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Balancing Act

A photograph of a living room. In the center is a fireplace with a dark marble surround and a white mantel. A fire is burning in the hearth. On the mantel, there is a large vase of orange flowers, two candelabras with lit candles, and a small framed picture. To the left, a dark sofa is visible. To the right, a hallway with a red carpet and a staircase is visible. The lighting is warm and cozy.

It's an architectural challenge when he wants grand and she wants cozy. The result is an amazingly elegant, yet livable home for a family of eight. By Harriet Edleson

Photographs by Phillip Ennis



Talk about a challenge. He wanted a home with grandeur, something akin to a Georgian estate. She adored cottage style, yearning for a nice cozy house with lots of nooks and crannies. And between them, they had six teenage children to accommodate. If only that were all.

The couple, who requested anonymity—let's call them George and Suzie—(he, a physician; she, a stay-at-home mom), demanded nine bedrooms for their new home: one for each of their kids plus one for guests and another, lower-level bedroom with an adjoining bath. And except for the master suite, each bedroom, George and Suzie agreed, had to be of equal size, with equal amounts of window- and closet-space. They also wanted eight bathrooms, two separate "his" and "hers" office spaces, a three-car garage, and both formal and informal entertaining spaces from which the family could easily access the outdoors. What's an architect to do?

Easy. Design a 10,000-square-foot center-hall Colonial in a cozy Nantucket style (the family goes to Nantucket every summer) and with enough grand elements like an outdoor terrace, rectangular pool, and boxwood gardens to please him and enough cozy elements like a breakfast room with an adjacent home office to please her. And make the house, which looks rather traditional from the outside, a combination of formal and informal inside.

At first, keeping grandeur in mind, Irvington architect Radoslav Opacic designed a colonnade for the front of the house. But when Suzie insisted that her home be "more cottagey," Opacic went back to the drawing board and designed a circular driveway and a stately but more

The family room is a blend of formality and comfort, grand and cozy.



The challenge? Design a center-hall colonial with a combination of formal and informal design elements.

modest front façade that exudes formality from the two-story center-entry foyer. Blue-gray shutters accent the understated gray-clapboard exterior and gray slate roof. Inside the entry foyer, white-oak floors with walnut borders enhance the formal look.

Yet, the interior is something else, something much less formal, perhaps...cottagey? After all, you enter the house through a mudroom opening onto a breakfast room and adjoining kitchen. "I kept saying cozy," Suzie says, "nooks and crannies. My husband wanted Georgian. It had to be a balance between the grand and the cozy cottage." In the end, the house took more than two years to complete.

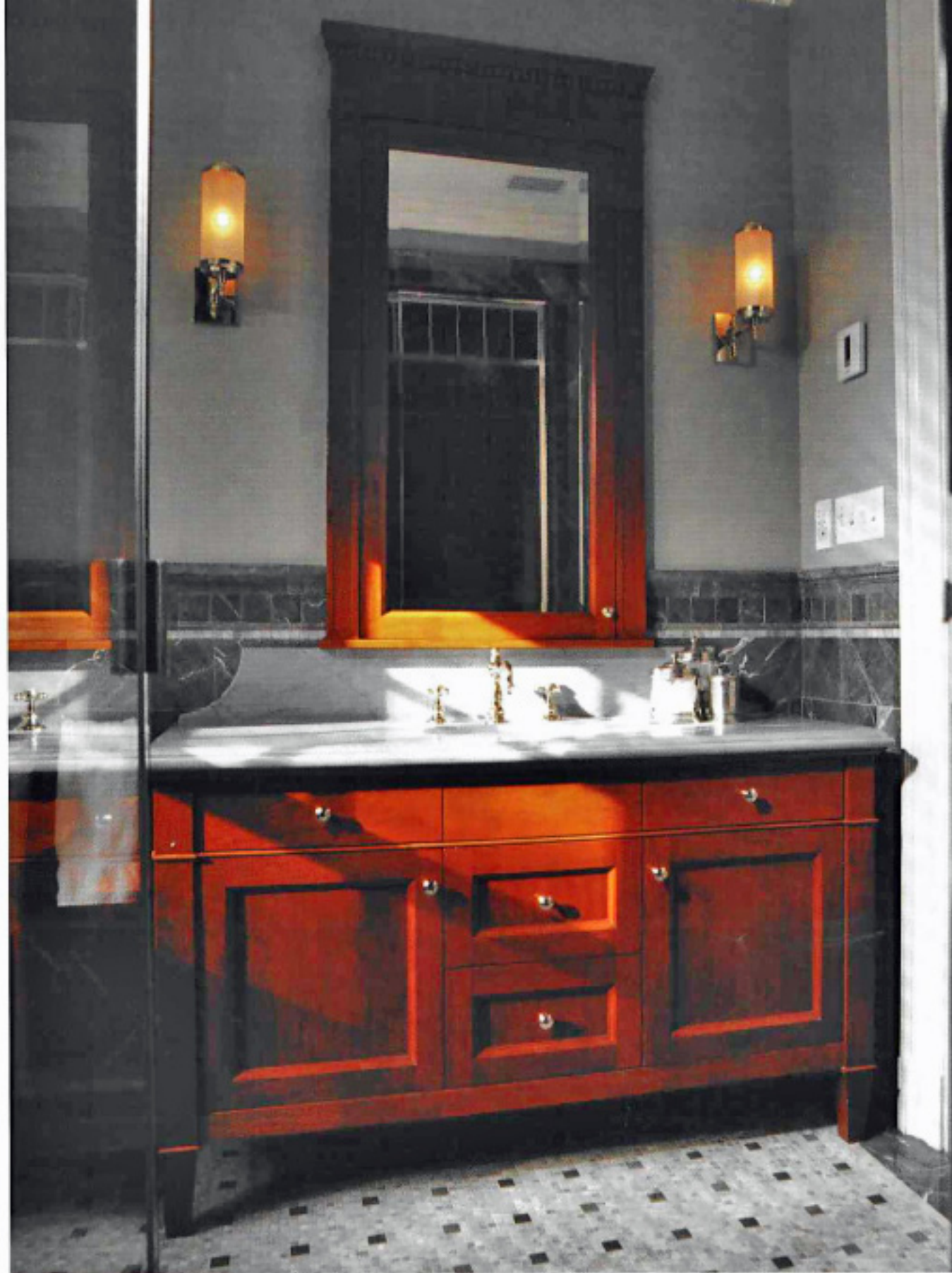
Although the property, located in Southern Westchester, is spacious at two and one half acres, the lot is narrow—110 feet of street frontage—and slopes to the rear property line. An existing four-bedroom house was demolished to make room for the new three-level house, with the lower level built partially underground. Terracing the rear of the property allowed the family to access the outdoors from several rooms on both the first and basement levels. While the front façade is formal and reserved, the rear of the house, with plenty of outdoor space for entertaining, "is where all the pizzazz is," says landscape architect Rivi Oren of New Rochelle. There is a 44-by-22-foot rectangular pool with a spa at one end and a boxwood garden. In the lower level is a game room, cabana, and bedroom-bathroom suite, making indoor-outdoor living easy and inviting. The suite features colored sea-glass accents in the bathroom, in contrast to the more traditional, mostly white baths on the upper floors. To ensure privacy, trees were planted at the side of the house.

Another appealing feature of the house is an office adjacent to the breakfast room. "It's a cozy, little space, like a command room," Suzie says. And she can see everyone as they enter through the mudroom. A large family room opens onto a covered barbecue terrace and an adjoining outdoor terrace, all designed for family living and entertaining. Light cascades through the kitchen and family room,



(Opposite page) Light floods the kitchen and adjoining family room, creating an airy feel. (Above) The two-story entry foyer exudes formality; the white pine floors have walnut borders.





Master suite bathrooms: serene green for her, masculine tones for him.

The master bedroom suite is "a retreat" from the rest of the house, totaling a grand 1,540 square feet. The terrace overlooks the pool and gardens.

creating the airy feel desired. At the other end of the first floor is the formal wing: a gallery off the entry foyer connects to the living room, flanked on either side by an octagonal library used as an office and an elongated octagonal dining room, with a table that can seat 20. Sandra Oster Interiors, Inc., of Greenwich, CT, helped select antiques, new furnishings, and decorative arts from antiques dealers and the Decoration & Design Building in Manhattan, as well as from local retailers. "It's a combination of formal and informal," says Oster.

One of the most impressive parts of the house is the light-filled master bedroom suite, a curvilinear shape with a balcony that overlooks the rear yard. "It is a retreat away from all the noise downstairs," Opacic says. The curve adds to the intimacy. "This curve makes everything come together on the second floor," says Opacic. It is repeated in his-and-her closets that lead to separate his-and-her bathrooms on either side of the master bedroom. Her bathroom, the most striking in the house, features a basket-weave mosaic of Ming green and statuary white marble floor. Opacic found the unusual marble at Waterworks in Greenwich, a resource he often uses for residential projects. The entire master bedroom suite, which includes four closets and separate his-and-her dressing rooms and baths, totals a luxurious 1,540 square feet. The view from the master suite of the pool and gardens is breathtaking, and visible from a small, 18-inch-deep terrace accessible through French doors. "I love my bedroom and study, the serenity of the bedroom spaces," Suzie says.

The architect's quest for uniqueness didn't end with the couple's rooms. For their rooms, each child selected a favorite color to accent the bathroom he or she uses or shares. A single floor tile depicting a lone dragonfly, dog, horse, or penguin was laid in each of the bathroom floors, reflecting each teen's favorite animal. Says Opacic, "In the end, everyone was happy." **ING**

Harriet Edleson is a Manhattan-based writer who lives in a condominium but often writes about houses.



