

**Ranch House Remodel**  
**The Collaborative effort of a design/build team restored this California Classic**  
**with authentic Spanish detailing.**  
**Qualified Remodeler: February 2002**

Set in a prestigious neighborhood overlooking San Diego Bay, this vintage Point Loma home was designed and built in 1936 by renowned Southern California architect Cliff May, the “Father” of California ranch house architecture.

It underwent a complete makeover in 2000 to restore it to the elegance that had deteriorated over the years. The owner, an industrial developer, hired and led a team of professionals from start to finish. The remodel consumed the better part of the year and left the house restored to its authentic Spanish character. It also produced a number of awards for design excellence.

Stephen Lusk, CGR, CEO of Lusk Building & Remodeling in San Diego, handled construction of the project. He attributes much of its success to the collaborative effort of all players who contributed.

“Industrial builders put together teams of people to compete for office buildings, malls and other industrial projects,” Lusk says. “That’s the environment the owner was accustomed to. This was a cooperative effort, and we became a design/build team.”

To work through the issues and network ideas, the owner held monthly meetings at the house. Always in control of his emotions, he was determined to keep everyone working together.

“He delegated everything,” Lusk says.

The owner even continued to live at home as the site was being gutted – a not-so-subtle reminder of his commitment to the project.

The team included Rick Fahmie, president of Kitchen Expo in La Jolla, CA, who played a major role in producing the kitchen and bath designs as well as other areas of the home. Others included architect Brian Hansen, AIA; designer Joyce Browning, ASID; and landscape designer Mike Parsons.

The interaction among the team was a unique experience for Lusk. In a typical situation Fahmie, the designer, would offer his ideas for a room. As the architect, Hansen would write up the plans. Then Lusk would find a logistical way to make those plans work, given the structural elements in place.

Lusk gutted the interior of the home, redoing ceilings, walls and floors. He replaced the electrical, HVAC, plumbing and roofing systems, fixing the functional inadequacies that had resulted from past remodel jobs and “the misdeeds and poor taste of previous owners.” He even had to chase out a family of skunks from beneath the home that had

stolen the batt insulation from the floor joists. All of this while specifying materials to match the old-world Spanish style while keeping with the character of the neighborhood and meeting the structural integrity required of buildings in a Type 4 earthquake zone.

#### Details make the difference

Lusk acknowledges there were timing issues to get past. It was often a struggle for the professionals to keep from bumping into one another, but the team work led to creativity. What truly sets this remodel apart are the details.

The kitchen shows the designer's wish to disguise the functional elements. A pop-up television hides in the far butcher block island. The upper level breakfast bar hides a cook top on the lower tier of the granite countertop. Without a visible range hood, the gas burners go unnoticed at first glance. This approach contrasts the popular trend of integrating high-power stainless steel hoods, ovens, dishwashers and other functional elements into kitchen design. However, it sacrifices nothing in performance or innovation. Fifteen feet of ductwork running through the joist bay separates the inconspicuous ceiling vent from a high-powered centrifugal fan on the roof. With all of the reverberation occurring outside the home, the fan runs powerfully but quietly in the kitchen.

One of the original goals of the project was to create space in the master bedroom, adding dual vanities and closets. The French doors lead out to a deck lined with redwood posts, copper post caps and plate glass panels designed to preserve the natural view of the back yard.

The master bathroom is another area that profited from the collaborative effort. With a cantilevered roof, the designer and architect took full advantage of the bamboo garden outside the master bathroom, drawing up a unique design to blend the outdoors with the indoors while providing privacy.

"Then as the contractor, I figured out how to create the cantilever to eliminate the posts in the corner," Lusk says.

The structural treatment allowed for a large fixed window with a mitered corner that opens up into the garden. The bamboo is thick enough to provide privacy from the outside.

The main entryway to the home adds a distinct touch to the old-world design, prefaced by a wooden Spanish style gate as the centerpiece to the walled courtyard area. Lusk constructed the window shutters from recycled barn pieces he retrieved from a used wood dealer. A wrought iron balcony sits above the bold, heavy mahogany entry door, adding the finishing touch to the Spanish-style masterpiece.