

CHECK OUT OUR 'BLISS'-FUL NEW CARTOON | A '60S SPLIT-LEVEL GETS A MAKEOVER

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## **CHRISTIE HEFNER'S XXX-ECUTIVE DECISION**

PLAYBOY'S CEO  
HALTS A PROFIT SLIDE  
WITH TV FARE THAT  
WOULD MAKE  
THE BUNNY BLUSH



# A NEW WRINKLE IN TIME

AMID CORNFIELDS, A DOWNSTATE SPLIT-LEVEL BENEFITS FROM A MODERNIST UPGRADE

**S**hedding a starter house is routine for many homeowners who hope to get closer to their dreams the second time around. Such was the case for a Chicago couple with a software business.

Their starter home in Champaign, Ill., was lacking. They had moved to a new subdivision when they married in 1993 to be closer to the husband's primary job as a business professor at the University of Illinois.

"We thought it was nice but nondescript. The neighborhood had small trees and ersatz architecture. Our place was built to look like a traditional frame house," says the wife.

Like many couples trading up, they wanted a place that was architecturally significant in an older, more established neighborhood, she says. "Something attractive but more authentic. And on a street with mature vegetation and tall trees."

She surfed real estate Web sites daily "looking for old houses. Then I'd run them by our architect to see if they were worth renovating."

That was Patrizio Fradiani, whom they had hired after seeing what he had done to his own home (which they had seen in this magazine in 2001). He rejected the first two options but thought the third, which she had spotted the day after it was listed, had potential. "I was there within the week, and they bought it the day after I saw it," he says.

So what did they snag? Old and architecturally significant are relative terms; to this 40-something couple and 30-something architect, the structure that caught their eye was a classic 1960s split-level.

"Champaign is smack in the middle of all



BY LISA SKOLNIK | TRIBUNE PHOTOS BY BILL HOGAN



The den is now edged by a floating hearth on one side (not shown) and a wall of windows overlooking the yard on the other. A new partition divides it from an adjacent dining area. Inset: Sliding doors clad in Italian walnut with maple inserts make them a visually arresting element, opened or closed.

these cornfields, and with its horizontal orientation this really played to the topography and had a wonderful sense of place," observes the wife. And "it had a Modernist sensibility with good bones."

But not good enough. According to Fradiani, there was a litany of ills. On the inside, the ceiling was too low, rooms were small and dark, the floor plan was choppy, the windows were poorly spaced, and essential spaces the couple desired, such as a study, formal dining area and porch, were missing. "It made me feel claustrophobic," he says.

Raising the ceiling was out because it would be prohibitively expensive, but changing the windows, pushing out the back to add more square footage, reconfiguring the layout, recladding the exterior and changing the structure's relationship to the yard were all possible. So Fradiani incorporated all of these elements into his plan.

For starters, all the walls were removed from the public areas of the house, except for a central one that defined the foyer and divided the living and sleeping spaces. Meanwhile, French doors and floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the yard were added to the structure's rear. A fireplace was revamped to become a sculptural, stand-alone, two-sided hearth that played to both the living area and den.

In the private wing, the quintessential three-bedrooms-in-a-row were enlarged and transformed into two guest suites with their own bathrooms, while a 1,200-square-foot addition to the rear of the home incorporated a master suite, complete with a spacious bathroom, sitting room and study. The central passage leading to these rooms was enlarged and divided with a floor-to-ceiling wall to become a double hallway. Thanks to pocket doors at the entry to each room and at the hall's apertures, the master suite can be left open to the guestrooms or closed off for privacy.

Revamping the exterior was a two-part process left for last. To update the exterior and give it a sleek demeanor that recalled its historic Modernist roots, it was reclad in a green-tinged fiber cement clapboard and lustrous aluminum siding.

Fradiani helped the wife fill the new space with contemporary pieces that both believe will become classics in the years to come—just like the split-level.

"I wanted to have a place that would be beautiful and functional enough to use for the rest of my life. This is definitely it," says the wife. □

*Lisa Skolnik writes frequently for the Magazine.*

**RESOURCES Architecture and interior design:** Patrizio Fradiani, Studio F, Chicago. **Den:** Ferlea sofa and ottoman—Orange Skin, Chicago; Living Divani Frog chairs—Luminaire, Chicago; antique African stools—Hamill Gallery of African Art, Boston; rug—Crate & Barrel; triptych—David de Castro, [www.daviddecastro.com](http://www.daviddecastro.com). **Hallway:** Bosca Arredi doors—[www.boscaarredi.it](http://www.boscaarredi.it); stainless steel railing—designed and fabricated through Studio F; Eames lounge chair—Design Within Reach. **Screened-in room:** Dining table—Room & Board; Kartell dining chairs—Orange Skin; porch chairs—Room & Board. **Master bedroom:** B&B Italia bed—Luminaire; Wenge wood headboard and dresser—designed and fabricated by Studio F; mounted kuba cloth—collection of owner; Eames lounge chair—Design Within Reach; closet doors—Bosca Arredi, Italy, [www.boscaarredi.it](http://www.boscaarredi.it). **Master bathroom:** Bisazza tile—[www.bisazza.com](http://www.bisazza.com); Hoesch bathtub and Porcher sink—Community Home Supply, Chicago; cabinets—designed and fabricated through Studio F; limestone tiles—Stone Design, Inc., Glendale Heights.



Top: A screened-in room and mini-kitchen added on to a storage shed in the yard is used by the couple for warm-weather dining. Above: A new master bedroom is part of a 1,200-square-foot addition. Glass and wood panel doors imported from Italy edge the closet. Opposite: A new master bathroom sports a ceiling that mimics the roof-line of the house and sports his-and-her showers.