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**N.C. Remodeling project:
A spectacular transformation**

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Raleigh remodeler converts house to "dream castle"

By Bob Mori

Wouldn't it be nice to take a house and, with a little change here and little fix there, transform it into your "dream castle"?

Well, a Raleigh remodeler did just that. Only thing is there wasn't anything "little" about the job—totaling out at around \$150,000 with a start-to-complete-finish in seven months!

When David J. Mackowski, president of Quality Home Improvements by David J. Mackowski Inc., decided to tackle the project, it was his first whole-house remodeling effort since going into business almost eight years ago. His real estate agent friends, a husband- and wife-team, had contracted him to improve other properties for resale. But



▲ The remodeled living room is inviting, and its access to the new covered porch, with its skylights and ceiling fan, provides additional opportunity for entertaining. (All photos courtesy of Quality Home Improvements by David J. Mackowski.)

he was both surprised and honored that they chose him to tackle this granddaddy of a re-do job at their own home, now valued at \$500,000!

Although this project was Mackowski's biggest, it certainly wasn't his first. When

he started his business, he specialized in remodeling work for resale, working with Raleigh area real estate agents. When Mackowski's husband- and wife-clients (and friends) asked him to take a crack at this 3,500-square-foot, 40-year-old house, he knew it would be a challenge. The house he found was chopped up, revealing the signs of past remodeling efforts done in stages over the years. The original owners were elderly and not able to keep up the place. One big challenge, right off the bat, was what to do with the outside appearance...a ranch-type dwelling with a large, long, high-pitched roof with radius features on the doors.

Starting at the top...

The owners, with concept ideas of their own, wanted to put dormers on the house and a cupola on one end to break up the large roof surface and add character to the house. Mackowski agreed and added three copper-topped, drum-type dormers to the front roof area. He then re-roofed the house with 25-year dimensional-style shingles, which gave a "shake" look to the roof.

The original house also had a nice entryway that broke in three directions. One of these directions led to the living room with outside-wall windows. The windows were changed into French doors and a veranda was added.

Off the same side of the house was a stone patio area with no access from the living room. Mackowski designed a template for his carpenters to follow for a porch that was easily accessible from the living room. He also found a room to the rear right of the living room that at one time had been

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▲ The homeowners and their guests can enjoy the outdoors all year-round in the cozy sunroom.

used as a library-type sitting room or an office. He converted this to a beautiful guest bedroom with its own private bath and an exit way to the new veranda.

Once he worked his way to the kitchen, he decided to tear it out and replace the old cabinets with custom new ones and granite countertops. He replaced the old vinyl floor in the kitchen with 2 1/2-inch oak hardwood, which was also extended into the dining, living and sunroom areas.

On the second floor, the previous owners had converted what once was a private bathroom at the top of the staircase into a common one with access to the bedrooms. Mackowski removed the walls separating the bath from its intended adjoining bedroom and made it a private bath once again. Continuing down a large upstairs hallway, he found a large room with no lighting. This has been transformed into an entertainment room with added skylights to brighten the atmosphere.

Quality Home Improvements then concentrated on doing more subtle things to enhance the value of the house. They painted the entire first floor, added a new chandelier in the dining room, stripped out the old cabinets in the sunroom and applied a glazing to the older-style avocado tile in the first- and second-floor bathrooms. Together with replacing old fixtures and faucets with modern ones, these rooms gained a whole different appearance.

With a crawl space and no basement to worry about, Mackowski could concentrate on designing a carport for the garage-less house. The final plans are awaiting a property variance since this addition would snug fit against the neighbor's property.

All in all, this was a project to remember. "It was a pleasure working for the homeowners," Mackowski reveals. "I was especially pleased and proud that they had the confidence in me and my company to ask me to remodel their 'dream' home and to tackle such a large job."

A remodeler through and through

His client's confidence is well placed, since Mackowski's background prepared him well for his craft. He grew up in a household where his dad was constantly remodeling the family home, with the young Mackowski

close behind watching and helping. His dad squeezed these home projects around his full-time job as a drill press operator for a local manufacturer of heavy equipment in Erie, Pa., and as a moonlighting electrician. Dad must have passed on this passion for the work to his son, because Mackowski concentrated on drafting and design at Tech Memorial High School before moving on to Gannon College, where he majored in electrical engineering.

After college, Mackowski worked as a designer of surgical equipment and accessories for American Sterilizer, which eventually
(See DREAM CASTLE on page 20)

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Dream castle

(continued from page 13)

transferred him to Raleigh to work in research and development in the Research Triangle area of the city. Here, he honed his skills and dedication before forming his own business in 1992.

"I owe a lot to my dad," he explains. "He taught me that nothing is impossible when you set your mind to it." Mackowski has evidently heeded well this advice since he's earned the designation of Certified Graduate Remodeler from the National Association of Home Builders Remodelers Council. Mackowski is one of only 2,000 professional remodelers nationwide who have attained or are in the process of earning the CGR certification.

Mackowski is also currently serving as chairperson of the Raleigh/Wake County Home Builders Association Remodelers Council, and is the proud recipient of five Remodelers Showcase Awards in 1998, 1999 and 2000.

As Mackowski's dad used to tell him, "You get what you pay for!" Obviously, Mackowski has taken to heart this axiom because his clients feel they get a lot more than they pay for in pride of ownership and satisfaction in work well done!

(Bob Mori is an Elizabeth City-based free-lance writer.) 🏠



▲ A wall of windows and French doors leading to an outside sitting area enhance the spaciousness of this remodeled bedroom.




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SPIKE ALERT

The numbers from Feb. 28 - March 22, 2001

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Alice Denton 27	397	Watauga/Avery
Benny Copple 25.5	561	Winston-Salem
Kathy Simpson 23	219	Raleigh-Wake
Jay S. Harwood 21.5	469	Albemarle/Stanly
Phil Hejl 20.5	205.5	Charlotte
John Hamrick 16	166	High Point Area
Ken R. Wilkie 15.5	351	Hendersonville
Donald Wilson 15.5	291	Roxboro-Person
Kelly Vick 15.5	56.5	Wilson

Highest Year-to-Date New Member Credits	Cumulative Credits	HBA
Kathy Simpson 12	219	Raleigh-Wake
John Hamrick 11	166	High Point Area
David Wilkie 10	38	Rutherford
Mark W. Martin 8	51	Outer Banks
Joseph Ussery 7	155.5	Moore County
Jay S. Harwood 6	469	Albemarle/Stanly
Gil Squires 6	6	Charlotte
William Reaves 6	1265	Moore County
Eddie Casanave 6	23.5	Raleigh-Wake
Ken Mitchell 6	6	Raleigh-Wake

Highest Year-to-Date Retention Credits	Cumulative Credits	HBA
William Reaves 43.5	1265	Moore County
Benny Copple 23.5	561	Winston-Salem
Alice Denton 22	397	Watauga/Avery
Jay S. Harwood 15.5	469	Albemarle/Stanly
Phil Hejl 15.5	205.5	Charlotte
Ken R. Wilkie 15.5	351	Hendersonville
Kelly Vick 15.5	56.5	Wilson
John T. Malys 11.5	52.5	Hatteras Island
Kathy Simpson 11	219	Raleigh/Wake
Frank Lindsey 10.5	327	Union County

Keep up the good work, Spikes!