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good, that door stays open.
The party just flows.”*

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—Michael Leaveck, architect

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FROM BEAST TO BEAUTY

► HOW ONE COUPLE'S VISION TRANSFORMED A 1990S EYESORE INTO A CLASSIC LAKESIDE STUNNER.

By LUCINDA HAHN / Photos by JACQUELINE SOUTHBY

W

hen Camille Alexander and Jim Reining bought their Walloon Lake house, the setting did most of the heavy lifting. The water shimmered just beyond the windows, the yard sloped gently to the shore, and long summer days unfolded much as they always had for the couple, who had been renting homes around the lake for more than a decade.

The house itself, however, was another story. "When Jim showed it to me," Camille recalls, "I said, 'Honey, that's the ugliest house I've ever seen.'"

Built in the early 1990s, it had zero curb appeal and an illogical layout, thanks to numerous additions. Worse, a massive fireplace ran smack up the middle of the great-room's main wall, blocking the view of the lake. No worries, they told themselves—we'll renovate! "He had this grand master plan," Camille says, which included cutting off the A-frame roof to create a second-story primary suite with sweeping water views. Based on several past renovations they'd done, she knew that between his vision and her penchant for interior design, they could make it happen. "He sees the outside and I see the inside, so we're the perfect pair."

But renovating meant giving up precious lake summers, and the scope of what needed fixing felt daunting. For nearly two years, they made do, sprucing up the interior and living around the house's shortcomings—even hosting their eldest daughter's wedding on the property. All went well—until the wedding photos arrived. Camille's eyes darted past the joyful bridal party to the beastly home behind them. "I just *hated* the way it looked in all the pictures!" she recalls. "I was like, okay, we *have* to do something." ►



The couple quickly called Stephanie Baldwin of Edgewater Design Group and builder Craig Boyd of Boyd Construction Co., whom they'd consulted before buying. The Baldwin-Boyd team had climbed through attics, traced load paths, and designed plans that would require a 15-month renovation—one that untangled the home's confused layout, dramatically boosted ceiling heights and square footage, and reoriented the living space toward the lake.

On the second floor, the peaked A-frame was lopped off and reworked into a roomy primary suite with glorious lake views. Tearing off the second floor had another benefit: Boyd's team was able to raise the ceiling heights on the main floor to nine feet, allowing for generous windows and French doors that draw light into the great room. There, the massive stone fireplace was relocated to a side wall, opening up the view to the lake. Clad in real fieldstone veneer designed to look centuries old, the new fireplace now



Left: The fireplace in the screened-in porch shares a chimney and wall with the greatroom's fireplace. Eze-Breeze vinyl panels pull down over screens so the room can be used in three seasons. **Above:** The home's "before" exterior look was dominated by drab, outdated decking that wrapped both stories of the home.

Previous spread: Though the project required extensive demolition, it maintained the same footprint and was technically a remodel—a distinction important for lake regulations. Preserving portions of the original structure simplified permitting and saved costs.



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Cascade Walnut by Canopy is crisp, light, and quietly confident. Beautifully balanced—and built for real life.

anchors the room rather than obstructs it. Next, the garage was rebuilt to be roomier; above it, Baldwin added an additional bedroom and an office for Jim, complete with a hidden safe room concealed behind a bookcase—an unexpected flourish in an otherwise traditional house.

The home was always meant to be full, a magnet for Camille and Jim's four children and large, extended family. That rhythm shaped every decision, particularly in the kitchen. Camille wanted a huge island, and for the room to look like it was full of furniture—a space that felt like a home, not a showroom. Baldwin translated that vision into cabinetry that hid the refrigerator and dishwasher and featured glass fronts and furniture-style feet. The pantry itself is practically a work of art, designed, Camille says, to be "so beautiful we'd



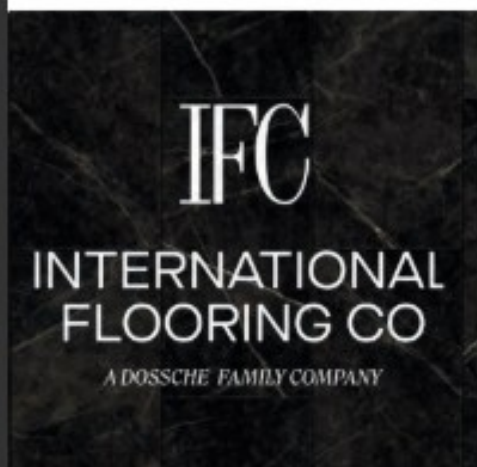
A Wolf 60-inch range with dual ovens was a must-have for Camille, an enthusiastic cook. "Jim said we could have bought a car for that amount of money. But we didn't need a car. We needed this!"

Greys and blues make for a serene master bedroom that includes a walk-in closet with a washer and dryer, a sitting area in front of a gas fireplace and a bathroom with a soaking tub.

The nautical-themed bunk room in the walkout level was a former cold-storage space. Now, it includes deep, built-in drawers—perfect for storing blankets and kids' games. Each bunk includes a cubby with outlets for lamps and phone charging.



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never need to close the pocket doors. And we don't." From there, the house opens seamlessly into dining and living areas, eliminating the compartmentalized layout of the original home.

Camille, who grew up in Louisiana, made sure to build in some of the best parts of Southern homes: a covered front porch and wide, centered stairs. Stretching across much



of the house, the porch is home to swinging beds (a perfect spot for sipping sweet tea) and a sprawling table for al fresco family meals. Meanwhile, those wide stairs, a nod to Southern homes that often were built elevated above the ground, create an inviting passage to the yard and lake. Another Southern must-have: a screened porch to keep summer bugs at bay. This one brilliantly converts to a three-season room, thanks to Eze-Breeze vinyl windows that pull down over the screens. "We'd build a fire, sit under blankets, and watch football," Camille says. "Neighbors knock on the screen to see if they could join. That porch became exactly what it was supposed to be—a gathering place."

Despite the scale of the transformation, Camille describes the process as unusually smooth. Baldwin's drawings required almost

no revision. "She just nailed it," Camille says. "There was virtually no iterating." Meanwhile, Boyd and his team executed details—trim, stonework, cabinetry—with a level of craftsmanship that makes the house feel settled rather than new. "It's a challenge to repurpose something without a complete teardown," reflects Baldwin. "But the ability to give an old home new life is really rewarding."

Today, what remains is a sense of continuity, a home that feels as though it evolved naturally over time. For Camille, the proof came soon after the dust had settled. When she looks at photographs now, the house "finally looks like it belongs." ■

Lucinda Hahn is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in The New York Times and New York and Chicago magazines, among others.

The screened porch sits atop a stone-faced storage room where the family hid away kayaks and other outdoor toys.

Desiring a slightly more contemporary space to retreat to down-stairs, the couple requested a wet bar and linear gas fireplace (on opposite wall, not seen) in the walkout basement.

The covered porch and haint-blue ceiling are a nod to Camille's Southern roots, a place where her large family could gather for meals. "This was just literally everybody's favorite, favorite place to hang out."

resources

Design: Curio Studio Design, curiodesignstudio.com

Builder: Closer Construction, closers.us