

## **Re-Configured Mother-In-Law Suite Converted into Spacious Spa Bath**

### *The Case of Too Many Closets*

By John Byrd

The folks at Sun Design Remodeling Specialists thought the message was a joke. “Can you help us...our master bath is in need of a makeover.. We have too many closets. Please call us.”

The follow-up was assigned to Katherine MacNeil, MCIDQ, one of Sun Design’s top kitchen and bath designers. “Frankly, I’d never heard of too many closets,” says MacNeil..”

Arriving at the scene, MacNeil was surprised by what she saw. The lower level of an attractive, contemporary-style home in McLean had been divided and subdivided. MacNeil thought she recognized the remains of a mother-in-law suite.

“There was one room with a sink and toilet, one room with a tub and shower, another room with just a sink,” says MacNeil. “There were a total of eight closets -- all of them cramped and shallow. .”

Nothing about the space seemed inviting. Entering from the exterior door, a short, dark hallway lead one directly to a tiny half-bath with a closet. To the left, a door to a bedroom devoid of closets; to the right a second hallway flanked by a total of seven closets and ending at the “ironing room.” Adjacent was the room with the tub and shower.

Originally the home of an architect who designed it for his own use, the 35-year-old house was well-conceived overall. But the “mother-in-law suite” had the obviously been worked-over by an amateur – one with an *ad hoc* thirst for storage.

At their headquarters in Burke, Va., MacNeil and her colleagues at Sun Design decided that the existing layout had to be completely revamped. They would gut the 32’x21’ envelop and divide it roughly in half -- on one side, a spacious new master bedroom with two large walk-in closets; on the other, a spa-like master bathroom with marble floors, a whirlpool tub, and double vanity.

First, the structural support wall that divided the two wings of the project would have to be replaced with a steel beam. MacNeil then set almost everything diagonally -- the new wall dividing the bedroom and bath, the double vanity, the closet doors. This widened the sightlines of both rooms and made them seem more spacious.

To frame the spectacular wooded landscape just outside the new bathroom, MacNeil ordered three picture windows -- two of them floor-to-ceiling -- for the end elevation. Vertical slats would control the amount of southern exposure sunlight. The third window would sit atop the Jacuzzi Allusion tub, allowing an “intimate” view of the abundant azaleas and hollies.

Above, a large skylight would complete the blending of the built and natural environments. But the woodland motif would continue throughout, with river rock pebble accents in the shower and “thunder gray” silestone countertops for the vanity. The glass wall between the shower and tub can indeed suggest a waterfall.

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