

INSIDE.



New England *meets* Lake Sammamish

A CUSTOM HOME WITH EAST COAST FLAIR

BY CHRISTY PESSEMIER | PHOTOS BY JOHN G. WILBANKS

Looking at the expansive four-story, 5,000-square-foot home built into the rugged hillside facing Lake Sammamish, passersby would never guess it once was an unassuming and dated 2,000-square-foot house in desperate need of a facelift.

In 1999, newlyweds Dave and Hilary Ohara moved in hoping to remodel and create their dream home. Their first step was to fix the rotting deck and replace it with a functional new one that was built to last. The Oharas contacted local Eastside home builder and contractor Russ Lavallee, who took special care in designing the deck to preserve — rather than block — the lake view. Wowed and won over, the Oharas were soon consulting with

Lavallee about an entire home remodel. It wasn't long before they came to the realization that the old house was poorly framed and remodeling would be a costly and difficult process. Instead, the couple took Lavallee's advice and chose to tear down the home and begin building a new one.

Dave took on the mechanical side of the design, while Hilary planned the aesthetic angles of the home. Lavallee was the medium between the two. "The thing that I'm most proud of is that we're still friends," Lavallee said. "This was a big, big project and even after it's all done I can still say we have a great relationship." >>



Dave's 50th birthday celebration in Tuscany sparked the idea for their front door. "The doors in Tuscany are phenomenal. I took a ton of pictures and brought them home. I knew the door had to be a prominent feature, because it's right off the street."



Windows weren't in the original plan for the top floor, but Dave asked to have them included. Today, a total of 50 windows invite the light and views of the lake into the home.



Throughout the home, influences of Hilary's Connecticut childhood are scattered about, adding a rustic charm. "In the old days in New England, they didn't have drywall. They used boards," Lavallee said. "One day, Hilary brings me a picture and asks if we can put in some shiplap." To bring Hilary's vision to reality, shiplap boards were incorporated throughout the house, giving it a New England-inspired signature.

Dave's utopia blends with Hilary's vision in an open kitchen complete with two marble-topped islands, instant heat induction stovetop, woodstone oven, two sinks and a massive pantry so large it actually housed the family when the home was in its final stages of completion. For that reason, Lavallee's nickname for the room is "the bunker room."



Hilary scoured magazine pages and set aside pictures of features that struck her eye. Among them were elevated ceilings, a large kitchen with endless white cabinets, dark floors, gray tones and a conglomeration of European and New England influences. Hilary is especially proud of the four tall Parisian-style French doors that open into the living room and the kitchen, rather than out onto the deck.

Dave, an avid cook, wanted to make sure the kitchen had everything within close distance of where he would need it.

The Ohara home project provided daunting challenges. It was located on a steep hillside, and needed easements from four other homes and variances from the City of Redmond. Then there was the monumental task of planting a 2,500-pound woodstone oven in just the right place in the kitchen.

After its final place was selected, the oven was brought in by crane, as was the 1,200-pound marble slab countertop for the kitchen island.

"We rolled it in through the French doors and I laid down

plywood so the floors wouldn't be damaged in the process," Lavallee said. "It took five of us to lift that slab and set it on top of the island."

Hilary smiles at the memory. "I still have the video of it being craned in."

To meet code, the home's structure had to be built up, hence the four stories. Hilary was thrilled that the driveway was flat and at street level and no longer was a steep incline.

The Oharas also were happy to buck Northwest tradition and open their home up to let a lot of light in. "A lot of Northwest homes are dark, and I didn't want that," Hilary said.

Today, the home is elegant and stately, but also tough enough to stand up to the elements. The Oharas are pleased with its functional design. "We wanted a home that expressed our taste, but was functional, timeless and built to last." Hilary said.

When they step into the entryway, visitors are greeted with beautiful entry tile and an elegant archway covered in hexagonal-shaped Calcutta marble tile leading to the guest bedrooms, >>



“I wanted these doors to be as tall and skinny as possible because that’s how they are in Paris,” Hilary said. “When we entertained over the summer, we had these all open and it was great.”



Oprah-inspired closet



garage and laundry room entry and an inviting staircase leading to the biggest activity area of the home.

Wrapped in a jaw-dropping, expansive, unhampered view of Lake Sammamish are the sitting area (which used to be the garage), kitchen and living room. Endless white cabinets decorate and provide storage, leading up to the 12½-foot-high ceilings.

Lavallee took extra care to disguise the steel beams that support the structure in elegant crown molding on the kitchen ceiling. These beams make it possible to provide the views of the lake without any awkward posts getting in the way.

Around the corner from the kitchen lies the master bedroom. Clean, white bead board paneling surrounds the bedroom walls, while a sliding door, custom made from the Oharas' old deck, allows entrance into the master bath. A matching door leads to Hilary's "Oprah closet," with a multitude of shelves for purses, shoes and knickknacks.

Downstairs, both Ohara children have private bathrooms with heated floors and towel racks. Next to their bedrooms is a second laundry room.

"This is the laundry room view," Dave says gesturing to the calm Lake Sammamish water peacefully laid out in front of him. "I mean, who gets that?"

Upstairs on the top floor is a large room with dormers and 15 windows. This is 7-year-old Wyatt Ohara's favorite feature of the home. "I like it up there because it mostly has all my toys for me to play with," he said.

Dave travels regularly but has a home office near his workshop. Precisely 177 steps down toward the water from the home is the Ohara family's 870-square-foot beach house and custom-built outdoor shower. They spend a lot of time here during the summer months.

Looking back on all the "sleepless nights" and years of planning and designing the home, Hilary Ohara says she has no regrets. "People ask me, if you could do something different with the house, what would it be? And I really don't have an answer for that. I wouldn't change anything." ❧

LAVALLEE CONSTRUCTION 425.785.3730, LAVALLEECONSTRUCTION.NET – Builder, AMBIENTE TILE – Tile in master bath and kitchen backsplash, ACE IRONWORKS – Custom interior and exterior metal railings, BELLEVUE PAINT – Benjamin Moore Paint, CALIFORNIA CLOSETS – Master bath closets, CANYON CREEK – Kitchen cabinets, CASCADE MILLWORK & SUPPLY – Interior doors and millwork, CHOWN HARDWARE – Plumbing fixtures, door hardware, CROCODILE ROCKS – Marble countertops, DEMAR HARDWOOD – Flooring, tile, carpet throughout home, DUNN LUMBER – Framing lumber, ISSAQUAH CEDAR AND LUMBER – Specialty exterior siding, interior shiplap on main floor, METALMASTERS NORTHWEST – Kitchen hood, MUTUAL MATERIALS – Stone, exterior, PELLA WINDOWS – Windows and French doors, RESTORATION HARDWARE – Master bathroom vanity, dining room table, SEATTLE LIGHTING – Light fixtures