



WHAT TO DO WITH A '40s HOUSE

WITH THE HELP OF A CREATIVE ARCHITECT THIS BRICK VENEER PUTS ON A BRAVE NEW FACE, FRONT AND BACK

Take one double fronted cream brick veneer; plop it down in almost any suburb anywhere in Australia and it's odds on that it will look just like every other house in the street.

So it was with something of a sinking feeling that Janine and Alan Clark made the decision to move into his parents' house in the Melbourne suburb of Ascot Vale.

For like so many houses in the suburb which borders on to Dame Edna's Moonee Ponds, this one was typical of the countless thousands of brick veneers spawned throughout Australia's suburbs in the years just after World War 2.

Alan's father, Tom, an engineer, built the house in the late '40s when materials were still hard to get and

"choice" was an unknown word. Those were the days when you waited six months for the roof tiles to arrive and you had to pay double price for cement if it was to arrive at all.

But the end result was a solid and comfortable home for the Clarks, and when Alan and Janine moved in with their family several years ago it was still in excellent condition.

The only trouble was, they wanted a house of the '80s rather than the '40s. So they decided to renovate.

"It would have been a cheaper exercise to bulldoze it and start again," Janine admits today. "But for sentimental reasons we decided to keep it. After all, Alan's father had built the house and he had grown up in it. Also, we wanted his parents, who are now



Above: The house as it was (opposite) and, as it is today. Owner Janine Clark and architect Andrew Fedorowicz study the plans. The old hipped roof has gone but the slope and the left peak remain the same. The roof's overhang and the extended "boxed" walls of the bedroom window and the diagonal wall give protection from the sun in summer. Left: The winter sun warms the family room and the Clarks rarely use the ducted heating. The table is of 140-year-old oregon from the old Newmarket saleyards.

Right and below: The back of the house two years ago . . . and as it is today. Emma Clark, then 13, and dog Dusty stand in the old backyard with its traditional lemon tree and rotary clothes hoist. Today, it's unrecognisable. The paved courtyard divides the main house from the unit, at left, and provides an attractive mutual entertaining area. The different roof lines, of Monier shingle tiles, create added interest.



basically, change it!" One major problem was the general aspect of the house. Because it faces due west — and incidentally over the Essendon public golf course and valley of the Maribyrnong River — it bore the brunt of the afternoon sun.

So Andrew decided to be unconventional and forego the view by building an angled wall across the front of the building.

This not only allowed privacy but created a cool area at the front.

Apart from a single long window at the corner of the living room and the main bedroom windows, the rest of the house "looks" inwards towards the new family room/kitchen and the central courtyard beyond it.

Andrew explains: "In the afternoon the sun was simply too strong to look into so I decided to eliminate where possible the windows facing west, especially upstairs where it would have been like a sauna in summer."

Downstairs, the wall separating the living and dining rooms was demolished to give the Clarks a large formal entertaining area. The old brown brick fireplace, complete with briquette heater, was taken out and an elegant white marble fireplace put in its place. The box-shape windows also went — to be replaced by three long narrow windows, two of them "shugg" windows which allow easy circulation of air but have no frames to mar the long window line.

Original moulding in the ceiling was retained and so, too, to Janine's initial dismay and later delight, was the old three-piece lounge suite which with its



Above: The family room is overlooked by the kitchen. The design takes full advantage of the sunny outlook and full-length windows allow uninterrupted views of the fernery and garden. The oregon table is bathed in sunlight, but the room is sheltered from severe heat by the pergola. The dividers between kitchen and living areas are finished in jarrah.

84, to remain there and we did not want to hurt them by pulling it down."

Architect Andrew Fedorowicz was called in and his brief, basically, was: Build a bedroom wing and extra bathroom for the children; build a unit for the grandparents and "do whatever else is needed".

The result? Well, there's certainly no sign of the '40s outside and, inside, there's just a touch or two — like the stencilled double glass living room doors and the ornate pendant lights — to remind you of the past.

Janine says: "We couldn't be happier. The house has been opened up and seems much bigger although it's still actually the same size."

Andrew, known more for his restoration of Moonee Ponds' lovely old Victorian houses, is equally delighted with the result.

"Houses built just after the war were mostly much the same because there was both a lack of materials and a lack of variety of materials.

"The Clarks did not like the look of the old house and their message to me was,

Right: A white marble fireplace, new windows, new carpet and new paint give a new look to the old living room. The light fitting and the lounge suite remain the same, however, with just a touch of paint and new fabric to transform them for their revamped surroundings.

Right below: A quiet moment in the family room for Janine Clark. This view, taken from the staircase landing, shows how the architect has connected the upper and lower spaces by leaving a void instead of blocking off the area with a wall.



inbuilt wooden ash tray holders on each arm rest was a "model" of its era, the 1950s.

"Andrew's wife, Jackie, who helped with the interior decorating, insisted we keep it and she found a geometric patterned fabric for it," explains Janine. "Now, everyone wants to know where we got it. It shows what can be done with basically sound furniture which has dated."

The front bedroom was retained with an ensuite bathroom built into the adjoining room.

For the rest of the house, though, the alterations were more drastic. Out went all the back rooms and, in their place, a large family room/kitchen and an upstairs children's wing were built.

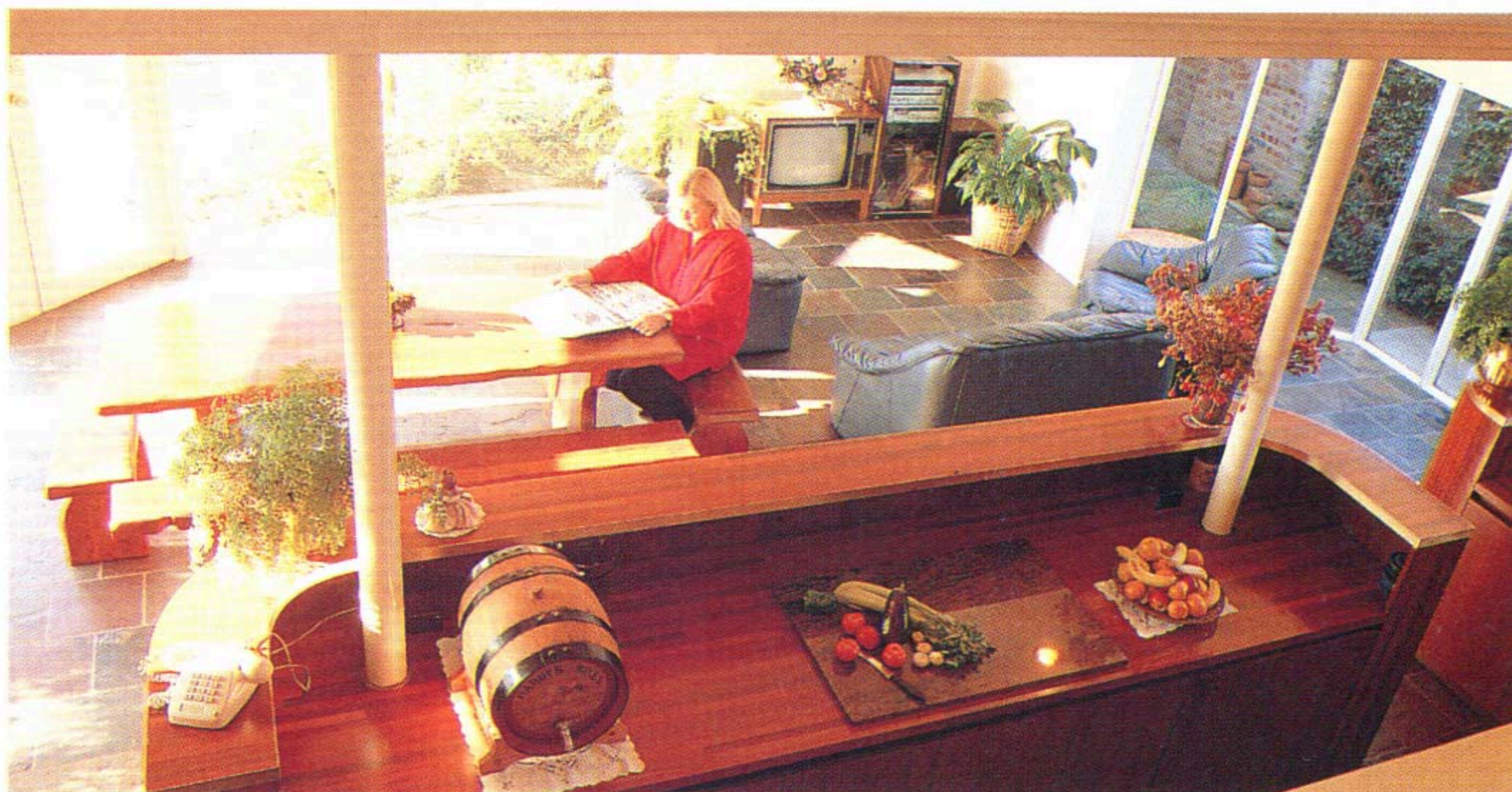
The whole area is "extremely thermally efficient," explains Andrew. In winter, the low sun warms the room while the hard dark surface of the slate floor radiates heat after the sun has gone down. The reverse happens in summer when the overhang of the roof stops the higher-angled sun coming in and a pergola gives added protection.

The backyard, once a typical suburban backyard with lemon tree, patch of grass, garage and shed, is now taken up completely by the courtyard and the self-contained two-bedroom unit of Mr and Mrs Clark senior.

Janine and Alan are obviously delighted to be able to live in a modern house just 10 minutes drive from the centre of Melbourne.

"People drive past, stop and back up to find out "where that house has gone," says Janine. "We tell them it's still here ... just different."

**Story: Dina Monks
Pictures: Gary Chowanetz**



Left: Etched glass doors from the old house were used again as the entrance to the living room. This view is taken from the front door and shows how the house has been opened up. The passage leads to the family room and part of the "void" can be seen at the top of the stairs.