

Originally published Friday, March 6, 2015 at 12:11 PM

## Bainbridge Island beach house remade to be light, bright and comfortable

The whole transformation was practically presto chango. Architectural alterations topped off with a complete redressing of the interiors in 90 days from interior designer Michelle Burgess.

By Rebecca Teagarden

Pacific NW associate editor



See more mapped stories

INTERIOR DESIGNER Michelle Burgess is a professional who prefers to let her thoughts percolate. When the right paint color/chandelier/arm chair/dining table/wall treatment reveals itself, she'll know. She will wait and she will know.

Not every project, however, can spare the luxury of time. This one, for instance.

"CRAZY schedule these last few days," reads her email. "We broke ground March 1, and they arrived June 8. I re-imagined the layout, removed a ton of walls, pulled the kitchen back and eliminated a weird passage, opened up the kitchen to the dining and living rooms, changed almost every piece of hardware in the house and specified all new materials throughout." Then she had the place painted, papered, lighted and furnished, right down to the cheerful accent pillows, placed about like pats of butter topping off a casserole.

When Parker and his family opened the front door, their new house (built in 1999) actually was new. And *much* improved.

"Everything she picked out we said, 'Let's do it,'" he says. There are bearclaws from Poulsbo on the counter and the smell of the sea in the air. "We figured the most important decision we could make for this house was to find the right person."

The family is moving north from Las Vegas ("What's the opposite of here? Vegas.") Parker and Susan were looking for more natural surroundings for the kids. A place where neighbors know the neighbors. "Ours had everybody over and served oysters from the backyard," says Parker. "That's so neat. Unfortunately, that kind of thing never caught on in Vegas.

"Here our children put on rubber boots and go down to the beach and pick up crabs and clams."

Bainbridge Island, in particular, caught their interest. "It's rural, uncongested, calm, no crime, gangs, the Bloedel Reserve, and you can ride bikes down the street," he says. The beachside house had the three most important elements the couple was seeking: location, location, location. But it also had orangy cabinets, brass fixtures, chopped up spaces and a closed-off kitchen.

“There was no heart to this house,” is how Parker puts it.

Now there is: Its very center, a large and grounding kitchen island. White cabinets, quartzite counters. Dining room on one side, living room on the other. One connected space of soft and subtle colors, the whole of it like the inside of an oyster shell. With touches of sandy beach. The beachside deck is an outdoor living room in wicker.

Trusting their designer, the couple told Burgess to go for it (within reason). And she did (within reason).

“We didn’t even know what color the walls were going to be until we walked in (light gray),” says Parker. “It was like one of these home makeover shows on TV. I was so blown away I didn’t even take pictures.”

Before beginning this redesign race to the finish (built by Smallwood Design & Construction), Burgess drilled not only the grown-ups but the kids for likes and dislikes. “She had an interview with the kids, and we weren’t allowed to be around,” Parker says. “They gave her a list.”

The list got the kids this — a very tentlike playroom. Passage is through a heavy scalloped-trimmed canvas. Bunks on either side (his and hers) hold twin-bed window seats with ceiling murals (a wizard and dragon for him; a mermaid for her).

“Our budget for the transformation of our house was about 20 percent of the price of the home,” Parker says. “I think that’s a great deal. Michelle made it a really amazing place.

“And every time I see my children out there on the beach . . .”

*Rebecca Teagarden writes about architecture and design for Pacific NW magazine. Benjamin Benschneider is a magazine staff photographer.*