

Metamorphosis

Family room gets a second chance

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

"A large room that didn't work" was given a second chance by Birmingham interior designer, Sandra Johnstone and her clients Lou and Sarah Goldfaden of Bloomfield Township.

Not only does it work now, but the newly decorated family room in this attractive brick colonial earns its keep from dawn until dusk and later. Remember conversation pits? Well, there was a circular one in this family room which is directly behind the living room and consequently easily seen from the more formal living room environment when the doors are open.

The first barrier to be overcome in changing from a dark, natural wood paneled environment was cement. The circular pit was poured concrete. It had to be broken up and removed, because as Johnstone pointed out, furniture can't be arranged

in a circular pit. And with three entrances to the room, there was simply no place to put furniture. For a family which includes four daughters, that spelled disaster — or at least, discomfort.

Still, everyone concerned agreed that more than one level within the family room was an attractive concept. So the concrete was poured again, the section at the far or fireplace end of the 15 by 20 foot room lower by a step than the adjoining areas.

THE PIT changed from round to rectangle, remained, but now, modulators could be introduced and placed against the side wall and a low poured concrete divider. Counting a game table and four matching chairs, refinished from dark to light wood, there's now comfortable seating for at least a dozen.

Johnstone and her clients were reluctant to tear out the wood, wall paneling. A future owner might decide to use it and besides wood is a natural insulator.

The wood paneled walls were covered in upholstered channel white duck, the same fabric used for the reverse roll up shades at the windows.

A bar which had been enclosed with doors was opened up, the bar and cupboard extended to provide more storage and counter space and finished in white formica. Stainless steel was used directly above the fireplace and the rest of the fireplace wall finished in white, high gloss formica panels. TV and stereo are behind these panels.

The Goldfadens and Johnstone fell in love with a piece of silk — a large pattern in shades of taupe, salmon, and apricot with a touch of lavender-blue. But, where does silk fit in a family room designed for informal entertaining such as late evening suppers, snacks and Sunday brunches?

THE SILK print eventually became a cocktail table, or rather the cover for same.

A custom table was built and the silk with Polyurethane over it (forming a laminate) was used to cover it. The shade of the taupe carpeting was taken from the print, as was the dusty salmon color of the wool covering on the modulators.

This lovely, dramatic, laminated silk cocktail table is the only print in the room, but it commands attention, as it was intended to do, and its colors set the theme.

Because all the family members like to read, light was a important element. In addition to recessed lighting in the ceiling, there are several lights with appealing sculptural and architectural qualities. One, in particular, has the bulb installed on an adjustable carrier arm facing a floor to ceiling strip of white canvas. It casts an even, pleasing glow as opposed to a single, harsh, directed beam.

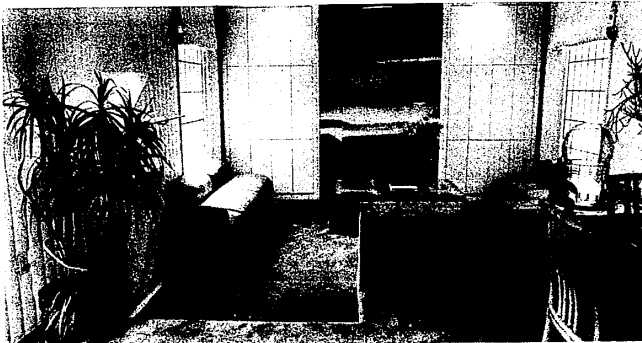
The effect of the light which touches every corner of the family room is heightened by the lavish use of white in company with soft, warm colors.

Overall, the room is comfortable, uncluttered and arranged with convenience in mind. Even the custom cocktail table was built with shelves that pull out for brunchers who like to sit on the floor while they eat and talk.

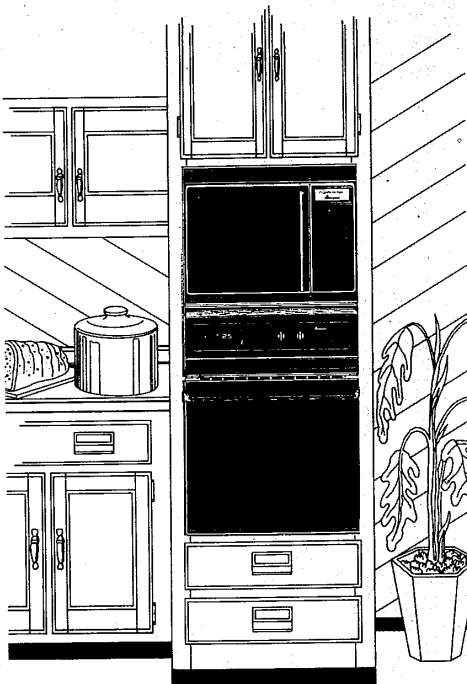
"Basically, we were trying to get more seating, we wanted to stay with levels and we wanted to make the room functional for a family of six," Johnstone said while Mrs. Goldfaden nodded in agreement.

"We wanted a light, sophisticated look, but the room had to be functional," she added.

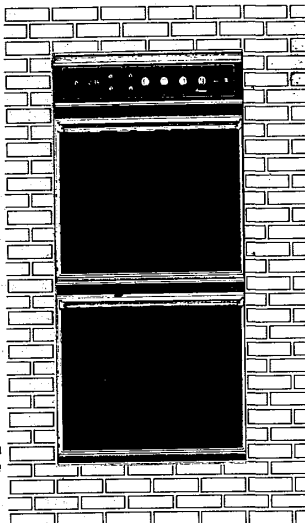
Now, instead of a room that doesn't work, the Goldfaden's family room puts in a lot of overtime and stays fresh and ready for more activity.



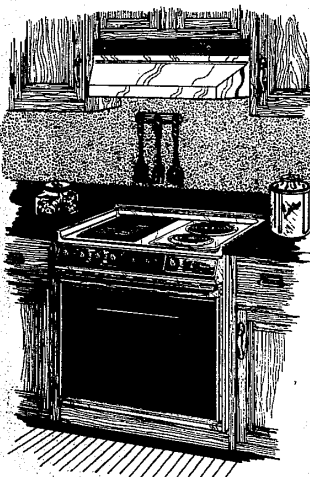
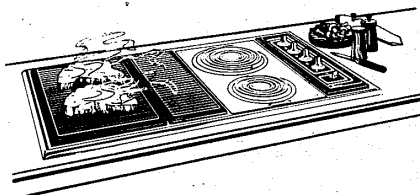
One of the most dramatic changes in this family room was the removal of a circular conversation pit. Another was the new look given the fireplace wall.



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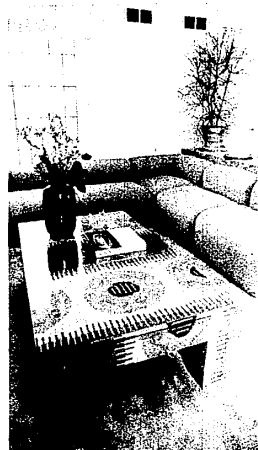


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Coffee table covered with silk and finished in a stain and water resistant Polyurethane has pullout shelves at each end for brunchers who like to sit on the floor.