

Years of toil create a home most delightful

Renovation: A certain house on Washington Boulevard in Ridgely's Delight keeps getting better and better with the passing years.

By MARY E. MEDLAND
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

It was the ancient fireplace and the ball-and-claw bathtub in the second-floor bathroom that, back in 1986, sold Sharon and Bill Reuter on their Ridgely's Delight house.

Of course, off-street parking for two cars, a downtown location, four additional working fireplaces, room for a home office and the couple's ability to see the 1840s house's potential didn't hurt either.

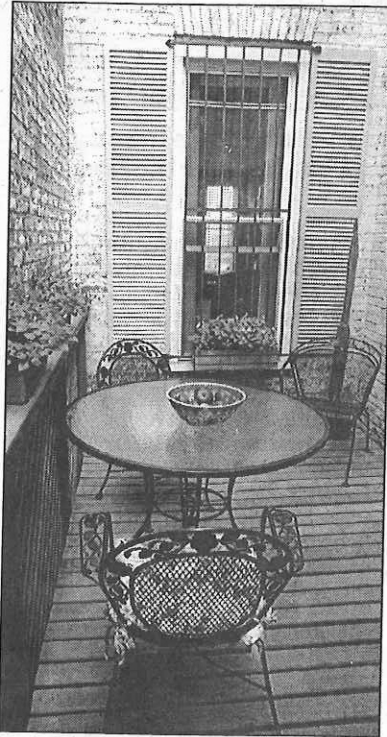
And, 12 years after moving in, the two — both are graphic designers who work out of the house's third-floor — have just completed a \$40,000 renovation to their studio.

"We bought the house from people who had partially rehabbed it," Sharon said. "The house had new wiring and new plumbing, and the first floor has the original heart of pine floors."

But, in spite of the renovations that were in place, there was plenty of work left for the Reuters to get the house into good order.

For instance, they inherited a back yard that bloomed primarily with broken glass and cast-off bricks.

Today, the bricks have been used to trim a blue-slate path, as well as to create a planter for begonias and impatiens, and the garden also boasts day and calla lilies, a hodgepodge of other white flowers, a fountain and a cast-iron love

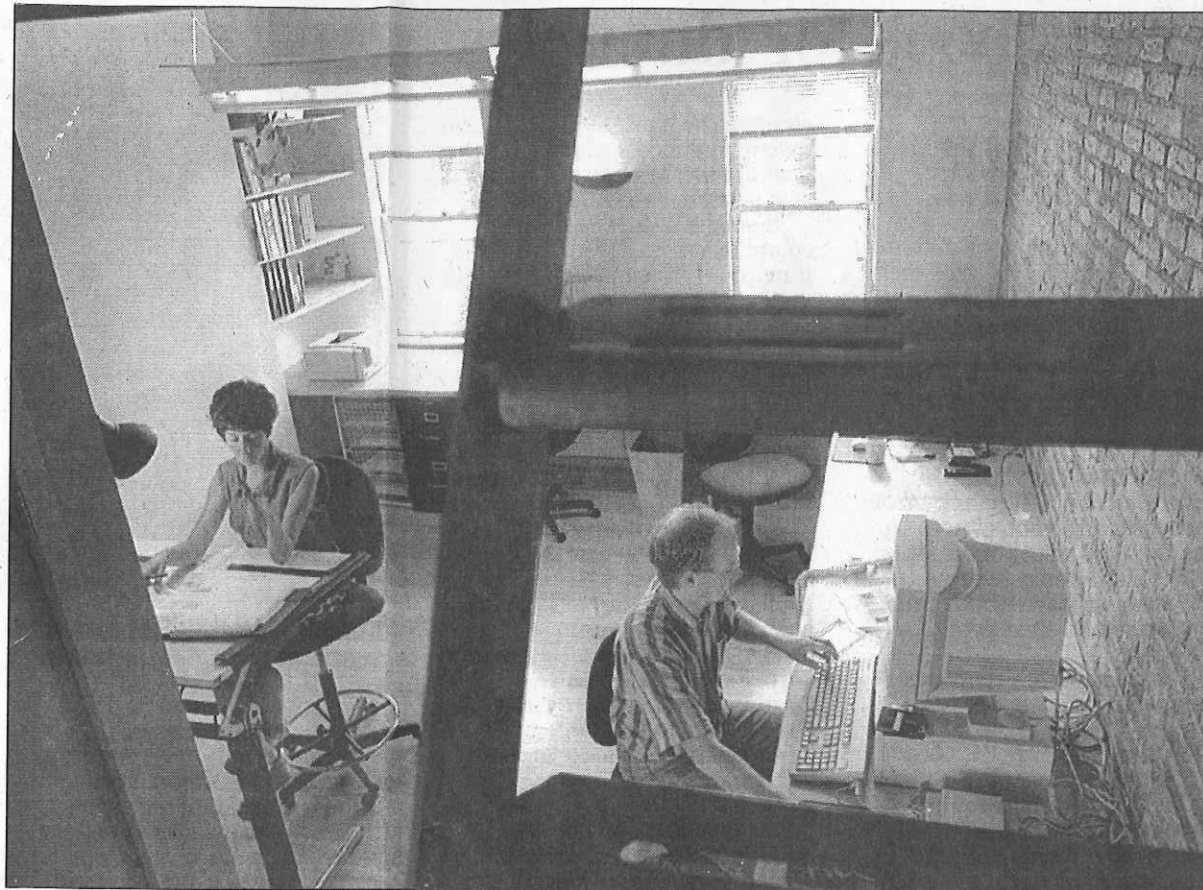


Rest area: Bill Reuter built the deck and rail for the patio of their Washington Boulevard residence.

seat. Behind the garden, a paved driveway was installed.

The garden's centerpiece is a twisted hickory tree (also known as Harry Lauder's Walking Stick) that "in the winter, when the leaves have fallen off, looks like a sculpture."

From the garden, a lamp-lighted, window box-lined walkway alongside the house leads to a small first-floor deck — with another fountain — where the couple often eat breakfast during the warm months.



ALGERINA PERNA : SUN STAFF PHOTOS

Work area: Bill and Sharon Reuter, both graphic designers, work in their third-floor studio, which recently underwent a \$40,000 renovation.

Parts of the outside brick had been covered by unattractive stucco, which today is camouflaged by ivy. The Reuters have also made use of ivy to cover up some unattractive chain-link fences.

In another outside area, another overly ardent use of stucco was made less apparent by the use of wooden latticework.

Inside, the first-floor living room has two fireplaces with old, if not the original, mantles, which nevertheless peacefully coexist with decidedly up-to-date decor. A dining room, modern kitchen and utility room with half-bath also share the first floor.

Randomly scattered throughout the house are glass doors, which well predate the arrival of the Reuters, although no one is quite certain by just how many years.

"The house is 13 feet wide in the front, about 10 feet wide in the back and about 90 feet deep," he said. "Then, there is another 90 feet of yard and driveway space."

On the second floor, a spare bedroom — which is adjacent to the bathroom with fireplace — faces Washington Boulevard. Down the hall, toward the back of the house, is a 27-foot by 10-foot master bedroom large enough to house bed, dressers, desk and sofa and yet another working fireplace. Off the bedroom is the master bath.

"We're lucky that the house next door to ours does not have windows that face our house, so we have a lot of privacy," Sharon Reuter said.

When the Reuters decided to renovate their third-floor studio, they consulted Klaus Philipsen of Baltimore's ArchPlan Inc. Expected to take four to six weeks to complete, the renovation project stretched into three months.

For the duration of the renovation, the Reuters moved themselves out of their own bedroom and into the spare bedroom, while relocating the studio-office into the master bedroom.

The third floor had been de-

signed as a separate bedroom with wood stove, bathroom and sitting room — ideal for renting to a student, but not the perfect professional environment.

"There was stucco and a lot of cheap, dark paneling, which was taken down to expose the brickwork," said Sharon, who added that ArchPlan managed to salvage a half-bathroom from the original full-bath.

In the course of getting rid of the stucco, ArchPlan's Gabriel Kroiz exposed original wood beams and discovered enough space under the pitched roof to create another loft-like work and storage area.

"Instead of using a wood staircase to get up to the loft space, the architects found an old fire escape in a building that was being torn down, which worked well for us — and helped to keep the costs down," said Sharon, who adds that the couple use this space primarily as a billing area.

From the loft, the architect created a dormer window that looks

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Bill Reuter

out onto the new Ravens stadium.

Below, in the original office area, are windows overlooking Washington Boulevard and in the back is yet another window with a view of the rooftops of Baltimore.

"People often comment that this view reminds them of Europe," Sharon Reuter added.

The floor is bamboo wood, which, Kroiz said, is extremely hard and stable, and a storage closet of birch plywood houses office supplies.

Around the edge of the room, ArchPlan designed a working surface large enough to accommodate the Reuters and an additional free-lance artist as well as a postage meter and light box, three computers, two scanners, two faxes, a laser printer, three phones and filing cabinets underneath the work surface. Additional storage space was built.

Although the house itself is not centrally air-conditioned, the studio space has a built-in air conditioner, which is notably quiet.

"Going through the process of such a renovation was frequently trying, but it was worth it," Bill Reuter said. "The end result met — no, actually exceeded — our expectations."

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