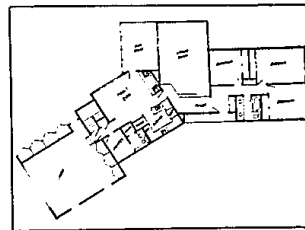
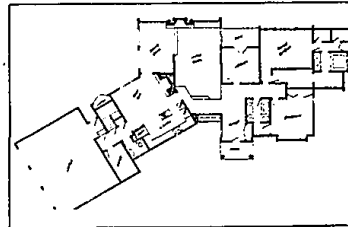


View of the step-down living room showing light, spacious feeling created by bleached oak floors, white walls and expanded foyer. The

renovation project won a merit award in Better Homes and Gardens Magazine's home improvement contest.



Floor plan before the expansion.



Floor plan after the expansion.



The front of the house before any changes.

By Cathie Breidenbach
special writer

LOCATION, location and location" real estate agents chant when asked what makes some property prime.

Location first lured Paul and Mary Primeau to take a look at the nondescript house on a short, rural street in Birmingham. The house was situated on an acre lot that slopes gently down to Wing Lake where spikes of purple loosestrife grow along the water's edge.

"We spent a total of 10 minutes in the house before we bought it," said Mary Primeau. "It was a typical 1950s house with small rooms and small closets. Most modern people wouldn't have bought it. It had sat for six months and we got a terrific deal on it."

The attraction of lake frontage, the large lot and the Birmingham address clinched the sale in October 1984.

The Primeaus radically changed the house, updating and expanding it from its original 1,800 square feet to a 2,700-square-foot showpiece.

The home recently won fourth place in Better Homes and Gardens magazine's Revision Contest for medium-sized houses. The couple joke that the cash prize for the contest "just about covers the cost of the film."

Paul Primeau, vice president of administration for Henry Ford Hospital's 20-plus suburban medical centers said, "We got talked into entering the contest by friends." The pair sent in floor plans, photos, and wrote a story of the renovation.

With 10,000 entries, they were surprised to find themselves winners. The tale of renovating the house has been a case of innocent little changes snowballing into a full-scale metamorphosis, and every step of the transformation has been filled with surprises.

FOR STARTERS, THE decision to leave their comfortable home in West Bloomfield for the house on the lake wasn't pre-planned. They were casually looking at real estate when they fell in love with the lake front property and bought the house that sat on it. Ironically when they moved in, they had no plans to make structural changes.

"At first we thought we'd just make cosmetic changes — paint and wallpaper," said Mary, who runs her own graphics design business, Primeau and Associates. "Then I thought if we did an addition, we'd just bump out in one direction."

When they decided to add to the house, regulations on how close they could build to the lot lines on the almost cloverleaf

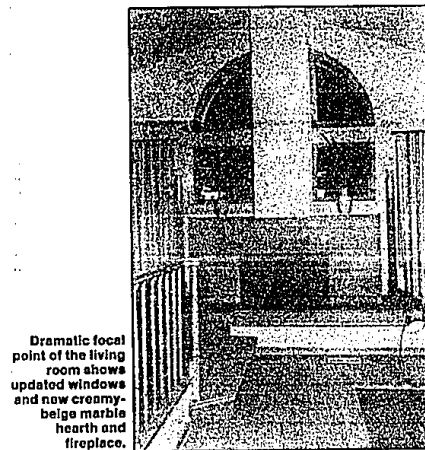
shaped parcel prevented them from getting the space they wanted by expanding in only one direction. Instead they spread out in multiple directions — along the front of the house to enlarge the foyer and a bedroom, along the side to add a laundry room and a three-car garage, at the back to

expand the library, a bedroom, and to convert a screen porch into a dining room.

RENOVATION BEGAN in the kitchen, more out of necessity than design. Paul says, "We needed a place to cook and do laundry." Mary describes the mi-

nor nuisances that precipitated change. "First the Kitchenaid died, two burners on the stove didn't work, and the fridge wasn't up to snuff," she says. "There was no way we could work with the kitchen as it was. Either we

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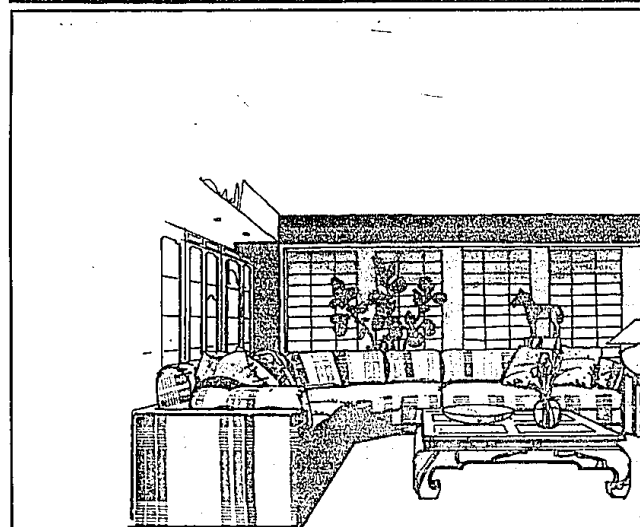
Dramatic focal point of the living room shows updated windows and new creamy-beige marble hearth and fireplace.

JOHN STORMZAND/staff photographer



JOHN STORMZAND/staff photographer

The remodeled kitchen preserved original windows but further brightened the room by raising the ceiling, lightening the color scheme with bleached oak cupboards and white ceramic tile.



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