

Local Owners of a Pioneer Modern Home Help it to Shine Again

News Release

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Early example of Modern Home Design returns to its past splendor

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Work quietly began this month at the site of a unique structure on Moorestown Mt. Laurel Road in Mt. Laurel. This structure, the home of Deborah and Buddy Lake, will be receiving a comprehensive renovation and addition by Wehner General Contracting. James Wehner, President believes the work will be complete by spring. While the house, built in a modern style in the late 40's, has been gradually modified over its 50 year life it has still retained its signature characteristics like the low, flat, and angular roof lines. Despite this, efforts by past owners to maintain the house and keep its appearance in line with current taste have undermined its unique quality.

Unique home represents break-through in American home design

A one story ranch house with three bedrooms may not sound that unique. When you consider that it was built in the post World War II era with a
(more)
flat roof, an open plan living/dining room with an angular cathedral

ceiling, horizontal windows, plywood siding, and an open carport for two vehicles; here you have the makings of a turning-point in American Residential Design. At the time the Lake Residence on Mt. Laurel Road was built there were very few examples of this type of house in the United States. The open floor plan was a breakthrough in residential planning proposed and promoted by Frank Lloyd Wright during this era, and the flat roof line was typical of the European Modernism which emerged just before the World War. This unique home in an undeveloped Mt. Laurel of the late 40's was the home of some forward thinking proponent of modern design.

The home has remained mostly intact over the years, as minor modifications were made. The open carport was enclosed to make a garage, larger picture windows replaced the thin horizontal windows, trim and siding were updated, a bedroom was lost to expand the living room. Now in the hands of the Lakes, they were ready for a significant change to the house to accommodate their family.

Other options explored before commitment to Modern Remodel

"The first time I saw the house, I knew that it was unusual - a textbook example of an early open plan "modern ranch" style house" said Architect Greg La Vardera, "I was very curious to find out what the owners had in mind for the house." The Lakes were in need of more bedroom space for their school age, and-live-at home children. A small family room was also needed for the young adults. (more)

Early on it seemed like the only alternative would be to add a pitched roof and try to make the outward appearance of the house more

conventional, but then the "modern option" emerged. "It seemed suddenly to make sense to simply go with the house, rather than fight it" said La Vardera, "and so we decided to keep the best qualities of the modern house and enhance them with the new work we would add." In the end, money not spent on a new roof structure could be invested in better quality materials for the house.

Refreshing Contrast to trends in local developments

The product of this unique approach is under construction now. The house will shed the gray paint and stand renewed in vertical cedar siding. The angular roof line will be reinstated, and now will extend over the expanded living room. "It will have a horizontal emphasis which contrasts wonderfully with the vertical stand of trees that surround it" said La Vardera; "Its nice to see new life breathed into the home, and remarkable to have clients who recognized the value of what they had." The owners, Deborah and Buddy Lake enjoy the contrast that their home has with the new homes springing up in developments around the municipality.

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(images follow)



Rendering of Lake Residence



Existing house on Moorestown Mt. Laurel Road.



The rear of the house complete.



The front of the house complete.