

Discovering a Diamond

Robert and Christie Board find a diamond in the rough and polish it until it's their own.

*By Hilary Datt
Photos by Larry Kauter*

When people hunt for diamonds, they're not necessarily looking for the shiny, sparkly stones that sit atop engagement rings or hang delicately from a pendant on a slinky chain.

They're looking for the tiniest glimmer, the hint of big potential. They're looking for the possibility of beauty — and often, it's shrouded in what is undeniably plain.

In many cases, people search long and hard for these diamonds in the rough. Why? Because diamonds make people happy.

When Christie and Robert Board found their 1960s-era home off Willow Creek Road in Prescott, they thought it may just be a diamond. As a long-time designing and building team, the Boards saw the home's potential.

"It was inexpensive, it had good bones, and we liked the location," Christie said during a recent interview.

They bought the house and the lot next door, and began planning a massive remodel that would add 600 square feet — for a total of 2,000 square feet inside the home — including a bedroom, an office space, a detached garage, and a generous outdoor living area perfect for parties ... and style. Plenty of style.

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Christie said, “But then we realized it was a unique opportunity. We had lots of property, we could put our stamp on it, and it met all of our requirements.”

The house really had it all; a central location to office space for their company - Board by Board Construction, and a spacious outdoor area.

Despite that, it was a difficult decision to move out of the house in which they'd lived for the past ten years.

“We loved that house, loved our neighbors, and the thought of a major remodel was challenging,” Christie said. “In order to make a project like this work we have to invest a tremendous amount of sweat equity and, sometimes that is easier said than done.”

In the end, though, Christie said, “We've come so far. But sometimes in the middle of it, we felt like, ‘are we ever going to get to the other side?’”

When they'd bought it with the intention of flipping it, they'd seen the potential – that sparkle of promise in a plain-looking building. But when they decided to move in and make it their own, they wanted to make sure it was really going to shine ... that it was really going to feel like home.



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the studs," but still aimed to keep the aesthetics of the 60s in mind when redesigning it.

The result: a contemporary industrial style combining clean lines and warmth. Most evident throughout, however, are the details that make a house a home.

The Boards poured washed aggregate concrete on the driveway to match the home's exterior concrete walls, and installed a low fence with horizontal slats for privacy in the front. The front

door features a classic mid-century design with three square cutouts with window inserts.

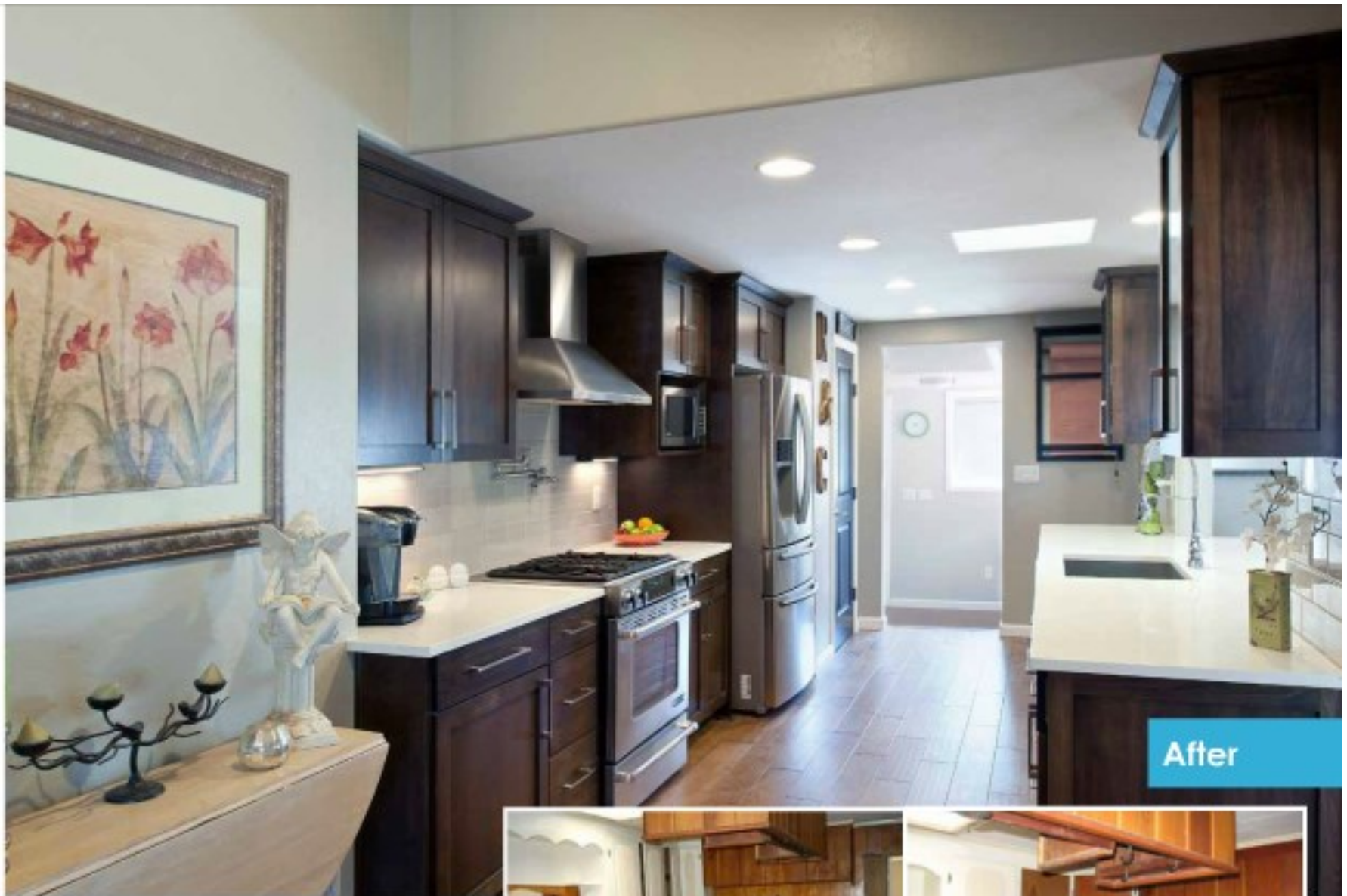
Just inside the front door, Christie chose hand-painted concrete tiles reminiscent of a style you might see in Europe hundreds of years ago, she said.

"These are cool. It just makes me happy."

To the right, several bar stools sit facing the galley-style kitchen, and the living room opens just behind that.

The walls are painted a timeless "greige," which Christie explains is a gray with a little beige mixed in for warmth, and the floor is an engineered wood distressed maple. On the coffee table, Christie has placed a bowl of several glass balls she collected when she lived on the Oregon coast in 2000. In honor of the millennium, glass blowers had created the balls and released them into the ocean for residents and visitors to collect when they washed back in.





In the kitchen, the Boards installed all new cabinetry, a shaker door style in a dark walnut stain. Christie chose pearl grey subway tile in two different sizes for the backsplash, and stainless appliances with details designed to make life more convenient (like a French-door fridge with a 2-door freezer – the top half of the freezer can be a refrigerator or a freezer – whichever a person needs – and a two-drawer dishwasher that can wash just one drawer's worth of dishes at a time).

Christie is a certified kitchen and bath designer, and said she loves trying out new appliances and features she can then pass



Before



on to her clients.

"This is my current favorite," she said, pulling a faucet out from the wall above the range top. "It's a pot-filler."

The pot-filler, she said, is inexpensive and handy, and she's been telling all her clients it is a must-have in their kitchens.

On the other side of the kitchen, the dining area includes built-in shelving and a vaulted ceiling, which the Boards added "to create a feeling of openness."

This, Christie said, "changed everything."

They expanded the room and added a bathroom behind it.

A short hallway leads to the bedrooms; to the right, the guest bedroom greets visitors with a cheerful mix of blues, greens, and white. In the middle, the Boards keep their exercise equipment and Christie's crafting supplies.

The guest bathroom sits between the two bedrooms, and the Boards installed heated tile floors, which Christie said are a great upgrade for a reasonable investment.

To the left, the master bedroom opens off the hall. A wall-mounted sliding door opens into the master closet, which features a combination of modular and hand-crafted cabinets, as well as a vaulted ceiling for storage space and a beautiful chandelier, about which Christie said, "this makes me happy too."

Here, again, they installed electrical outlets inside the closet, which are handy for ironing or using a steamer in the closet.

A wide window in the bedroom looks out onto the





back yard, where Robert built a trellis out of rebar and wood. Now, tiny vines stand beneath the trellis, but by next summer, they should be climbing the trellis, providing the Boards with a floral wall of color.

Adding the master bedroom to the existing house, Christie said, "made a huge difference in how the house lives."

On the other side of the kitchen, a butler's pantry houses serving platters and big dishes, and a generous countertop provides space for mail, keys, and phones or tablets. The Boards installed several USB-friendly electrical outlets throughout the house to make charging a phone, tablet or computer convenient.

In the laundry room, honey gold cabinets (a combination of original and new) provide plenty of storage space, and a high counter with a utility sink provides space for folding clothes. Robert built and installed an in-wall dryer rack, and the room is brightened by windows on three sides.

Outside, wide concrete steps lead up to a sprawling, 1,500-square-foot patio, where several sets of patio furniture, a hammock, a fire pit and a barbecue wait for guests to arrive. On the concrete walls surrounding the patio, black corrugated metal creates texture and depth.

Downstairs, the Boards converted the home's previous one-car garage into an office from which they run their business. They added a three-car garage in which to store their construction-related equipment and supplies, and a breezeway to connect it to the house.

Although Christie said the remodel was fun because it was a different design



"I think we've turned this house into something really special." - Christie Board

style than anything they'd ever done, she said it also was tough because they completed it while working full-time.

"It's always important to do something new, to step out of your box as builders and designers," she said. At the same time, though, "This is the last major project we will do for ourselves."

The Boards, who have been married for twenty-one years, consider this house one more step in their journey. It may not be their last house, but it will definitely hold a special place in their hearts.

"There were disappointments, frustrations, times when we experienced that fear of 'what if what we imagined doesn't come to be?'" Christie said. "But it's so exciting when something does happen. It's so worth doing I think we've turned this house into something really special."

More important than anything, it's theirs. And in their eyes, it shines.

