

# A Maximum Suite



**Surround the bathroom with storage.** The top requirement for this new master bath was a steam shower, but the real story here lies in the best use of available space (photo taken at A on floor plan). I was able to incorporate the most significant benefits of this remodel, additional closets and a washer/dryer niche, into the other side of the master bath's walls (floor plans, facing page). Their reduced height gives the small room an added sense of space and also provides a way for the skylight to illuminate the interior of the house through clerestory windows (inset photo, taken at B on floor plan).



# with Minimum Fuss

A clever floor plan yields separate baths, a steam shower, a laundry room, and ample closet space, all without breaking a tight budget

BY CAROLYN MURRAY ANDERSON

“Oh, man!” I chuckled as I hung up the phone. “This one’s really going to take some creative digging.” Shelley and her husband, Peter, had just bought a house in Gloucester, Mass., and wanted help turning a second kitchen into their master-bedroom suite. The previous owners had raised the roof and built an upstairs kitchen (inset photo, p. 95) for themselves so that an aging parent could live privately on the first floor.

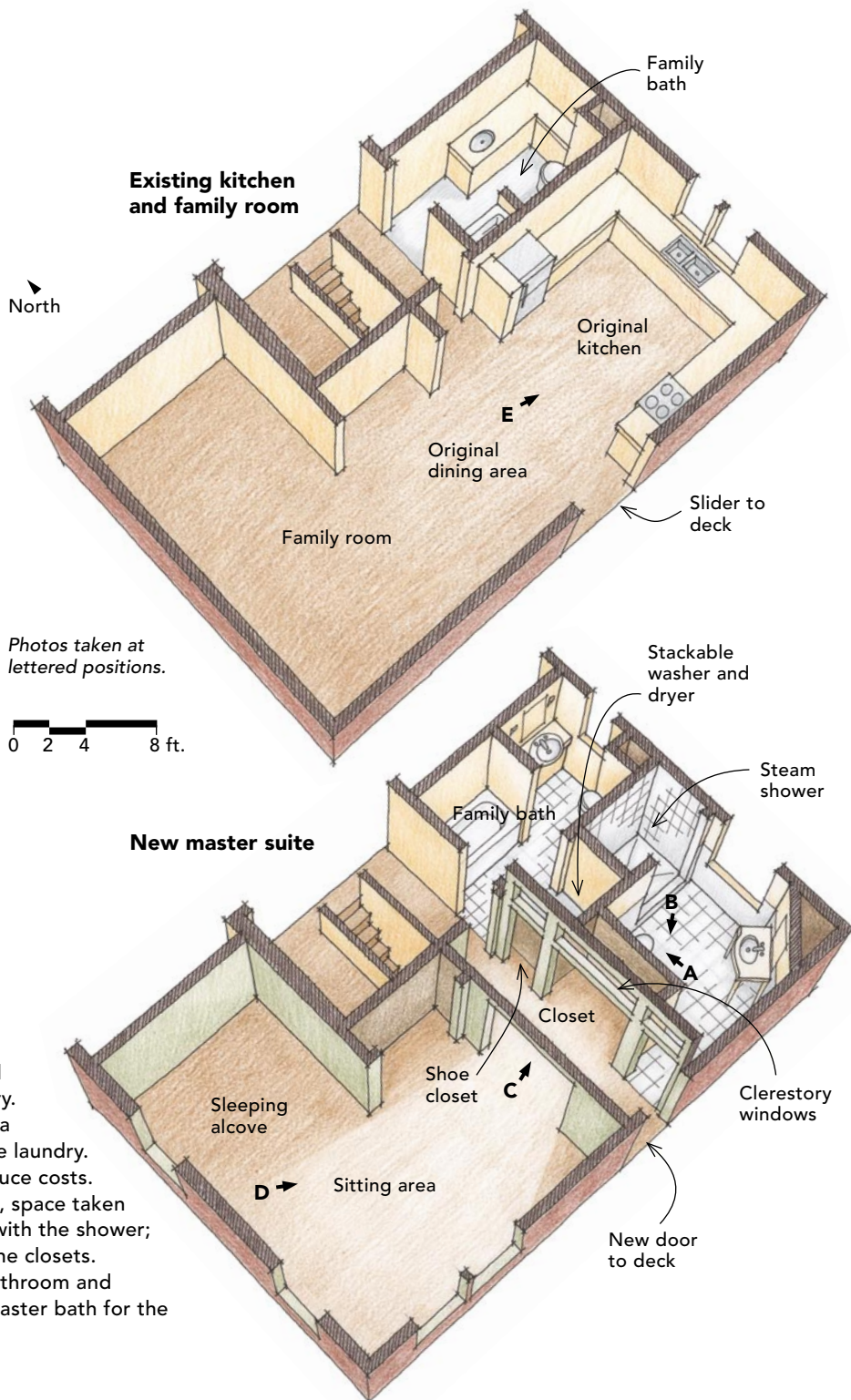
Shelley and Peter wanted the 396-sq.-ft. kitchen area divided into a sleeping alcove, a sitting area, closet space, a master bathroom with a steam shower, and a laundry room. Shelley also sheepishly admitted to having a “shoe problem.” Storage for her burgeoning shoe collection would have to be accommodated as well. The real challenge would be getting all this work done within a tight \$28,000 budget.

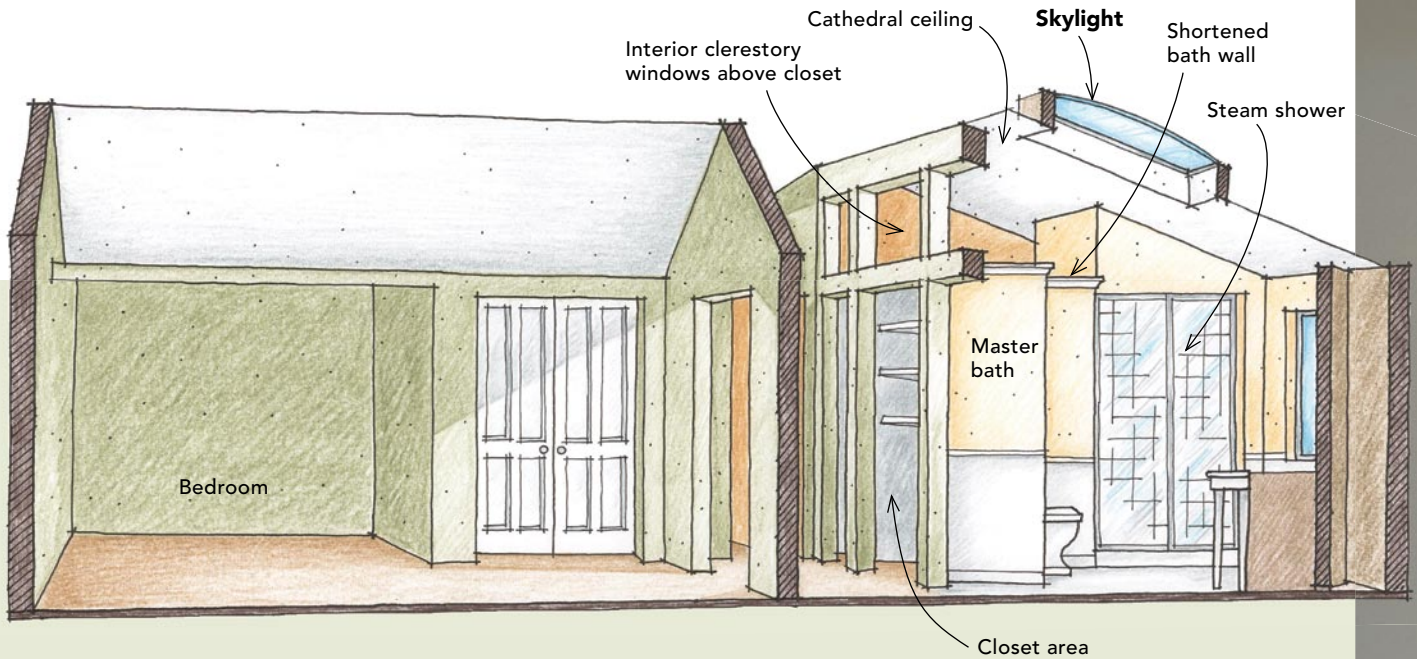
## Smart layout saves money

The first step was to come up with a workable layout (floor plans, right). The windows on the southwestern side of the house overlook the harbor, so the sleeping and sitting areas were given the views. Also, I had to maintain

## WHO NEEDS TWO KITCHENS?

Formerly housing two families, the home now served one, and the second kitchen upstairs was unnecessary. Converting the extra kitchen to a bath then became a matter of finding space for the steam shower and the laundry. I tried to minimize changes wherever possible to reduce costs. Along the common wall between the two bathrooms, space taken by the old refrigerator and counter was filled easily with the shower; two new enclosures framed the laundry alcove and the closets. Shifting the tub to the opposite side of the family bathroom and shortening the vanity created enough space in the master bath for the entry and the washer/dryer doors.





## A PROBLEM TURNS INTO A BONUS

The back wall of the closet originally was designed to extend to the ceiling, but it would have interfered with the skylight well in the master bath. Instead, the closets were capped just above the doors. Fixed windows above the closets let light from the skylight into the bedroom area. After fitting in the steam shower and the laundry, there was just enough room to squeeze in a closet for an ever-expanding shoe collection (photo right). A double-door closet to the right accommodates full-depth hanging-clothes storage. Photo taken at C on floor plan.



access to an existing deck on the southeastern side. I kept the door to the deck in the same spot but reduced a 6-ft. slider to a conventional 3-ft. door.

To control the budget, I made as few changes as possible to the exterior walls and roof, which meant working with existing windows, and skylights. With plumbing already there, the south side of the kitchen was the most natural location for the new bathroom.

### A steam shower, a laundry, and a shoe closet in 42 sq. ft.

Working within all of these parameters, I drew up three strategies for making the plan

work. Somehow, the first solution I came up with seemed easier than it should have been. When we met to review the plans, Shelley's first question was, "Where's the laundry room?" Oops! Embarrassed, I went back to the drawing board to find more space for the laundry room.

As it turned out, I found a great solution. In the adjacent family bath, I flipped the tub and the entryway to expose the wall that separated the family bath from the old kitchen. The sink and the toilet in the family bath could stay where they were. This revamped design made the master bath work better as well.

First, I put the new master-bath steam shower against the partition wall (photo p. 76). Then, on a plane with the front of the shower, a new wall was built that became the back of a laundry alcove big enough for a full-size stackable washer and dryer. An opening in the partition wall allows access to the alcove from the family bath. That left just enough room to shoehorn in Shelley's shoe closet, which opens into the new bedroom suite (photo above).

### Sharing the skylight

Next I tackled the closets that separate the master bath from the bedroom. To minimize



**Better use of space.** Filled with natural light, the new bedroom offers plenty of perches to alight and take in the view (photo above taken at D on floor plan). The old kitchen-sink window (inset) now helps to illuminate the new bath (before photo taken at E on floor plan).

work on the roof, I left the existing skylights in place for ambient light in the new suite. If the closets were built as they were drawn, however, the back wall of the closet would have landed about 7 in. into the bathroom skylight well. The solution was to give the closets 8-ft. ceilings, leaving a 4-ft. space between the top of the closet and the existing cathedral ceiling of the bathroom.

To close in the bathroom, I extended the front wall of the closets up to the ceiling, avoiding the skylight well altogether. This solution had an added yet unexpected bonus: The wall above the closet doors became the ideal place for fixed-glazing

clerestory windows that bring additional light from the bathroom into the bedroom.

Inside the bathroom, beadboard wainscot unifies the room and gives it a comfortable cottage feel. Setting the vanity wall at an angle makes the space seem more intimate and provides a place for a recessed medicine cabinet that's not on an outside wall. □

Carolyn Murray Anderson is owner and founder of Heritage Design Group and Anusara Home, two interior-design firms based on Cape Ann, Mass. Photos by Roe A. Osborn, except where noted.