Wait!

There is a George Nelson-type bench!!! We had thought months before that a bench in front of the windows would be nice for plants.

And look!

Right next to it is this amazing retro lamp. The wood veneer is coming loose, and a tiny piece of it is missing. But the sculptural shape is wonderful.

For \$12.90, we're in thrift store heaven!

A vintage couch pulls the living room together

July 2, 2007

We recently had the good fortune of buying this wonderful mid-century couch at an estate sale for \$35.00.

It was custom made for the owner in 1964 and was kept in a part of the house where it got little day to day use. The cushions have springs and are really comfortable to sit on.

The couch is in really good shape and we couldn't believe we got it for that price.

When we got the couch into the living room, it looked as if it belonged there. The scale and style of the couch are just right for our new home.



With the addition of the couch, the living room is really coming together. It feels more like home all the time.

We love sitting on our new couch and looking out over the Grande Ronde Valley from our living room.

Life doesn't get much better than that.

Air Conditioning, 1950's Style

August 10, 2007

In the mid-1950's in the La Grande Oregon, where our house is located, people went to the Granada Theater to experience air conditioning.

Although our house thankfully now has a heat pump, there was no air conditioning in the home originally.

The builder did, however, include a large transom on the north side of the living room. When we bought our home, the transom was caulked shut.

This spring, Gary spent a morning prying out the caulking and doing a little sanding. The transom now easily opens and closes.



Fast-forward to this summer. On really hot days, and we have had several this summer, the heat pump is a necessity. On many days, however, breezes provided natural air conditioning in the morning and in the late afternoon and evening.



On those days, we use the heat pump just to take the edge of the heat in the afternoons. Enjoying the breezes from the Blue Mountains which flow through the living room from the transom is pure pleasure for Anne.

Thinking about a kitchen remodel

October 20, 2007

We are starting to give serious thought to remodeling our kitchen. The picture below is the kitchen as it is now.



Though the existing cabinets give the kitchen a cozy country cabin look, that isn't really what the house is all about.

We want to bring the kitchen more into the mid century modern look in which it was originally designed. One thing we will be doing is putting on different cabinet doors that go better with the style of the house.

We are also planning on installing new counter tops. We are still looking around for a material we like but haven't made a decision yet. It will definitely not be granite.

We are planning on putting an Energy Star refrigerator in the space where the fake bricks currently are and moving the oven under the stove.

The lighting for the room is inadequate but we haven't figured out what to do with it yet. That is definitely going to be a challenge.

At this point we are still in the “early confused stage” of planning. However, we are to the point where we are ready to have a contractor come out and discuss how realistic our preliminary ideas might be.

Once we’ve talked to the contractor we will regroup and figure out what we want to do next.

Comments

Tiel Says:

May 12th, 2008 at 12:36 pm

Hi,
My husband and I are retro renovating our 1950’s kitchen.
We are in the process of looking for lighting. Where did you find the track lighting that is on your kitchen ceiling?

Tiel

Anne & Gary Says:

May 23rd, 2008 at 6:45 pm

The lighting in the kitchen came with the house and we don’t know what it is.

We recently had an electrician look at it with the thought of adding additional lighting to match it. He couldn’t find a brand name so we still don’t really know what we have.

We have learned that what we have is called monorail lighting, not track lighting, so if you look for that you might be closer to what you are looking for.

We know how confusing figuring out lighting can be. Good luck in your hunting.

Rebekah and John Says:

June 20th, 2009 at 10:22 am

Hi Anne and Gary,

I just found your blog. It is great and I really appreciate your videos. They really help me get a spacial idea of your home. My husband and I are buying a home that was built in 1964. For the most part, the house has all of its original features. Our challenge will be updating the house without losing the mid-century feel. We have a lot of exposed brick on the interior of our home that we love. But we also have a lot of clear cedar wood paneling that we are warming up to but are not 100% keen on keeping—at least not all of it.

I'm thinking about doing a blog when we start our remodeling. I'm curious to hear what you think about blogging about your remodel. Good luck with all of your decisions!

John and Rebekah

Anne & Gary Says:

June 22nd, 2009 at 10:44 am

It is difficult to decide how much of the original character of a house to try to retain. We have struggled with whether to try to restore our mid-century home or just try to keep with the feel of the original design. We chose to try to retain the classical feel.

If your house is a classic, your cedar paneling is original, and the house hasn't already been remuddled, you might consider keeping the paneling. Of course, it's your house and you can do anything you want. We just have a love for natural wood and that is probably what we would do. It's really up to you.

We have enjoyed our blog a great deal. We get about forty visitors a day, which amazes us. We have no idea why so many people visit.

Blogging is time consuming and takes quit a lot of work. If blogging is something you think you would enjoy we would recommend it. If you would like tips about blogging, let us know. We would be glad to share our experiences.

Happy Holidays!

December 12, 2007

It hardly seems possible that we have owned our home for over a year now; these are the second holiday greens we have hung on our front door.



If you are reading this because you are redoing your own mid-century modern home, stay tuned. We're getting ready to gear up for our kitchen remodel, and hope to write more frequently this coming year.

Though we aren't retro purists, we seem to be naturally collecting items and furniture from the period. We're curious. Are you going to have an aluminum tree for your mid-century home? Regardless, enjoy your holidays.

If you are friends and family, reading this because of the link in our e-message, we hope you enjoy seeing a bit of our life in La Grande. We're always up for visitors, so let us know if you'll be heading this way.

We wish all of you a happy and healthy 2008!

Comments

Keselle Says:

December 27th, 2007 at 4:24 pm

I really liked reading your blog and it gives me an idea about what to do with my all black wall of a fireplace...see it here..<http://hubpages.com/hub/Mid-Century-Modern-Houses>

3 - We Score MCM Finds

If It's Kidney-Shaped, It Must Be 50's

January 24, 2008

Part of the fun of bringing our mid century home to life is finding interesting pieces of furniture in unlikely places and at bargain prices. We found this wonderful kidney shaped table at the Classic Consignment Furniture store in Baker City. We were able to buy it for only \$25.00.



If you have been following this blog you know we are huge fans of Classic Consignment Furniture. They sometimes have wonderful finds at great prices.

Surprisingly, this was not a love at first sight purchase. It didn't make much of an impression on us when it was sitting in the consignment store.

However we just couldn't resist. We figured at that price if it didn't look good in the living room we could find a functional use for it in the basement, or somewhere.

When we got it into our living room we were delighted!

Once again our house "spoke to us" and said this furniture was perfect.

Comments

50s Pam Says:

January 27th, 2008 at 3:22 pm

Very nice!!

Anne & Gary Says:

February 2nd, 2008 at 1:09 pm

We have wondered if our table might have been made in someone's home workshop. This seems even more likely since our friend Gerry gave us this link to a pattern for a similar table: http://www.populuxebooks.com/index.php?main_page=document_general_info&cPath=87&products_id=736&zenid=3b8aca33

Virtual Tour

February 12, 2008

Below is a short video tour of our living room/dining room/kitchen.

This video must have been done pre-YouTube and is missing!

Comments

50s Pam Says:

February 12th, 2008 at 8:54 pm

I LOVED your tour! It was so cool, although I wanted to see more of the kitchen!

Hmmm. I have to figure out how to do this, too!

Anne & Gary Says:

February 18th, 2008 at 4:49 pm

The Video Tour was fun to make.

We did it with an inexpensive still camera that is capable of creating short (eight minute) videos. It was edited with an inexpensive video editing program and displayed through Google Video, which is free.

We are planning on doing many more kitchen posts since that is going to be our major focus in the next several months. We presume a fair number of these will be video.

Ronn Ives/FUTURES Antiques Says:

February 18th, 2008 at 6:22 pm

Hi,

I need a video camera. I've taken lots of shots of our mid-century (split level) home – mainly because it keeps changing (mainly due to me, not my wife), but also because I see new “passing moments” when the light hits a certain zone, etc., and then, if I don't catch it, it's GONE. I own a modernist shop in Norfolk Virginia, and have a web site as well. I have some shots of our home on the “Shop” page in the “Friends and Customers” gallery. Our home has the label (duh) of “Our Home”. Since it's my business to locate the coolest stuff from the bulgy middle of the 20th century, I thought you might enjoy seeing what I'm up to, also.

Ronn Ives

modernemama Says:

February 24th, 2008 at 4:21 pm

Very interesting. What's the flooring in the living room?

Niece Jennifer Says:

February 29th, 2008 at 2:04 am

oh I just LOVE it...love your videos and adore the house...it's looking soooo cool and so different from your Portland house...how fun!

love you guys,

Niece Jennifer

Joe Says:

November 19th, 2008 at 11:55 pm

Hi,

I love the house....my only complaint is the French Doors with the grills.....That is too traditional and does not go with the theme of the house.....I like the idea of glass french doors, but it should just be the glass panes.....No Grills. Also, I think you should change the white trim....doesn't blend well.....Overall, I love the house and all the windows.

tory Says:

January 1st, 2009 at 6:25 pm

Fabulous house and great stuff – especially love the orange chair and the armchairs in the lounge!

Retro Windows with a View

March 6, 2008

One of the things we love about our Mid-Century home is these windows.



The window above is on the east side of the kitchen and looks out over La Grande and the Grande Ronde Valley. It has one of the best views from the house and makes working at the kitchen sink a joy.

As you can see, two-thirds of the window is fixed frame with the other one third being a casement window that opens outward. On the inside of the casement there is a built-in screen that rolls up like a roller shade so you can get to the hummingbird feeder.

The house has four windows of this design: one in the kitchen, two in the master bedroom, and one in the guest bedroom.

We have discovered you can still have this style window custom made and are considering having two made for our home.

One would replace the window in the third bed room (Gary's den). We assume this room originally had a window like the other rooms, but the one in this room has been replaced with an aluminum-frame sliding window. Replacing this window with one in the original style should go a long way toward making the house more consistent with its original design.

The guest bedroom in the southwest corner of the house has one of the original windows on the south wall but no window on the west wall.

The picture below is what the view from a window in that location would look like once it was installed!



This view seems way too beautiful to waste with a solid wall. The space is begging for a replacement mid-century modern window as well.

Comments

maggie Says:

April 7th, 2008 at 9:13 am

Hi — I came to your blog through Pam's RetroRenovation site. I see you're considering a kitchen reno, and thought you might want to know about this Frigidaire Flair range (pink, no less!) in Oregon that I just saw on eBay. If you've been reading Pam's blog, you'll recognize this fabulous design.

<http://cgi.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&item=270226492757>

Love your house, and I'll keep checking in on your progress.

...maggie

About That Floor

April 23, 2008

We have been amazed at the number of comments and questions we've gotten about our floor.



Interestingly, Anne really didn't like the floor when we first bought our home. It's quite a contrast from hardwood floors!

But then we found our dishes!!!

As previously reported, we spotted our dishes in an antique shop in Portland soon after we bought our home.

Anne said, "They match our floor," and we bought them.

That purchase turned the tide. We began decorating around the black, and Anne now loves the floor.

Gary always did.

Assumably, our floor is Armstrong vinyl composition tile, the kind they've been making forever.

You can see a picture of our dining/living room flooring below. Compare our close-up picture with this Armstrong product.



We first thought the floor was original. However, the previous owners of our home told us they had the floor installed to replace worn out wall- to- wall carpeting which was also not original.

As a side note, we may love the floor but we have not been pleased with the heavy chemical smell of the Armstrong floor care products which came with the house.

A lucky accident with Murphy's Oil Soap is giving us hope that this product touted for use on wood may actually work as both a cleaner and a polisher for our floor when used in higher concentrations.

Does anyone have ideas for "green" cleaning products that might be even better for this type of floor?

Comments

Stacey Derbinshire Says:

April 23rd, 2008 at 2:29 pm

I found your blog on google and read a few of your other posts. I just added you to my Google News Reader. Keep up the good work. Look forward to reading more from you in the future.

Stacey Derbinshire

Kay Says:

April 25th, 2008 at 11:27 pm

I have the Armstrong congoleum floors and have had very good luck just cold mopping them with Dr. Bronner's Magic Soap.

I use the Armstrong wax, but I am sensitive to their Clean and Brite cleaner. So far Dr. Bronner's has worked very well for me with out dulling.

eichler Says:

June 5th, 2008 at 9:49 am

I second the recommendation for Dr. Bronner's.

p.s. great MCM crib!

Anne & Gary Says:

June 6th, 2008 at 12:36 pm

Kay & Eichler,

Thanks for the Dr. Bronner's Magic Soap recommendation.

We'll give it a try.

Anne & Gary

eichler Says:

July 9th, 2008 at 10:27 pm

Excellent. curious to find out how it works for you (although the floors look great as is!)

Anne & Gary Says:

September 12th, 2008 at 1:56 pm

Kay and eichler,

When we checked out Dr. Bronner's Soap (<http://www.drbronner.com/index.html>) on the web what we found appeared to be soap for the body.

Is this the same stuff you recommended for our floors, or is there another Dr. Bronner's product you were refering to?

Thanks

Anne & Gary

Tania Says:

September 16th, 2008 at 8:13 am

I have a Method "O" Mop with washable microfiber head and I use their lemon ginger floor cleaner which is completely biodegradeable. I have ceramic tile floors and the Armstrong tiles which you have and it works great on both. It smells wonderful and removes even the gross food my two little boys inevitably spill everywhere. 😊 It requires no dillution and no rinsing- perfect for my hectic life... Good Luck!

PS they carry it at Target.

Barclay Says:

January 27th, 2009 at 2:51 am

I have the same floors in a B/W checker pattern. The great thing about this stuff is that it's indestructible; they use it at my local Safeway.

Dr. Bronner's is indeed a soap for the body; but it's billed as a kind of everything-in-one soap too; and as green and biodegradable, etc. It'd be worth a try as it probably would not hurt.

My question for my floors is sealant; how often should one re-seal, and with what? Not only for the sake of the tiles, but to seal the tiny seams between tiles. I'm not fond of the overly-glossy sealant they use at Safeway, but then again, why am I looking at Safeway for residential decorating tips? 😊

Anne & Gary Says:

January 28th, 2009 at 1:30 pm

It would be nice if we had an answer to your question about sealants, but unfortunately we don't.

For now we've given up on trying to figure out proper floor care. We've decided to hire a professional to come in and do it right. That will free us up to work on the rest of the house.

There is so much to do, and only so much time to get it done. Besides, the other stuff is more fun.

Orange Retro Chair

August 22, 2008

This is another of our mid century modern bargain hunting finds.

We found this wonderful retro chair at a garage sale in La Grande for two dollars! Obviously mid century modern hasn't caught on in La Grande yet.



The chair appears to be made of some sort of rubber like material. It does not appear to be plastic. If anyone could tell us more about his chair it would be appreciated.

As you can see, the chair has a light film over it which may be paint, or possibly from sun exposure. If anyone knows what might have caused this, and how to clean it up, the information would be greatly appreciated.

Another option we are considering is painting it. Unfortunately we don't know what kind of paint would work on this surface. Anyone got any ideas?

Thanks.

Comments

Mona Says:

October 24th, 2008 at 7:40 pm

Hi, your chair might be fiberglass, but I'm also guessing that the "film" you're seeing is actually sun fade. I doubt there's much you can do about it. Have you tried a swipe of polyurethane or something similar in a hidden spot? It might just refresh the finish, just as water would. DOES water make it brighter? If so, you should be able to varnish it with something then.

It's a great looking chair. Good luck, Mona

km Says:

November 16th, 2008 at 8:40 pm

try simichrome polish. It says it is a metal polish but it is also a wonderful plastic polish. These chairs were usually fiberglass, and I am willing to bet this chair is too. The Simichrome should refresh the surface without damaging it. I have used it to remove a scratch on my Ipod. Good stuff.

Barclay Says:

January 24th, 2009 at 12:49 am

Hi,

I grew up in Oregon and now live in CA. I'm nostalgic and jealous of all the great finds in small towns in OR.

I'm a big fan of your blog. In fact it helped inspire me to create my own, documenting our....success story? I don't know. I'd love to hear what you think. We got a 1943 house and completely remodeled it. Mid-century madness, but also a few potentially controversial decisions ("you tore out WhAt?!"). See for yourself at:

<http://doghouse.coyoteyip.com>

Enjoy and thanks; keep on bloggin'

Barclay

Anne & Gary Says:

January 24th, 2009 at 5:06 pm

It is heartening to learn you are a fan of our blog. We know from our Google statistics that about forty people visit our site each day, but we don't have much of a sense of whether they like it or not. It is good to hear that you do.

Your blog is very nice. It has clean lines, a simple design, and is easy to use. Thank you for including us in your "Sites We Like" links. We've added yours to our "Related Sites" links.

You have some really cool stuff in your home. It's fun to see how you've arranged things.

Looking for mid century furniture and other stuff while in rural Oregon is fun. Consignment stores, garage sales, and thrift shops are a tremendous treasure trove of inexpensive stuff. There really is the thrill of the hunt.

When it comes to controversy, doing anything with a mid century home elicits plenty of opinions. Some people are into restoring the house to how it probably appeared in the 50's. We are more inclined to aspired to remodel to achieve the intention of mid century philosophy: simplicity, open space, and fun colors. You've done some great things with your home.

It is apparent you are just starting out on you blogging experience. We will be interested in watching the evolution of your mid century adventure.

Anne & Gary

Clarice Booth Says:

June 16th, 2009 at 12:27 am

Hi,

I believe your chair is a is Herman Miller eames style chair. It is probably made of Fiberglass and should be cleaned or restored according to the method appropriate for the material. They are popular items on Ebay and the bases vary. You can probably find out more about you particular one with a little web-searching. I think your site is great and have visited it several times. Nice Find! Keep up the awesome job.

Clarice Booth

Matt Flood Says:

June 19th, 2009 at 3:26 pm

This is an injection molded plastic chair, rather than the Herman Miller/ Eames

fiberglass chair. I have seen some of these in thrift shops in the Denver area. They're usually brown and listed for at least \$20. So, finding a red one for just \$2 is a good find! The haze is probably sun fade. Some ArmorAll (or similar automotive product) might restore the true color.

-Matt

Anne & Gary Says:

June 22nd, 2009 at 10:51 am

Clarice and Matt – We're not sure what the chair is, but we do know it's nothing fancy. What we love about it is it was extremely cheap and it fits in with the house.

At Last! We find a dining set!

December 28, 2007

The living/dining/area of our home is a long open space. We've been looking for a dining room table big enough to have company for dinner but not so large as to diminish this open space. The set couldn't be too formal. The black vinyl composition tile didn't seem to call for a classic teak set. The set couldn't be too informal. Chrome dinette sets are too kitschy to be part of our living room.

We didn't want to buy something new. Modern dining room furniture tends to be over-sized. Plus, we've found that furniture from the era tends to settle in and feel just right in our home.

And, we needed to find the set in Eastern Oregon so we didn't have the challenge of how to get it home.

We finally found something!!!

We were so pleased when we found this mid-century dinette set at Classic Consignment Furniture in Baker City. It fits the space perfectly, has an extra leaf, only cost \$125.00, and the whole thing fit in the back of our station wagon.



The chairs have the original Virtue Brothers label (Chair 674) on the bottom. They were a large manufacturer of metal dinette sets including the classic red, green, or yellow marbled sets with chrome legs.

We're glad they also made a few sets with black metal legs. Actually, we wonder if the table and chairs are parts of different sets. The table has gold metal in addition to the black and seems to have a slightly different style.

If anyone knows more about the table or chairs, please comment!

And, if you live in the Eastern Oregon area we would strongly recommend checking out Classic Consignment Furniture in Baker City. Their prices are very reasonable and they often get in mid-century modern pieces.

Comments

50s Pam Says:

December 30th, 2007 at 12:13 pm

What a wonderful wonderful wonderful house!!! Is that enough superlatives for you?

😊 I adore the dinette – have actually be watching ebay myself so that I could do a post on my blog about dinettes that aren't so...diner. This is perfect. I will likely feature your find. Meanwhile, I also wanted to let you know that I will be adding you to my blogroll...and, that I am very interested in what you may be planning for your kitchen. Pam

50s Pam Says:

January 14th, 2008 at 12:19 pm

Be sure to see my post on your dinette today! Send more pics of your house! Pam

Mary-Frances Main Says:

January 14th, 2008 at 9:12 pm

Awesome! Great house...fabulous dining set! I found you through Pam! Glad to have you in the midcentury blogosphere!

Keeping it Mod in the ATL Says:

October 23rd, 2008 at 11:43 pm

Anne and Gary, Great work preserving your mid-century modern gem; I too am preserving a rare modern treasure here in Atlanta, Georgia. It is true if you sit with the house long enough it will guide you in making your design decisions. You might be interested in <http://www.docomomo-us.org> a society dedicated to the documentation and preservation of modern architecture. The link below is from a

recent modern home tour

http://www.docomomoga.org/media/documents/2007_guide.pdf also look around at <http://www.northcrestmodern.com> there are several homes similar to yours featured there. The images may lend you some ideas for your kitchen project. Now to the real reason I wanted to comment on your blog, my family has this identical dining room table from the 50's. The only difference is ours has a pink faux wood-grain, printed laminate table top with matching pink chairs. The original coverings on the chairs were some sort of textured plastic or vinyl in a mottled pink and white tone. The metal legs are black with the same brass detailing. I think the table was purchased in 1956. I am not sure of the manufacturer; I would have to ask if it still has the indicating labels. I was excited to see a photo of it on your blog and to tell my mother that her vintage table is now in vogue again.

Best wishes, Mod-ATL

Anne & Gary Says:

October 28th, 2008 at 6:16 pm

Mod-ATL,

We checked out the links you mentioned and did find them inspiring. It is amazing how often your ideas for a house change by taking the time to patiently live with it until inspiration strikes. It is a long slow process, but it pays off in the end.

How fun that your family still has the same dinette set!

Anne & Gary

Suzy Says:

January 14th, 2009 at 8:33 am

Hi. I'm having fun reading about your mid-century home. You questioned whether or not your table and chairs were from the same set, but I thought I'd just tell you that I have the exact same set too, only with different fabric (gold sparkly vinyl!). I think since 3 of us have the same table and chairs here, it's safe to assume we have a set!

Thanks for sharing your project!

Barclay Says:

February 13th, 2009 at 11:38 pm

LOVE this dinette set! And I agree, those common chrome diner sets are a little too kitschy as in "Happy Days". Yours is the perfect balance, especially for your space and your kitchen.

We just got a new table to go with our new chairs (so a new dining "set") that I'll put on my blog soon.

Feels great when things come together; especially a dining table; it's a center-piece of one's house.

On Plate Says:

April 21st, 2009 at 10:31 pm

Thank you for ideas. I'm going to re-model my dining room and looking for some facts and ideas about this matter.

IKEA vs Painted Plywood

January 6, 2008

It is interesting how this house really lets us know if something will work. It's a contemporary house; but the contemporary is 50 years old. We've found with furniture that what was contemporary in the 1950's and 1960's immediately settles in and feels right. We're starting to find the same thing with the kitchen.



Months ago, when we first bought our house, we drooled over modern kitchens in magazines like Dwell and Natural Home as well as in the IKEA catalog.

We considered going that route, but something didn't feel right.

As you can see from the pictures on the next page, our hall and bathroom have the original plywood/particleboard painted cabinetry. It's not a choice everyone would make, but we've come to realize the kitchen cabinets need to match.



We wondered if it were even possible to have matching cabinets. A trip to Millers Custom Cabinets, a business that has been in La Grande since Anne grew up here in the 1950's, answered that question.

We are now working with Ben, a cabinet maker at Miller's, to help us return the kitchen cabinets to their original style.

Stay tuned as we discuss materials, layout, and color!

Comments

50s Pam Says:

December 30th, 2007 at 12:17 pm

I am very much looking forward to hearing what you work out with Millers! How cool that they have been in business since the 50s. Did they laugh when you told them you wanted to recreate cabinets from that era?

I have NOT forgotten my promise to find you some photos of kitchens we discussed. I have been re-reading my archival material slowly but surely over the past week and will have a post soon. On your dinette, too! All the best! Pam

Steve Says:

January 23rd, 2008 at 2:10 pm

Hello fellow MCM Oregonians,

I just discovered your blog from Pams amazing retro renovation blog and wanted to say hello. We're in similar situations, having purchased our MCM home almost a year ago and are in the beginning stages a remodel designed to bring back some

architectural integrity, style and modern usability. In short... it's a ton of work. Your house is great and Haley and I will be checking back often to enjoy and be inspired by your progress!
Enjoy! -Steve

Anne & Gary Says:

January 26th, 2008 at 3:15 pm

Steve, thanks for touching bases.

It's especially fun to connect with fellow MCM Oregonians. We checked out your site (<http://www.greshamrummerfun.blogspot.com>) and you two look like you are having a lot of fun!

Donna Says:

February 9th, 2008 at 8:14 am

You are right – the cabinets need to be appropriate for the MCM house. My 1953 ranch had original cabinets – except that someone “updated” them in 1969 and made them look “mediterranean” by routing the doors and adding icky new pulls. They are terrible now. Still painted plywood, though and sturdy. Cabinets in the 1950's were “site built” and not the modular ones used now. You are doing a wonderful job with your house!

The 50's in Edmonds Says:

June 25th, 2008 at 9:11 pm

Anne & Gary,

I've enjoyed stumbling across your website, as I'm also an owner of mid-century Rambler and dearly love my home! My kitchen has the original cabinets, which I painted to coordinate with the original tile counters...it seemed wrong to replace what was perfectly good and well built. Keep it up, the hard work is worth it!!!

Terri Says:

February 24th, 2009 at 11:06 am

I'm just curious about the cabinets you have pictured.. what kind of kitchen cabinets are these? They look to be metal with wood face. I am looking for St. Charles cabinets with wood face and haven't located any yet that resemble mine. Thanks!
Terri (new to site)

Anne & Gary Says:

February 25th, 2009 at 7:17 pm

Terri,

Thank you for visiting our web site. We're always excited to have new visitors.

Our cabinets are not metal. They were built on site and the doors were replaced probably sometime in the 1970's. We would love to replace the doors with the original ones, but unfortunately they are gone.

When we remodel the kitchen we are going to do some minor rearranging of cabinets and replace the doors with ones that better fit the era of the house. We are playing with the idea of painting the doors in a mondrian style. We haven't totally decided how we are going change the kitchen. Right now we in the process of being overwhelmed with remodeling the master bedroom/bath.

We hope you enjoy our web site.

Thanks for visiting.

Anne & Gary

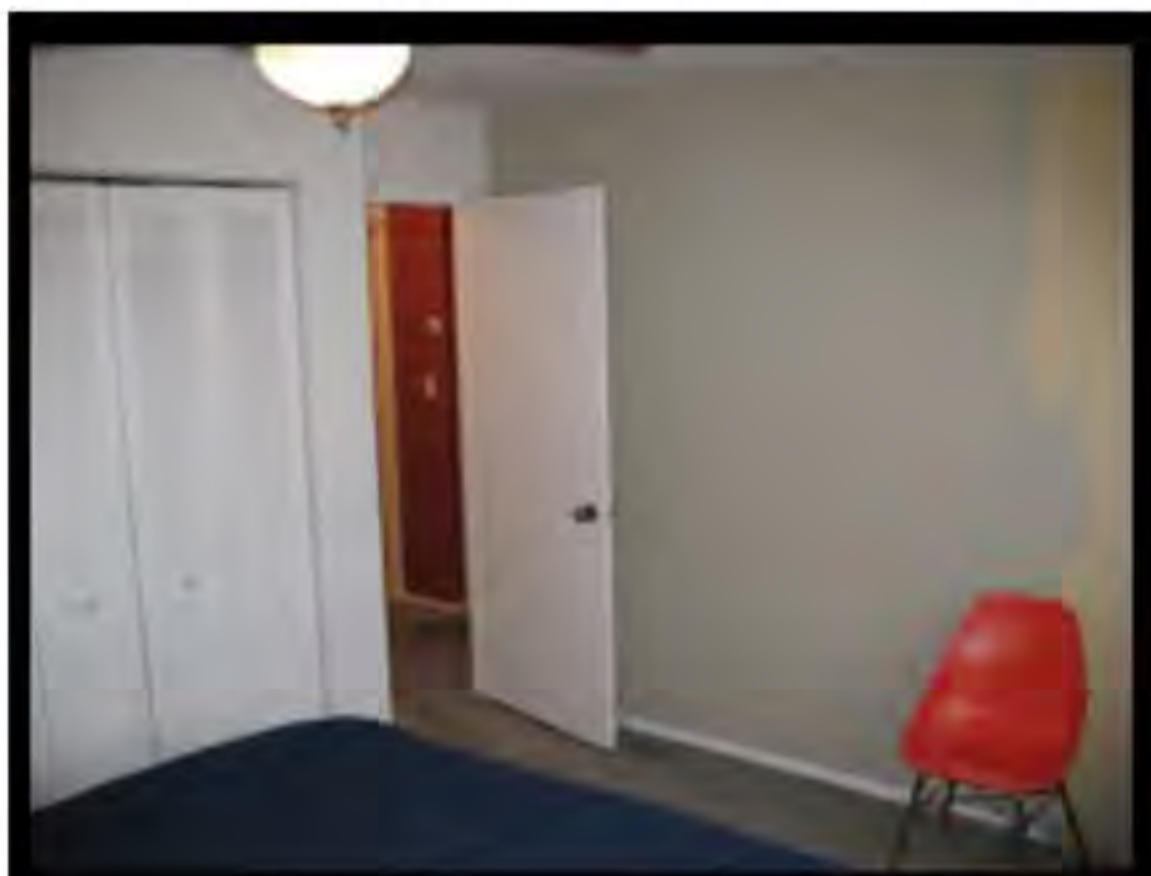
4 - We Gear Up To Renovate

Getting Ready for a Master Bedroom Suite Remodel

December 27, 2008

We are almost ready to begin remodeling the master bedroom area of our home.

The top picture is the current bedroom, and the picture below it is of another bedroom that was converted to a bathroom/utility room by previous owners.



We had considered turning the utilitarian bath back into a bedroom, but it was impractical. After all, with all the plumbing and electrical already installed it would be crazy to yank it all out.

We decided instead to join the rooms in a master bedroom/bath suite.

Where the closet is in the bedroom (top picture) will be a passage way into the master bath. Closets will be on either side of the hallway leading from the bedroom to the bath.

On the wall you see in the picture, there will be a stackable washer and dryer next to a built in vanity. The existing window will be removed and replaced by a long narrow fixed pane window higher up.

On the other side of the room are the existing toilet and shower. We'll leave them where they are but partition the toilet with a pocket door. We will also upgrade from a plastic shower stall to a tiled one.

The back wall will have a custom-made new window from Versatile Sash that will go where the blue tape is. Although it is a different shape from the existing windows in our home, we designed it to mimic them in style.

We are excited to be working with a couple of very talented people in La Grande. Our contractor is John Mueller who is really an artist but does contracting to pay the bills.

We became overwhelmed with the decision making around paint colors, flooring, countertops, and tile and turned to Deb Allstott and her business Home Matters for help with making these choices.

Stay tuned as we begin this project early in 2009!

Comments

niece jennifer Says:
December 28th, 2008 at 1:43 am
sounds awesome!!!

Bathroom Decorations Says:
January 8th, 2009 at 12:44 pm
A good idea of turning previous bathroom and bedroom, converting into master bedroom. Jane

A video about our bedroom/bathroom remodel

January 24, 2009

It's a challenge trying to explain a remodel project on a blog.

Conveying how we intend to change a space with only words and pictures is quite difficult. We decided to try a different approach. Video.



Though we recognize helping people understanding what we are attempting to accomplish through this video is still confusing, at least it give you a better idea of what we are up to.

We hope you find it interesting.

Comments

jen anderson Says:

January 24th, 2009 at 6:58 pm

wow it sounds like it's going to be really cool! so are you guys not going to have a tub?

Anne & Gary Says:

January 24th, 2009 at 7:24 pm

The house has two bathrooms. The bathroom on the main floor has a tub. The bathroom off of the new master bedroom will only have a shower.

That should be plenty.

Bathroom Suite Says:

June 7th, 2009 at 3:35 pm

I have just watched your video and understand what your doing so dont worry, The video is very good.

Jill xx

We Try Our Hand at Designing Windows

February 5, 2009

As we mentioned in our previous post about our master bedroom/bathroom remodel, we are having two new windows installed.

One is for the new master bath and will go where there has never been a window. The other will replace the vinyl window in the original bathroom. Both windows face west and are adjacent to each other in the back of our house.

Since the original bathroom has a vinyl replacement window, we have no idea what the original bathroom window was like. This left us with no template for our new windows.

We had to get creative and design new windows based on the appearance of the original windows we still have.

The picture below is of our original kitchen window. One of the things we love about our house is the rather unusual windows which combine a casement window with a fixed sash. We wanted to replicate that look throughout the house.





After a lot of thought, we decided to design our own windows based upon the style of the original windows.

We did a rough drawing of a casement window with a small fixed pane designed to fit in the rough opening of the original bathroom.

We then worked with Versatile Sash to turn our drawing into finished windows, one of which you see above.

Though there are some minor differences due to changing technologies, the windows are remarkably similar. We are quite pleased.

As you can see, Gary has already primed the windows and they are ready to be installed.

Once the ice melts that is making it nearly impossible to do anything, we are going to have both of the windows installed.

Comments

50s Pam Says:

February 6th, 2009 at 8:27 am

Very impressive!

Robin Says:

May 5th, 2009 at 8:52 pm

I have this same table. It was a hand me down from my parents. The table is the same color, however, the legs are painted a color similar to the table top only slightly darker. I would like to redo the chairs with a new vinyl. I asked an upholstery shop but they told me the work would cost more than a new chair. Any ideas? Do you know anyone who repairs Virtue Brothers furniture?

Anne & Gary Says:

May 8th, 2009 at 5:48 pm

Robin,

We don't know anyone who repairs Virtue Brothers furniture.

We came across our table at a consignment store. We bought it because it was very inexpensive and went well with our house.

We are not furniture experts and don't know what to tell you.

Sorry.

Anne and Gary

Anne discusses the challenges in selecting paint colors

February 15, 2009

Choosing paint colors for our mid century home has been particularly challenging.

In this video Anne shows our progress in painting the house interior while explaining the particular challenges we faced in selecting our color scheme.



Comments

50s Pam Says:

February 16th, 2009 at 8:28 am

I LOVE your videos! Paint colors are so personal – therefore, so hard! I can't wait to see your finished products!

maureen Kelly Says:

February 20th, 2009 at 7:57 pm

not wanting anything boring,like more linen white, and feeling adventurous, I brought home Benjamin Moore's 'Funky Fruit' sample jar and the painter put a swath of it on the living room wall....it was perfect — a sort of very light peachy pink, that changes in the various changes of the sun, but never disapoints...really good color. Try it, you'll like it!!!

Maureen

How Did Mid Century Modern Get to 1955 La Grande?

February 27, 2009

Our home -- with its open floor plan, beamed ceiling, and floor to ceiling windows -- was most unusual for our little town in 1955.

We often wonder how it came to be.



La Grande did not issue building permits until the 1970's so that usual way of finding the history of a home is not available.

Unlike its cousins—the Eichler's, The Rummer's, the Cliff May's -- our house is not part of a development. There are no others like it in town.

A friend who lived about a block away when the home was built told us it was built by a contractor, we gather as sort of a spec home.

We did do a search of city directories at the public library, thinking perhaps the home had been built with a specific family in mind, a family whose home it was for some time. Not the case.

The city directory shows the first two owners stayed only about two years each.

The home had six different owners in its first 28 years, the families of: Forrest Russell, a teacher; James Haas, a biologist with Oregon Fish and Wildlife; Dave Slaght, the city manager; John Reid, a physician; Eugene Washington, a civil engineer; and Barry Heath, a Presbyterian minister. The next owners, the Fetz family, kept the home for 20 years and then sold to the people from whom we bought our home.

We would love to learn more about our house, how it came to be, what it was like originally, etc. If anyone reading this lived in our house or was in it in its early years, we would love to hear from you!

Comments

Barclay Says:

March 12th, 2009 at 2:41 am

Your house is gorgeous! It's odd to learn that there are no others from the same style/era nearby. Mostly though I'm jealous because, compared to the SF Bay Area, I'll bet you got that great house, in La Grande for a relative steal! Did you see that there was a Frank Lloyd Wright house for sale in CA recently? It's in a remote area, so a million two seems like a lot, but when is there the chance to buy a FLW? See <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi=/c/a/2009/03/08/RE0U167P7D.DTL&hw=frank+lloyd+wright&sn=001>

Beautiful houses in remote(ish) areas; you have some company! Hope your sleuthing pays off.

Anne & Gary Says:

March 12th, 2009 at 5:28 pm

We're glad you like our house. We have to agree it is wonderful. Of course we are a bit biased.

La Grande has been economically depressed for a long time. Housing prices here are amazingly low, though people who have always lived here don't see it that way. We try to buy from local merchants here whenever possible and hope that the money we are spending fixing up our house will stay here to help the economy.

Compared to SF, of course, the house would seem like a steal.

Thanks for your comment.

Anne & Gary

5 - We Begin With The Bedroom/Bath

The Master Bed/Bath remodel begins

March 28, 2009

Finally! The remodel of the master bedroom and bath has begun.

As you can see, the future master bath has been stripped to the studs. The top picture is taken from the bedroom into the new bath. The bottom picture is from the new bath into the bedroom.

We are on our way!



Our contractor is John Mueller, who is better known as a local La Grande artist. You can see his work and learn more about him at his web site.

He does his art work out of Way Point Studio. Fortunately for us, his day job is working as a general contractor doing home remodeling and construction.

We went through a lot of contractors before we found one who appreciated our vision of what we wanted the house to become. We are very fortunate to have found John.



The picture above is the huge wasp's nest John found when he pulled down the ceiling.

Fortunately it was an old, mostly abandoned nest, and the remaining wasps were sluggish from the cold weather, so it wasn't terribly nasty.

As you can see, the nest is huge. It entirely filled in between two rafters. It was most impressive.

We added sealing off the holes to the outside where the wasps got in to our to-do list. We've had enough of those critters.

So that's where things stand with our mid-century home remodel project.

Stay tuned for further details.

Comments

Loren & Amber Says:

April 13th, 2009 at 6:58 pm

Hey Anne and Gary, we have been checking your site regularly for a while. We live in Bend, OR and actually almost bought a home in Baker City about two years ago. We have our own restoration project in the works so check out our blog. We are most interested in following the progress of your bathroom renovation as we plan to do the same this summer, all the way to the studs. Keep in touch!

Anne & Gary Says:

April 13th, 2009 at 9:39 pm

Loren & Amber,

The dry wall on our bedroom and bath should be up within the next week. Then we will be ready to begin painting. After the walls and ceiling are painted the cabinetry goes in.

We were really excited to see the pictures of your cabinets in your blog. Our intentions are to have the cabinetry in both the kitchen and new bath built to match the era of our house. That means painted cabinets just like yours.

There seem to be a lot of people who like the Ikea look, and are not as keen on the simple beauty of painted wood. Seeing how your cabinets turned out has inspired us. We are more confident than ever we have made the right decision in going with traditional painted wood.

We have put a link to your blog (<http://bungalowranch.blogspot.com>) on the Related Sites menu on this web site. We hope it encourages people to check out your project.

Anne & Gary

Guest Blogger, Artist/Contractor John Mueller

April 29, 2009

This week we are delighted to have John Mueller, from John Mueller Construction, as our guest blogger. John is the contractor for our Mid Century home remodel.

John is not only a remodeling contractor but an artist as well. To see his art go to <http://www.johnmuellerartwork.com/index.html>.

Below is what John has to say about our projects.



John Mueller

I have been working as a carpenter for 19 years, and I am in the 13th year of operating my own remodeling business in La Grande, Oregon.

La Grande is a small town, and it seems as if there is not a street that I can drive down without spotting a house that I have worked on.

The houses in most neighborhoods have structural and architectural similarities based upon their period of development, so it is usually easy for me to assess the general construction methods and materials of any given house at a glance.

However, I recently began working on a true architectural anomaly tucked away at the dead end of a little street that scales the hill at the west end of town.

The owners, Anne and Gary Olson, contacted me through a mutual friend of my

mothers in Portland. I am glad to have met Anne and Gary. They are easy to get along with and are very detail oriented and engaged in the project.

I could go on at great length about the journey we have patiently taken together to sift through all of the minutia of the design, function and intent of their vision for the project, but this first contribution of mine to the blog is about an interesting structural situation that I discovered midstream in the master bedroom/bath remodel.

The living room is an open beam construction, with floor to ceiling glazing on the East side.



The beams penetrate the interior and exterior spaces and are a prominent feature of the architecture and feel of the house.



In the area of the master bedroom/ bath remodel, there is a ceiling rather than the open beam design of the living area. Structurally, it appeared from the exterior that beams had been used to carry the roof load here as well, beam ends creating the eaves.



Based on that, I concluded that the ceiling was a drop ceiling and that moving walls around would be structurally irrelevant.

The Olson's plan did, in fact, involve moving a North to South wall between the bedroom and bathroom and the installation of a pocket door (these create rather large opening spans).

Again, based on my structural conclusions, I thought, no problem!

Then came the surprise.

The decision was made to take down the existing ceiling in the bathroom area. It was only 3/8 drywall that had suffered damage from a past leak.

When I started the demolition, I was surprised to find that above the drop ceiling joists were 2×12 rafters, not beams. The beam ends making up the eaves were short pieces scabbed on to the 2x12s as seen below.



The problem was that the rafters were spliced mid-span, directly over the wall that was to be moved as seen below.



That was the roof load.

Additionally, when I first looked things over, I could see that the seams and nail lines of the "drop ceiling" were running North to South, which led me to believe that the "drop ceiling" was framed North to South as well.

As it turned out, the framing was East to west and had been furred out with 1×3 in the North to South. So the framing was spliced mid span over the same wall.

There was the ceiling load.

Fortunately, the laps of the splices for both the roof and ceiling members were quite long, and the planned location of the new wall fell within them.

The major change in my plan involved constructing a substantial 2×10 header for the pocket door opening, seen below, and sistering the floor joist that carried the load, and having to have all the new framing in place before removing the existing wall.

It all worked out, and I learned some new things about a very unusual house.



Progress Report: The Sheetrock is Up

May 10, 2009

We figured it was time to give you a quick update on the progress of our midcentury home remodel.

John Mueller, our remodeling contractor and an artist, has been working away on the project.

The picture below shows the new doorway into the bathroom from the now enlarged bedroom.



The space beyond that door is where Anne's closet and the stackable washer/dryer will go. The door to the right is the original one that leads from the bedroom into the hallway.

The picture on the next page is of Gary's closet space, the shower, and the enclosed toilet area.



Notice the open space above the toilet area (farthest away). This is going to be filled with textured glass to allow natural light into the space.

On the far wall you can see part of the window we had built by Versatile Sash. It is now installed and we love it.

John is preparing the shower for tiling and plans to write about that soon.

Stay tuned.

Progress Report: The master bedroom and bath get painted

May 23, 2009

We spent the past week painting.

The walls and ceiling of the new master bedroom and bath have three coats of fresh paint. What a lot of work!



We are deeply grateful to Deb Allstott, from Home Matters in La Grande, for helping us select our colors. She was a sanity saver.

Our final choices were Benjamin Moore "Palace White" for the ceiling in both the master bedroom and bath, Benjamin Moore "Somerville Red" for the master bedroom walls, and Miller Paint "Caper Tree" for the master bathroom as well as the original bath.

We love the results, and would highly recommend Deb for help with color selection.

Comments

Alonzo - Home Remodeling Says:

June 10th, 2009 at 6:56 pm

After you're done admiring the fine drywall work, eventually you do have to cover it up with paint.

No question, painting is hard work. But when you're all done, a fresh coat of paint and new colors is the rewarding finishing touch. As soon as the fumes wear off 🍷

I like your home remodel chronicle. Great idea to let people follow along and watch your progress.

Alonzo

Progress Report: The Shower Tile is Laid

June 24, 2009

Here is a quick update of the installation of the new shower in the remodeled master bath.

John Mueller, our remodeling contractor and an artist, has been working away on the project.



The picture above shows the new tile that is now completely laid. The grout still needs to be applied, which John will do next.

That's it for for now.

We'll keep you informed as things develop.

Comments

Barclay Says:

June 25th, 2009 at 12:27 am

Wow! You guys are like building a whole new house with the amount of work you're doing!

I'm liking the new shower; small tiles are such a luxury (and safer as they form a non-slip grid too).

Looking forward to checking back; good luck!

Diane Says:

July 7th, 2009 at 6:05 pm

I think it is VERY strange that you have one of the few MCM remodel blogs that I read – I have been remodeling a MCM house also – and our contractor's name is John Moeller! What are the chances?!?

-Diane from RanchoRedux.blogspot.com

Anne & Gary Says:

July 7th, 2009 at 6:21 pm

Barclay – Sometimes it feels like building a whole new house, but we suspect this is more fun.

Diane – We'd say the odds are about a million to one. After all, how many John Muellers can their be?

We are in Atomic Ranch Magazine!!!

August 25, 2009

Our Mid Century Home has been pictured in the Fall issue of *Atomic Ranch Magazine*!



A picture of the house and a paragraph about it can be found in the "Home Page" section of *Atomic Ranch* magazine on page 43.

If you do not yet subscribe to *Atomic Ranch*, though we suspect many of you already do, please check out their web site at <http://www.atomic-ranch.com>.

We have been reading *Atomic Ranch* for many years and always find it inspiring. It is a wonderful source for ideas about what to do with your home.

If you aren't subscribed to it already, we suggest you do.

6 - We Continue With The Kitchen

Deb Allstott helps us select colors and shades

September 12, 2009

Deb Allstott is our color consultant and window treatment expert.

Deb, who owns Home Matters in La Grande, Oregon, has been a life saver when it has come to picking colors for our renovation.



Though we were comfortable selecting the colors for our living room area, the rest of the house was too much of a challenge. This was especially true with the hard surfaces where it's not "just a can of paint".

Deb has an excellent eye for color and has been invaluable in helping us find colors that are dramatic while working well with the colors we've already selected.

If you happen to live in the La Grande area and need help figuring out colors, give Deb a call.

Tom Woodruff - Cabinet Maker Par Excellence

September 27, 2009

We are very excited to be working with local cabinet maker Tom Woodruff.

We had quite the challenge finding someone to work with who could meet our specific needs. We finally heard about Tom through John Mueller, our remodeling contractor who is also a La Grande artist.

Tom makes wonderful custom furniture and art work as well as cabinets. He generally works on one project at a time and is known for his quality work. We are really excited about working with him.

We particularly appreciated that he was willing to sit down and patiently work out sizing for specific drawers and cupboards. He is going out of his way to give us exactly what we want. We are confident he will be able to implement our vision.



Tom is progressing rapidly on the cabinets as you can see from the pictures above.

Very shortly (gulp) our old kitchen will disappear.

If you happen to live in the La Grande area and would like to talk to Tom, here is his contact information:

Woodruff Custom Furniture and Cabinetry
2407 East Q Avenue
La Grande, Oregon 97850
(541) 963-8332

More pictures of cabinets being made by Tom Woodruff

September 25, 2009

Here are more pictures of the cabinets Tom Woodruff is in the process of making for us.



Tom Woodruff



**Woodruff Custom Furniture & Cabinetry
2407 East Q Avenue
La Grande, Oregon 97850
(541) 963-8332**

Going, Going, Going, Gone!

October 15, 2009

Our kitchen tear-out is beginning this week! (Don't worry; it was not the original 1955 kitchen.)



Gone will be:

- * An impossible-to-keep-clean kitchen sink
- * A glued-down cutting board with a giant crack
- * A drawer which can't be opened unless the dishwasher is opened
- * No counter space between the cooktop and the frig
- * Double ovens which routinely set off the nearby smoke alarm

Stay tuned to see our new retro kitchen!

Off we go. The demolition begins

October 23, 2009

As you can see, the old kitchen is gone!



John Mueller, our remodeler extraordinaire, has completed the demolition of the kitchen and hallway. The electrician has been getting the electrical work in order and everything is being prepped for the cabinet installation.

We'll keep you informed of developments as they happen.

The kitchen installation begins

November 7, 2009

As you can see, the installation of the kitchen has begun.



This picture was taken from the hall. The big box structure to the right is the new enclosure the refrigerator will go into.

The basic structure of the cabinets are in place.

We will have more pictures to share with you soon.

A new home for the refrigerator

November 7, 2009

In the previous post we showed a picture shot from the hall of the framed box the refrigerator would be moved to. This is a picture of that box from inside the kitchen.



The refrigerator was in the space now occupied by the cabinets with the green drawers. It will now go in the built in space you see here.

As you can see, there will be a cupboard above the refrigerator. Since Gary is six foot three, he will be the one taking stuff up and down from there.

Where the new stove will be

November 7, 2009

This is the wall where the stove will go. The stove will slide in between the two cabinets.



You saw the cabinet to the right in the previous picture that showed where the refrigerator would go. As you can see, the refrigerator will go directly to the right of these cabinets.

The space where the refrigerator used to be will now be cabinets and counter space. It will be wonderful to have counter space between the range and the refrigerator.

It will be very handy having the refrigerator directly to the right of the cooking area.

The kitchen sink

November 7, 2009

Not much to say about this one. This is where the new kitchen sink will go, which is exactly where it was before.



Kitchen and bath update

November 22, 2009

The renovation is coming right along; we are so excited!

As you can see in this picture of the kitchen, the cabinet boxes are in. You can also see the edges of the new laminate countertops.

Also notice the new can lights in the ceiling. We are really excited about those. The lighting in the old kitchen was always a problem.



This next picture is of the vanity in the new master bathroom. No drawers and cabinet doors yet, but it's looking good.



This final picture is of one of the two new built-in closets in the new master bath. We are particularly excited about those.



That's it for now.

Stay tuned for future updates.

Original Boomerangs

February 6, 2010

We are almost done with our kitchen/master bedroom/bath project but have decided to hold off showing more pictures until everything is finished.

We decided to do it this way because we don't want the final presentation to be anti-climactic. We think it will be more fun doing it this way.

In the mean time, we are going to do some blogs about little things we discovered while doing the renovation.

For example, the picture on the left is of the original counter top that was revealed when the workers were dismantling the old counters. Obviously, it is the original mid century boomerang patterned Formica!!! We think it is kind of cool.



At one point, we even considered using the reissued boomerang Formica in our renovation. We ultimately decided to go with something a little more versatile.

It was fun discovering this bit of history hidden from sight all these years. This house continues to offer up mysteries that confound and delight us.

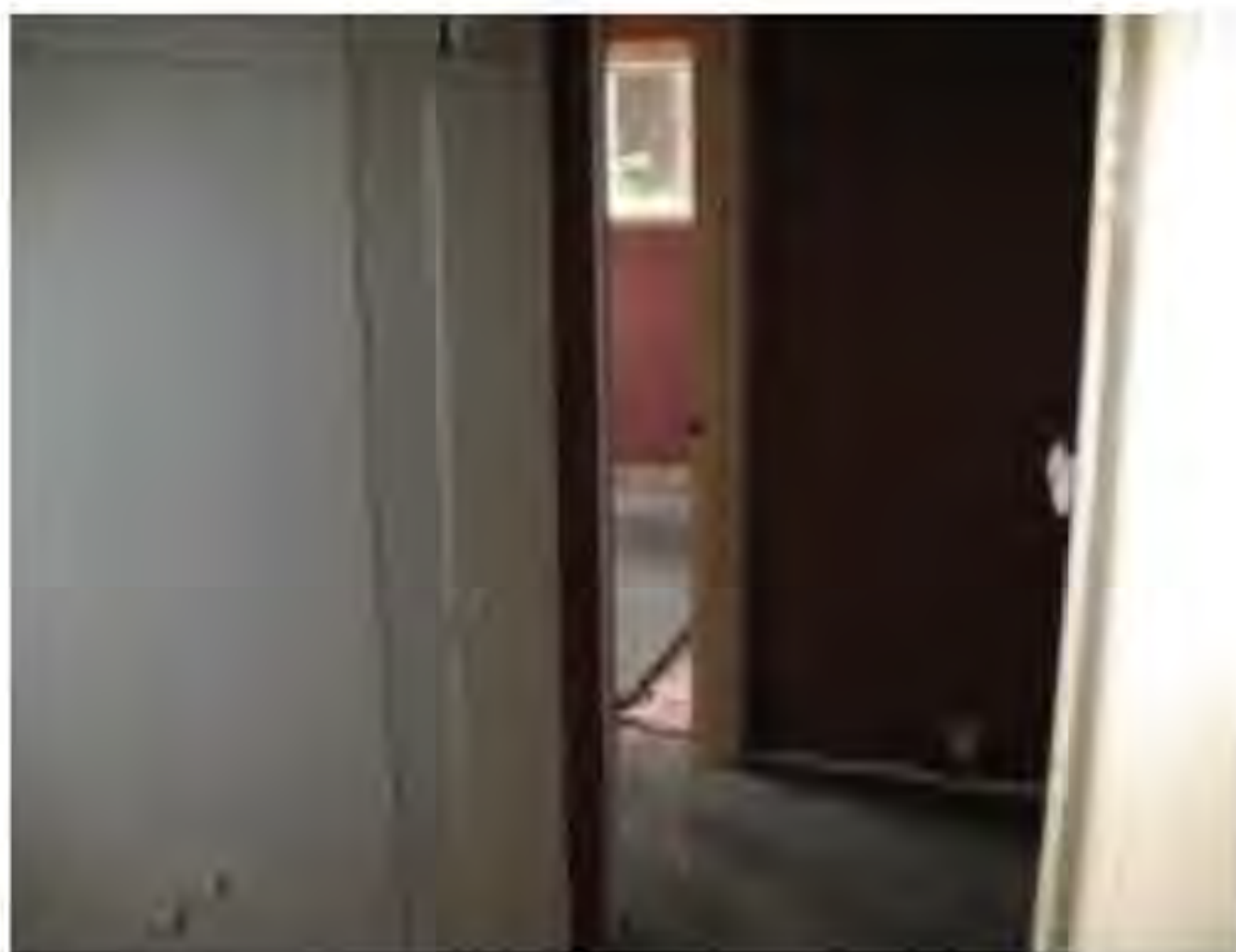
7 - We Finish The Upper Level

Honey, Where Did You Put the Washer?

March 1, 2010

Something we discovered during the tear-out phase of our renovation was the original location of the laundry.

This first picture shows our hall before tear-out. The doors to the right enclosed a broom closet.



This next picture shows the hall after tear-out.



It turns out that the broom closet contained a laundry drain (which you can see at lower right corner) and an outlet midway up the wall. This washer location was most likely the original! Perhaps the dryer was to the left?

Interestingly, we had contemplated putting the laundry in this exact spot but decided it wouldn't have worked.

If we had only known!

Where else has the washer been? After the hall location, it apparently was moved to the basement. It was probably there for many years.

The couple we bought our home from moved the laundry back upstairs into a bedroom they converted into a sort of second bath/laundry.

When we moved in, we put the used washer/dryer we bought back in the basement!

Finally, we ultimately re-worked the bedroom conversion into our master bath/dressing area/laundry.

The spot for our washer/dryer is shown in this next picture, just to the right of the shelves.



We left our old washer/dryer in the basement for extra-large or extra-dirty loads.

Consequently, we will have the best of both worlds!

A small teaser

April 24, 2010

It's been awhile since we posted anything new on the blog.

We figured we'd do this quick post to let you know the project is moving along and is going very well. We would have posted earlier but we've been really busy.

As a teaser, we've posted a cropped down picture of the new kitchen cabinets, counter-top, microwave, and stove. There is quite story there, but we'll save it for another post.



The reason we don't just show you the whole house is because, though it's mostly done, it is unfinished.

We are at the stage where we are painting and installing the baseboards and trim. It is a huge task and until it is done the house looks unfinished.

We figured that if we show you our progress so far it will be anti-climatic when we show you the finished project. However we will tell you this much. It came out really well and we are excited about eventually sharing it with you.

The Renovation is Done!

August 15, 2010

The renovation is pretty much done, or as done as such things get. We are extremely pleased with the results of the project. It is exactly what we envisioned. And the quality of the work is excellent, thanks to the patience and craftsmanship of our general contractor (and artist), John Mueller.

Starting today, we're going to show pictures of the completed project. We'll alternate displaying the overall house with posts about our experiences with appliances, hardware, plumbing features, and design challenges.

We're going to start by taking a look at our new kitchen.

As you can see, this picture features the built in refrigerator, can lighting, and built in stove and microwave.



This next picture features the laminate counter top, sink, and cabinetry.



The colors in the picture, as is often the case in photographs, are deceptive. The clay wall color is much more subtle than the glowing orange it appears in the picture. The black of the appliances and counter top are not the severe contrast that they appear in the picture.

The colors all work together extremely well.

The clay is a continuation of the living room wall color. The black picks up the black of the VCT tile in the living room. The green introduces another fun color into our palette.

We owe it all to our wonderful color consultant, Deb Allstott of Home Matters in La Grande.

The sink and appliances are nice, but we are not entirely satisfied with any of them. We'll have more on that later.

We are very pleased with our new layout. It is so nice to have space between the refrigerator and the range.

What we love perhaps the most are the cabinets which were custom made by Tom Woodruff of Woodruff Custom Furniture and Cabinetry. He did a wonderful job. The cabinets matched the style of other cabinetry in the house so everything blends together seamlessly.

We'll have more details about the renovation and more examples of John, Deb, and Tom's work in the weeks ahead.

Stay tuned.

Our Wonderful Master Bath/Dressing Area

September 6, 2010

This is a view of the remodel of our master bathroom/dressing area.



As always with pictures on the internet, the colors are a bit off. The room isn't even close to the yellow shown in the picture, but the wonderful outcome of the project still comes through.

Once again, you'll notice the superb craftsmanship of the cabinets created by our cabinet maker, Tom Woodruff.

We got the hardware from Rejuvenation House Parts in Portland Oregon.

Originally we were leaning towards black hardware, but Tom talked us into going with the chrome.

We are not sorry. It looks great!

Notice the glass work along the top of the enclosed toilet towards the back. Our contractor, John Mueller, designed this transom feature.

The toilet stall is very small and would be very dark if it weren't for the natural light this feature allows in.

We are extremely pleased with how this turned out.

We got the ceiling light fixtures from the Rebuilding Center in Portland Oregon. They sell vintage house parts recycled from old houses that have been torn down.

Though the lighting fixtures don't show up well in the picture, they are perfect for the house. We will have a separate post about them later.

So that's it for now. We'll have more posts, hopefully in the not too distant future.

8 - We Start More Projects

Necessity is the Mother of - Wonderful Bas Relief Wall Art

July 9, 2011

Below is the "before" picture of the wall that separates our kitchen and living/dining room.



The wall was originally solid but someone cut into it to add shallow cupboards. We didn't care for the cupboards, but we loved the wonderful grained panelling which is also on the fireplace wall at the other end of the room.

This was a major design challenge. We thought about just replacing the grained wall with dry wall but hated to lose this original design feature.

After several years of asking everyone we could think of, we determined the wall was made out of sandblasted plywood. We subsequently learned that it could not be duplicated.

Modern plywood is not made in a way that can be sandblasted to bring out the grain the way it was in the fifties, so there was no way to replace the wall.

What to do?

We turned to our local artist/contractor John Mueller. We begin tossing around the idea of filling the openings with repetitive bas relief designs ala Frank Lloyd Wright.

We had seen a house in Atomic Ranch with detailing of this type on the exterior. However, the particular design did not lend itself to our trio of wall openings.

Then Anne chanced to look at Pam Kueber's wonderful Retro Renovation blog the very day there was a post about Dave's mid century modern wall panels.

Bingo! John took the basic pattern Dave had used and modified the dimensions to work in our openings. Sculptural artist that he is, he also added several layers of depth.



The panels totally pull the room together.

We love them. Thank you Dave, Pam and John Mueller!

New Garage Doors

March 6, 2012

As much fun as remodelling the inside of the house has been, we've been eager to spruce up the outside.

The house needs a good coat of paint, but before we could do anything about that we needed to deal with the garage door situation.

As you can see from the "before" picture below, the house had a sliding door that leads to an unfinished room that was originally a garage bay.



The door doesn't fit the design of the house. We decided it had to go.

Calling on our favorite contractor, John Mueller, we turned the house back into a two garage home.

We had two wooden doors installed that matched the vintage of the home. We will hold off on having them painted until we are ready to give the whole house a fresh coat of paint.

After



We are really pleased with how the doors came out.

Carlo of Hollywood Painting

March 8, 2012

We found this original Carlo of Hollywood picture in the Dawn's Delight second hand store in La Grande for \$40.00.



It is quite large, 23" x 65", and is hand painted. Not a print.

Paintings under the "Carlo of Hollywood" label were actually mass produced, though they were mass produced by real artists. Or at least people with a talent for painting.

They were mostly manufactured in the 1950's, which works well for our mid-century home.

His art was carried in department stores and included with tract housing. So we're not talking high-end highbrow art.

None-the-less, it is a wonderful addition to our mid-century La Grande home.

The house exterior is painted!

2012

By the summer of 2012, we had moved on from blogging but were still working on the house.

An 'aha' moment led to having the outside of the house painted the same color as the den, a lovely warm Devine color known as 'Roast.' The trim is Benjamin Moore 'Bedford Brown.'



Later, Anne painted the door 'Bedford Brown.'



9 - We Tackle The Addition

The addition "before"

2012 (photos 2006)

Sometime probably in the 70's, an addition had been built on the back of the house in the L-shaped space between the upper level and the living room.



The room boasted a wonderful view up the hillside but little else. The exterior siding was in poor shape. The room had a claustrophobic low ceiling of dark paneling. The vinyl flooring had badly-worn spots.

The room was accessed through multi-paned French doors in the living room. The traditional look of the doors detracted from the simple lines of the post-and-beam construction and the floor-to-ceiling windows.



The only way to the basement was through this room and the only way to the backyard was a sliding glass door on the far side of the room.

What to do? We turned again to our wonderful contractor, John Mueller.

John did an amazing tear-out job. When he was done, what was left was an original concrete slab patio and the framing for the overhead patio covering, now supporting the roof.

John removed both exterior walls and propped this roof structure up with 4x4's. For a brief time, we had a covered patio!

A sunroom emerges

2013

After a brief period of thinking we should continue to use the space as a covered patio, we turned to creating a sunroom.

We originally hoped to have the same floor-to-ceiling windows that made the living room so wonderful. However, code restrictions and the fact that windows are no longer assembled on site made this impossible.

We did, though, want windows all across the back and along the north side.



We purchased (gulp!) six Marvin window units consisting of a fixed upper pane and a lower hopper window.

The hopper windows open in, allowing the wonderful mountain breezes to cool the house.

After some old, scraggly arbor vitae were removed, there was a view of Mt. Emily from the north sunroom window.



John creates faux beams

2013

The living room beams slope down toward the addition, so John came up with the idea of making it look like they continued on through the addition.



He fabricated faux beams by constructing sleeves to fit over the ceiling rafters. We painted them the exterior trim color.

John also put in a tongue-and-groove ceiling to match the living room.

He continued the look with faux-beam extensions on the outside, very similar to what was done originally on the upper level.



John also painstakingly recreated the board-and-batten look of the original house.



Sidelight repetition

2013

We spent a lot of time thinking about what kind of door should replace the French doors leading into the sunroom and also whether the door to the backyard should be solid or include glass.

John, artist that he is, realized that repetition was the answer.

Our home featured a solid panel front door with a frosted/textured glass sidelight.



John located a similar frosted/textured glass and created a similar look for the door leading from the living room into the sunroom.



And also for the door leading from the sunroom into the backyard.



The basement door dilemma

2013

The door to the left in the photo below originally led to the basement and also to a door out onto the patio. By the time we bought the house, all of this had been reworked and the door opened to a coat closet.



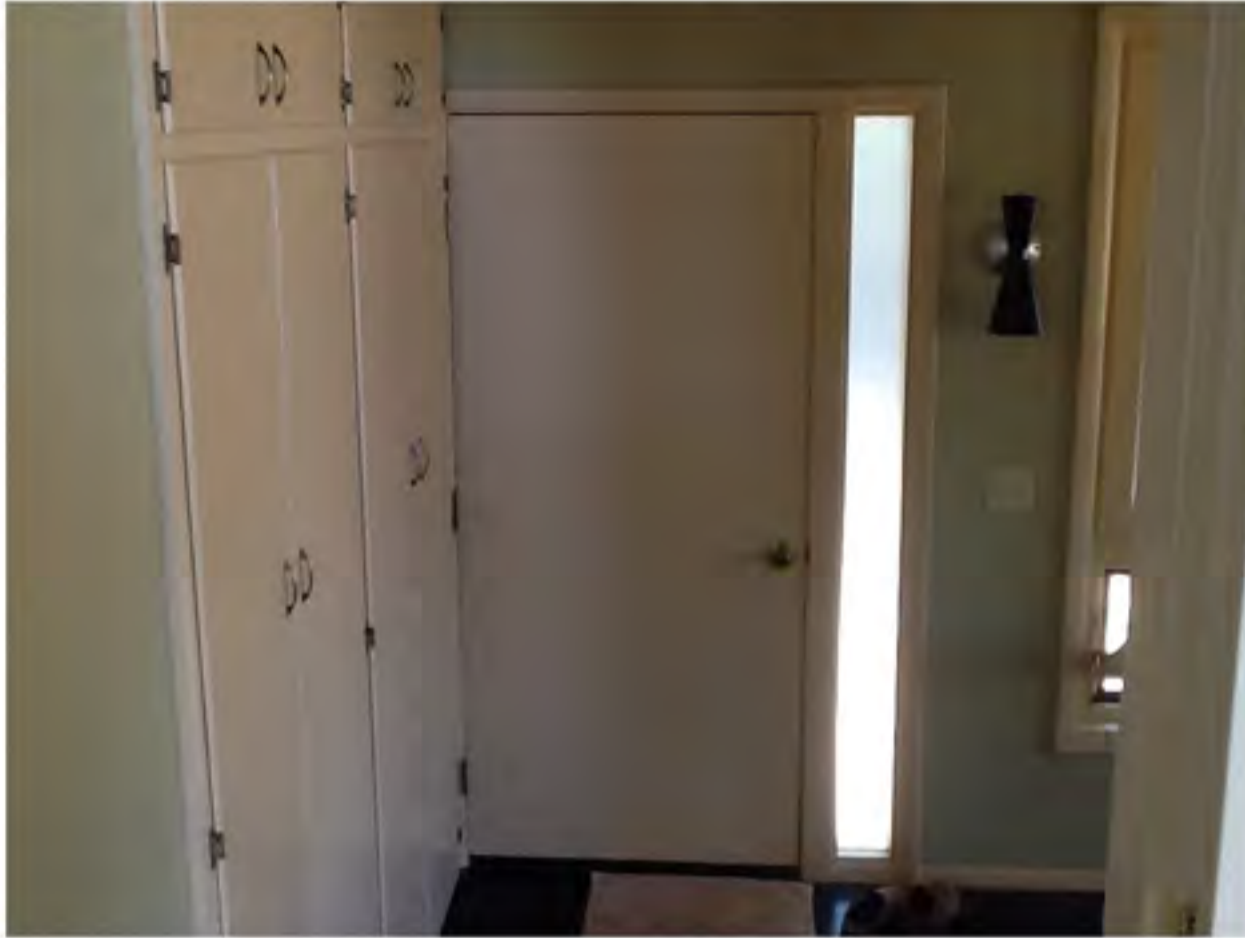
This created quite a dilemma as we really liked having the coat closet but also wanted to be able to go directly to the basement without having to go through the sunroom.

Finally, after much creative brainstorming with John, we came up with a simple solution to this complex problem.

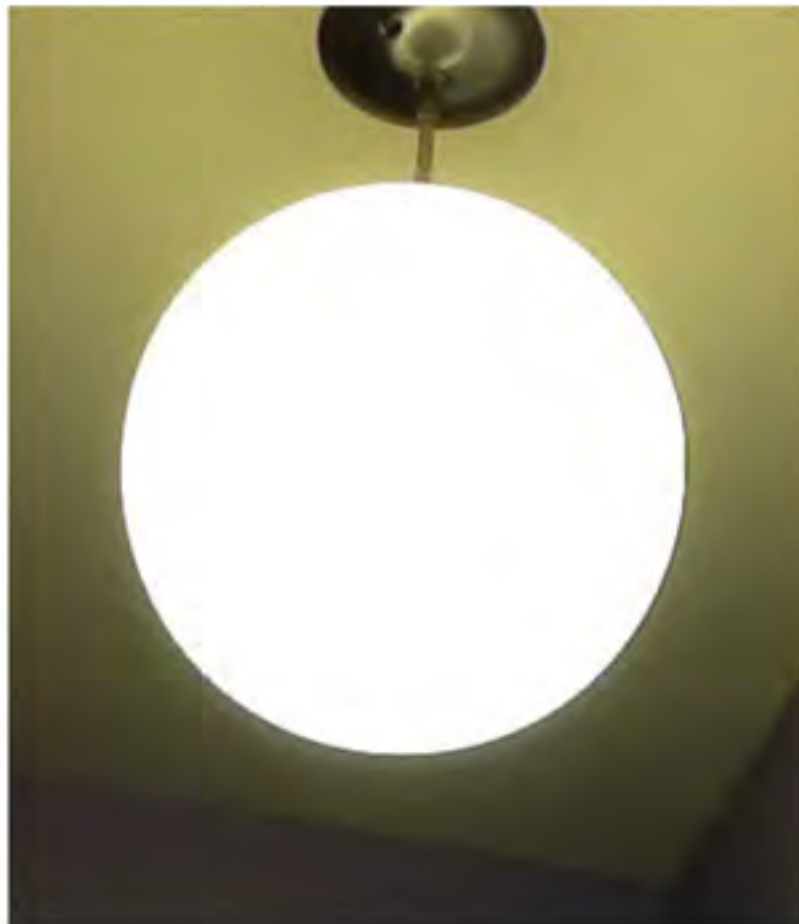
Enclosing the narrow space between the sunroom door and the wall enabled John to create a closet nook on the landing just inside the basement door.



And a set of floor-to-ceiling storage cupboards in the sunroom.



The frosting on the cake was replacing the bare bulb light above the basement landing with an original midcentury modern globe light we had bought for \$1.50 at a church rummage sale.



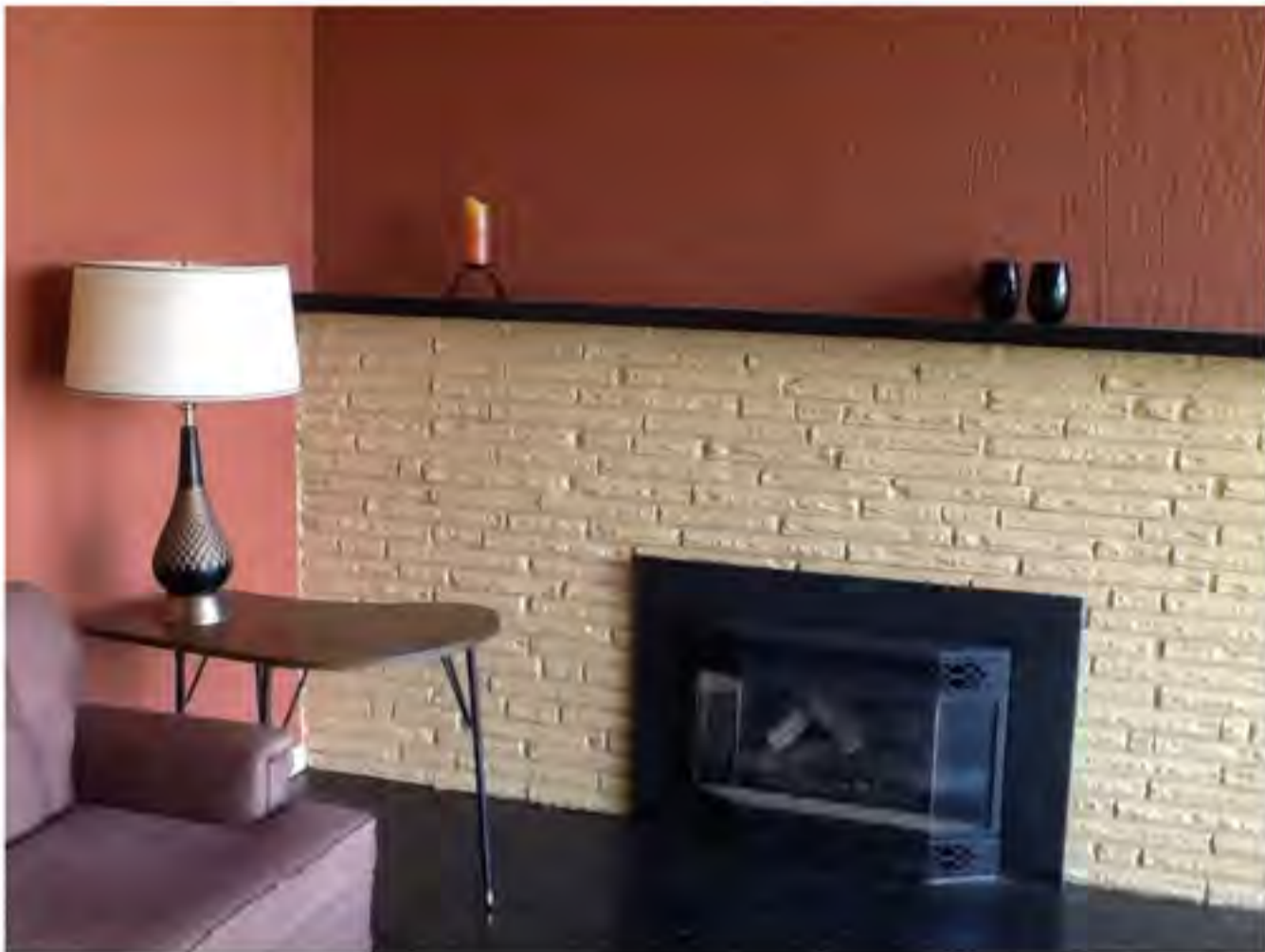
10 - We Add Final Touches

The mantle

2014

The fireplace mantle had been covered with stick-on wood veneer. By the time we bought the house, the veneer was peeling a bit and of course the seams showed.

Ever the artist, John suggested using black laminate to recover the mantle. It took Anne a while to warm to this idea, but as usual, John nailed it.



The black mantle echoed the black of the gas fireplace insert as well as picked up the black of the floor and accessories.

After seven years, the interior of the house was finished!

A new driveway

2016

The driveway was not in good shape when we bought the house and continued to deteriorate.

It consisted of three sections--the original concrete driveway, a concrete addition making it possible to back directly out of the south garage, and asphalt extending from the bottom of the driveway to the street.



Jamie Challis of James Challis Construction came to the rescue.

Jamie paved the driveway straight from the garage to the street. Curbs on both sides act as mini-retaining walls and give a finished look.



Curb appeal rose dramatically with the new driveway!

A retro mailbox

2016

A few winters after we bought the house, the city snowplow took out the original rural-type mailbox. We didn't have mail delivery, so we didn't replace the mailbox.

Finally it was time.

A modbox usa mailbox, patterned after a mailbox available from Sears in the 1950s, put our finishing touch on the home.



It was time then for new owners to add their touches to this amazing midcentury modern gem.