



# Forever Home

*A major remodel in Montecito built to last a century*

By LESLIE WESTBROOK  
Photography by Jim Bartsch







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ou'd be hard pressed to find a warmer, more welcoming, more enthusiastic couple than Peter and Kathy Halper, who are deservedly proud of the award-winning remodel of their gracious 4,700-square-foot Mediterranean style home set on 1.2 acres in Montecito's foothills. Having completed the makeover three years ago, the Halpers declare themselves settled, after many homes and moves, in their "forever" home, "Belcampo."

The longtime life and design project partners enthused that they loved being on site every day, interacting with all the talented people that made their vision come to life.

According to the contractor-builder firm Allen Construction, this created a huge advantage. "The Halpers were very involved," said Eric Johnson, the company's Santa Barbara regional director. "Having them on site every day aided in quick decision-making on the spot. Also, the house was built to last. Longevity is a new term in green building. We like to build houses that will last 100 years from now."

When the Halpers' realtor, Susan Burns, showed them the original house, the longtime couple (together 41 years this spring) knew exactly what they wanted to do. Plus, this wasn't their first creation. They'd built or remodeled many houses, including a 1940s Havana-style Laguna Beach home, a log cabin in Minnesota, a turn-of-the-century country farmhouse in Marin County, and even a rooftop ballroom turned penthouse in New York City.

Lifestyle decisions also made as the Montecito remodel was in process included creating a wine cellar and a bocce ball court, flanked by petit syrah grapevines and an array of fruit trees. Soothing babbles from the convergence of San Ysidro and Oak creeks add to the ambiance.



“Probably the most important part of this Allen Construction project was the building from scratch of a very large guest suite on the bottom level, which includes an elaborate master bath,” Peter said. “We needed the additional suite to offset the elimination of two bedrooms upstairs that were made into the master suite.”

In total, the two-story house now consists of three bedrooms and three and a half baths. The downstairs guest suite has its own private entrance.

The remodel also included a lovely greenhouse also used for entertaining, complete with piped-in stereo sound and a 65-foot lap pool.

While Kathy leaned towards Venetian style, Peter admits a penchant for French design. They created a happy amalgam, which is 100 percent them and 100 percent successful. The newly created entrance courtyard evokes Europe, with olive trees and formal hedges. A glimpse through the glass front door, through the cozy living room and beautiful outdoor loggia, reveals views to the Pacific Ocean and a portion of Santa Cruz Island.

Because the Halpers were so well prepared and knew what they wanted, the major remodel was completed in a year. It took two years for the landscaping, overseen by Peter, to fill in and be completed.

The first floor originally had four bedrooms, three and a half baths and lots of closets. Three bedrooms were converted into a lovely master suite with a plaster fireplace, a ceiling drop-down television, and fireside alcoves with built-in nooks. The shared master bath with vaulted plaster ceilings has his-and-her sinks separated by a huge “meet in the middle” walk-in shower with radiant heat floors. A satin pewter tub for two has a view. The couple happily shares their large walk-in closet, formerly a second bedroom.

The third former bedroom, now Kathy’s office, features luxurious leather flooring and plenty of built-in bookshelves for photos, books, and awards from her recently discovered passion, competition ballroom dancing.

Big, bold contemporary art mixes nicely with antique pieces, Venetian lighting fixtures, and antique sconces. Kathy’s beloved Italian pottery from various homes is now all together under one roof, some cleverly displayed and visible through chicken wire cabinet doors in the kitchen pantry.

The bright, cheerful kitchen was pushed out three feet to accommodate an island with a solid 10-foot-long pewter countertop. A cell phone charging station is hidden behind cabinetry that matches the refrig-



## BUILDER PROFILE



erator door. Clever counter space-saving pop-up appliance ledges add convenience.

Remodeling was not without its surprises. Once the longest residential pool in Montecito was created, the team was told they couldn't fill it due to the drought. Peter's archival research revealed an abandoned well, which now provides all the water for their landscaping, pool, and greenhouse. Stonemasons worked diligently for months to create the beautiful garden sandstone walls.

"We really enjoyed the building process and we were a great team," Peter concluded. The couple admits they have little desire to leave their cozy idyll, which comes as no surprise.

"This is our first forever house and this is our forever community," Kathy said. Those thoughts were echoed by her husband, whose hobby — when not feeding the chickens inherited from the original owners — is collecting vintage cars stacked in his very cool, six-car garage.

**BUILDER / CONTRACTOR:**  
Allen Construction  
[www.BuildAllen.com](http://www.BuildAllen.com)

**ARCHITECT:**  
Tom Ochsner  
[www.tomochsnerarchitect.com](http://www.tomochsnerarchitect.com)

[www.food-home.com](http://www.food-home.com)

