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Left to right: Pati and Nolan Carter enjoy family time with Gracie, Lilian, Kelly, Sutton and Carter Arribas.

ROBERTO GONZALEZ

FAMILY TIES

A COUPLE RENOVATE THEIR LONGTIME WINTER PARK HOME SO THEY CAN ENJOY REGULAR VISITS WITH THEIR FAMILY.

By Denise Bates Enos

TO SAY THAT Pati and Nolan Carter are close to their four grandchildren is something of an understatement. Their daughter and her family live a mere stone's throw in the Winter Park neighborhood where the Carters have lived in the same home for more than three decades. "It is just wonderful to have them nearby," Pati says of the frequent visits by her daughter, Kelly Arribas, son-in-law Rudy and four grandchildren. "We see the grandchildren almost daily. They are such a source of joy for us—to watch their sports and be a part of their lives."

“We wanted the house to look like it had been here forever; we didn’t want to make it look like the new kid on the block.”

—Pati Carter

A WELCOMING HOME

Once the grandchildren began to arrive, the Carters decided that their home, a circa 1958 warren of too-small rooms and ankle-twisting multiple floor levels, needed to change in order to accommodate an extended family that spanned three generations. They wanted their home to be a place of comfort and welcome, not an obstacle course. So instead of making do with the dated interior, the Carters decided to re-fashion the space to create an open floor plan and a level playing field for their grandchildren, Gracie, 13, Carter, 11, Sutton, 9, and Lillian, 7. What they ended up with was a kid-friendly home that would also suit their needs as they get older.

Gone is the once-fashionable sunken living room, as well as the low ceilings and claustrophobic walls that blocked views of Lake Virginia outside. In their place, elegant columns that reach to the

elevated ceiling delineate the large family gathering space from the expanded kitchen, defining spacious and comfortable areas for entertaining, casual dining and simple pursuits such as watching TV or reading a book.

A COLORFUL PALETTE

The new environs attest to the fact that the Carters are not afraid of color. Here, a palette of warm, earthy tones such as umber, ochre, russet and burnished gold is fearlessly paired with cool antique green and bright blue. Together, these vibrant hues energize the space and lend an understated sense of *la dolce vita* to the home.

The Carters’ love of art also is evident throughout the home. A tree of life mosaic by artist Suzi Edwards welcomes visitors at the front door; more of Edwards’ work can be seen in the kitchen, where a lively mosaic back-



BEFORE

splash brightens the room. A wall niche boasts an Italian scene hand-painted by artist Paul Hamilton, and other original pieces throughout the home draw the eye and enliven the space.

Family photos are another important part of the décor, including plenty of the grandchildren; photos of their son’s recent marriage, which took place on the home’s lakefront terrace, and another that shows him on a Special Operations mission for the Navy. Together, the photos of milestone occasions and beloved family members weave a poignant tapestry that illustrates the ties that bind the close-knit Carter clan.

UNEXPECTED BENEFITS

Pati and Nolan look forward to many years together in their family home, but they originally had their own parents in mind when they made the house handicap accessible. “When we started, we still had parents who were visiting,” says Pati. They knew that the multiple floor levels in their former home were a potential hazard for both their young grandchildren as well as their elderly

parents, but leveling the floor turned out to be an advantage for them as well.

The benefits of the new floor configuration were evident after Nolan underwent unexpected hip surgery. Nolan quickly discovered that having a walk-in shower is a plus to someone for whom stepping over a tub ledge would be agonizing, if not impossible. Removing obstacles such as steps and tub ledges is an essential part of the aging-in-place approach to homebuilding. For homeowners like the Carters who plan to stay put as they advance in years, eliminating barriers allows those with compromised mobility, wheelchairs or walkers to safely navigate the space.

MULTIPURPOSE USE

Every room in the house is designed to serve multiple purposes, in keeping with Pati’s desire to use every inch of space on a regular basis. For example, one of the guest rooms does double-duty as an office for Nolan, a semi-retired attorney, and his secretary. “He is very close to totally retiring,” says Pati. “It has been a six-year project to finish all of his cases.”



EVERETT & SCALÉ

EVERETT & SCALÉ, BEFORE: PHOTO SMARTPIX



This page: the home's covered terrace and hot tub overlooking Lake Virginia; facing page: the new master bath and bedroom; a home and backyard transformed.



Tiled stairs rise to the new second-story area, which was designed with the grandkids in mind. "It's a total hangout space for them," says Pati of the play area, which includes a game table, summer kitchen and the one piece of furniture they kept from their former home: an oversized leather sofa.

The out-of-sight, out-of-mind configuration of the upstairs area lends itself to casual family living. Unfinished artwork, crafts, puzzles and other projects can be left out until they're completed, since it's out of view of the first floor. Pati notes that granddaughter Gracie especially enjoys the privacy of the upstairs retreat: "She loves to bring friends over and have her own space."

THE OUTER LIMITS

Like the inside, the home's exterior faced a dramatic redo as well, morphing from bland ranch style to California-flavored Mediterranean. The goal was to create a façade that would blend in with the established neighborhood. "We wanted the house to look like it had been here forever; we didn't want to make it look like the new kid on the block," says Pati. Another goal was to complement the architecture of Rollins College, which is located across the lake from their home. To that end, the home's exterior mirrors the creamy stucco, tile roofs and arched details of the campus buildings. One of the more radical outdoor alterations was the

removal of the backyard pool. "Nobody ever went in it; we could never get it warm enough," says Nolan. So they replaced it with a hot tub, which the whole family now enjoys frequently.

But the real star of the backyard is the covered terrace, which was designed to catch the cool lake breezes. A series of elegant colonnaded arches frames the expansive view of Lake Virginia, and there's an alfresco space that includes a seating area by the outdoor fireplace, plus an outdoor shower.

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

To keep the peace during the potentially stressful project, the Carters took a novel approach to their home makeover: Pati had the final word on all decisions regarding the interior, and Nolan was in charge of the exterior. It was a clever way to give each spouse ownership of the project.

They also enlisted expert help at every stage of the process. Lucia, Kassik & Monday drew up the redesign; Farina and Sons handled the actual renovation; Gribble Interior Group took care of the interior design; Julie Collier of Signature Kitchens did the kitchen makeover;

and Frank Joseph Brooks served as landscape architect. "This is a forever home that will never go out of style," says Victor Farina, who counts the project as one of his all-time favorites. "The teamwork and collaborative approach taken by the builder, homeowners and designers early on in the project created a magnificent, enduring home for this wonderful family."

Says Pati: "You have to listen to your architect, love your builder and trust your designer. We accomplished that, and there's not one thing that I would change." Nolan agrees: "On a scale of one to 10, this is a 10; before, it was a zero. They did a beautiful job."

The Carters moved out for 18 months while their old home underwent a complete makeover. Any lost family time was quickly recovered when they returned to their beautifully renovated home. The Arribas family stops over regularly, which suits the Carters just fine. Their home base is a permanent one. "We have no plans to leave this home," Pati says, tongue firmly in cheek as she adds, "When it is time to go, we will tie rocks to our wheelchairs and push ourselves off the dock." +

