



From Basement to Hacienda

By Christine Hanlon
Photography: John Johnston

For years, Margaret Scott's half-finished basement was a hodgepodge of rooms in disarray. "It depressed me to go down there," recalls the homeowner. As a result, she used her lower level more as storage than living space.

One thing that did lift her spirits, however, was taking out and looking at the many handicrafts and art pieces she had brought back from trips she made to Mexico, New Mexico and Arizona over the years. Those special memories gave her an idea.

"I've always liked those kinds of strong colours," explains Scott. "I knew that they would really warm up the space." But because she didn't like the lower level layout, she also knew that renovating would involve more than just painting.

That is when she contacted All Canadian Renovations (ACR). "I told Mike what I wanted," she recalls, "and he recommended an open concept."

What Scott wanted was a welcoming rec room and work area for herself, as well as a bedroom and bathroom to accommodate guests. The

space also had to provide plenty of storage to accommodate yarn and other supplies for her knitting projects.

"We just expanded on her ideas to complete the project," explains Mike Kerr of All Canadian. "Once we know what a customer wants, we can put it all together so it is attractive, comfortable and functional. We can create a living space with all the components built in. It just takes careful planning"

In this case, ACR first had to undo what was already there. This involved gutting the entire sixties-style basement right down to the concrete walls. These were then reinsulated to modern R20 standards.

Any major home renovation requires taking out a building permit and ensuring that all plumbing and electrical work is done to code. ACR takes care of all these details while ensuring the entire process is conducted in accordance to the latest by-laws.

For instance, the place where Scott wanted the bedroom had only a very small window. To comply with the requirements for fire egress





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– so, in case of fire, the occupant can escape – ACR enlarged the window to regulation size.

“The permit process protects the homeowner,” Kerr points out. “We make sure everything is done right.”

This applies to design and aesthetics as well. For instance, ACR changed the staircase, putting in a platform and turning the stairs around to create a nicer approach to the lower level.

A storage area is conveniently located immediately at the bottom of the stairs. Closets behind two sets of double louvered doors contain winter/summer clothes storage as well as craft supplies. Meanwhile, an overflow pantry takes advantage of the space under the stairs.

As for the recreation area, it is large enough for Scott's treadmill, with the adjoining workspace enclosed by a half wall. Other areas are defined by colour. There are 12 different hues in the lower level.

Sometimes a colour Scott had chosen would end up looking too vibrant once it was applied. “They were very accommodating,” recalls Scott, explaining how All Canadian was able to take the colour down a tone.

On the floor, rustic vinyl plank flooring coordinates well with these warm bright walls. A



floating vinyl floor was used in the bathroom and laundry room.

Having a well-equipped space to wash, fold and iron laundry was important for Scott, as was having a lower level bathroom. She also wanted a sauna so the three-piece bathroom had to be built large enough to accommodate that.

All Canadian suggested a latest-generation infrared electric unit that can be conveniently plugged into a regular socket. Equipped with a

CD player, radio and mood lighting, this spa-like sauna can be relocated with Scott if she ever moves.

But for now, the homeowner is only too happy to enjoy her new 'hacienda.' “Everybody I take down there can't believe how beautiful it is,” she says. “I really like how they did it. I'm very pleased.”

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