

Closet or Bath?

A trade-off seemed inevitable, but a clever solution made both possible

BY CHARLES MILLER

Charlie's bedroom was just about perfect. Upstairs in a Craftsman-era house designed a century ago by the great Bay Area architect Bernard Maybeck, the room overlooks a winding creek shaded by large oak trees. The only thing missing in Charlie's bedroom was the rest of the bathroom.

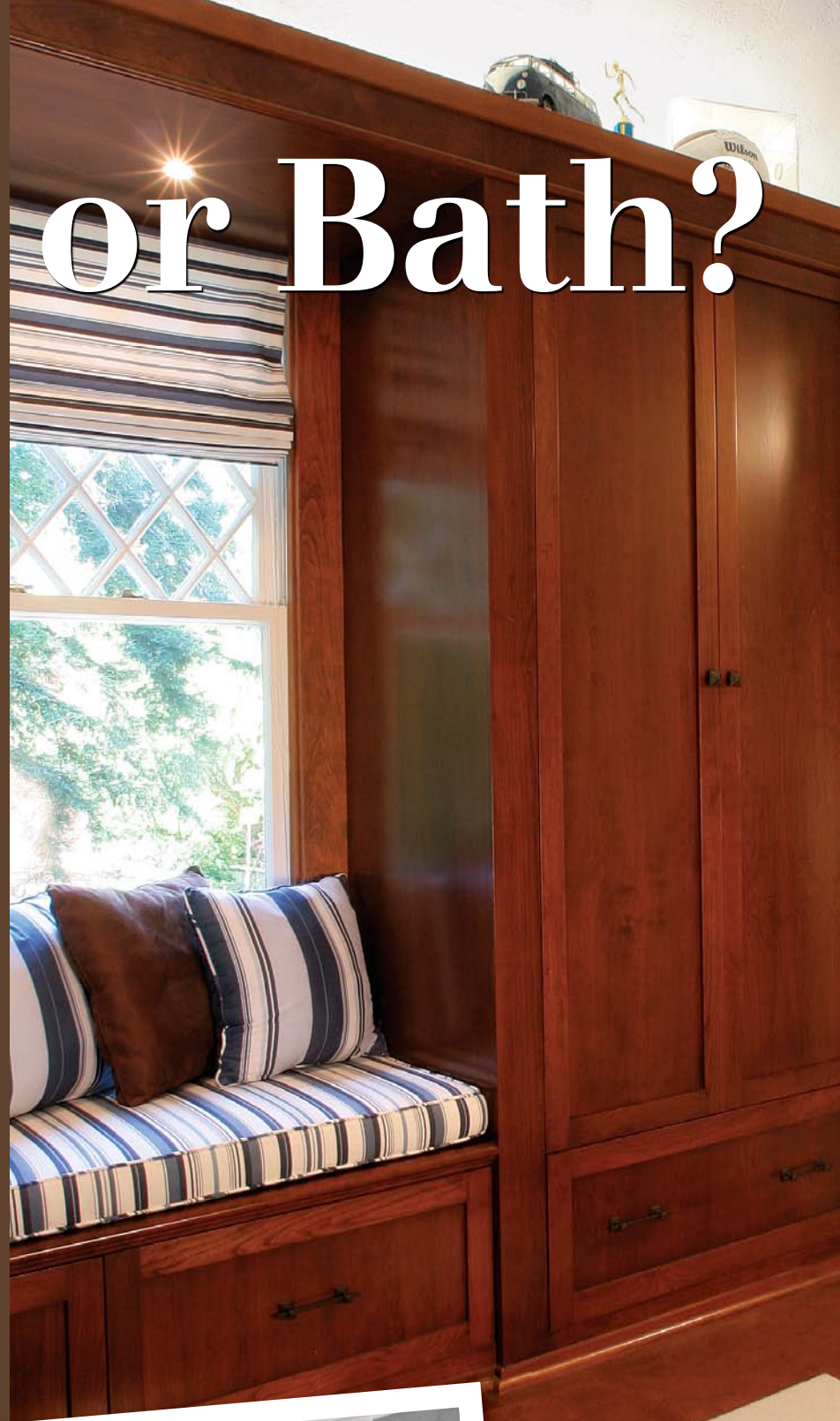
At the turn of the 20th century, it was common for a bedroom to have its own lavatory. Charlie's bedroom shared this arrangement ("Before" floor plan, p. 53); the bathing and toilet facilities were in a bathroom down the hall. As Charlie turned the corner into his teenage years, however, having his own full bath rose higher on the priority list. His bedroom closet was the logical piece of real estate for a bathroom expansion. But what about the lost storage? Replacing that was the other chess move.

A signature detail restores storage

Leslie Lamarre of TRG Architects in Burlingame, Calif., came up with a solution that simultaneously replaced the lost closet space and added a classic Craftsman detail to the room: a window seat flanked by cabinets.

The cabinets are 24 in. deep. That's enough for hanging clothes, and it's a more efficient use of space than the old 39-in.-deep closet. One cabinet has two rods for hanging shirts and pants. The other has shelves for clothes and a shoe rack on the inside of the door. Along with the generous drawers below bench level, the new storage space is a net gain over the original closet.

Window seat waiting to happen. The original bedroom featured a generous window centered on the west wall and a doorway to a sink-only bath on the right. In the reconfigured bedroom, a pair of wardrobes frames the window. Drawer storage below is topped by a comfy window seat. Display space hovers above the scene. Photos taken at A on floor plan.





Comfortable coexistence. The clean lines of modern fixtures and the room's restrained colors and textures are right at home with the broad window and door casings of the Craftsman-era house. Photo taken at B on floor plan.

The cabinets are made of cherry but are stained with a brownish glaze to look like American elm, which is more in keeping with the West Coast Craftsman look. A cork floor and carpet squares from Flor (“Sources,” facing page) round out the changes in the bedroom. Both materials have sustainable underpinnings. Plus, Flor carpets are designed to be recycled. The company even offers to pick up its carpets and to cart them away for recycling when it’s time for replacement.

Long, narrow, and uncluttered

At a little more than 3 ft. wide and about 12 ft. long, Charlie’s bath could have been a dark shooting gallery. Lamarre kept it light with sleek finishes, fixtures that hug the walls, and a glass shower door. Coke-bottle-green glass tile lines the shower and wraps the lower walls of the rest of the bath as wainscoting. Bands of variegated-glass mosaics tie it all together and emphasize the linear layout. A made-you-look detail of two silvery strips of aluminum runs like rails down the middle of the room, bordering the three rows of limestone floor tiles (photo below).

A Lacava wall-mounted sink, only 11 in. deep, doesn’t crowd the room, yet it has enough deck space to rest a wet toothbrush and a bar of soap. Its chrome, T-shaped trap turns a typically unattractive collection of tubes into a sculptural detail. Even the flush-mounted body-spray showerheads hug the walls, intruding as little as possible into the airspace.

The wall-mounted medicine cabinet originally specified in the plans (a unit with integral glass shelves) turned out to be way too expensive. As an alternative, a simple mirrored medicine cabinet is flanked by a set of three custom glass shelves supported by chrome wall brackets found online (“Sources,” facing page). They deliver the same look and utility for a lot less money. The shelves rise above the sink, providing space for items worthy of display, and they didn’t add a lot to the budget. □

Charles Miller is special-issues editor. Photos by the author, except where noted. Builder: Charles Edward Inc.

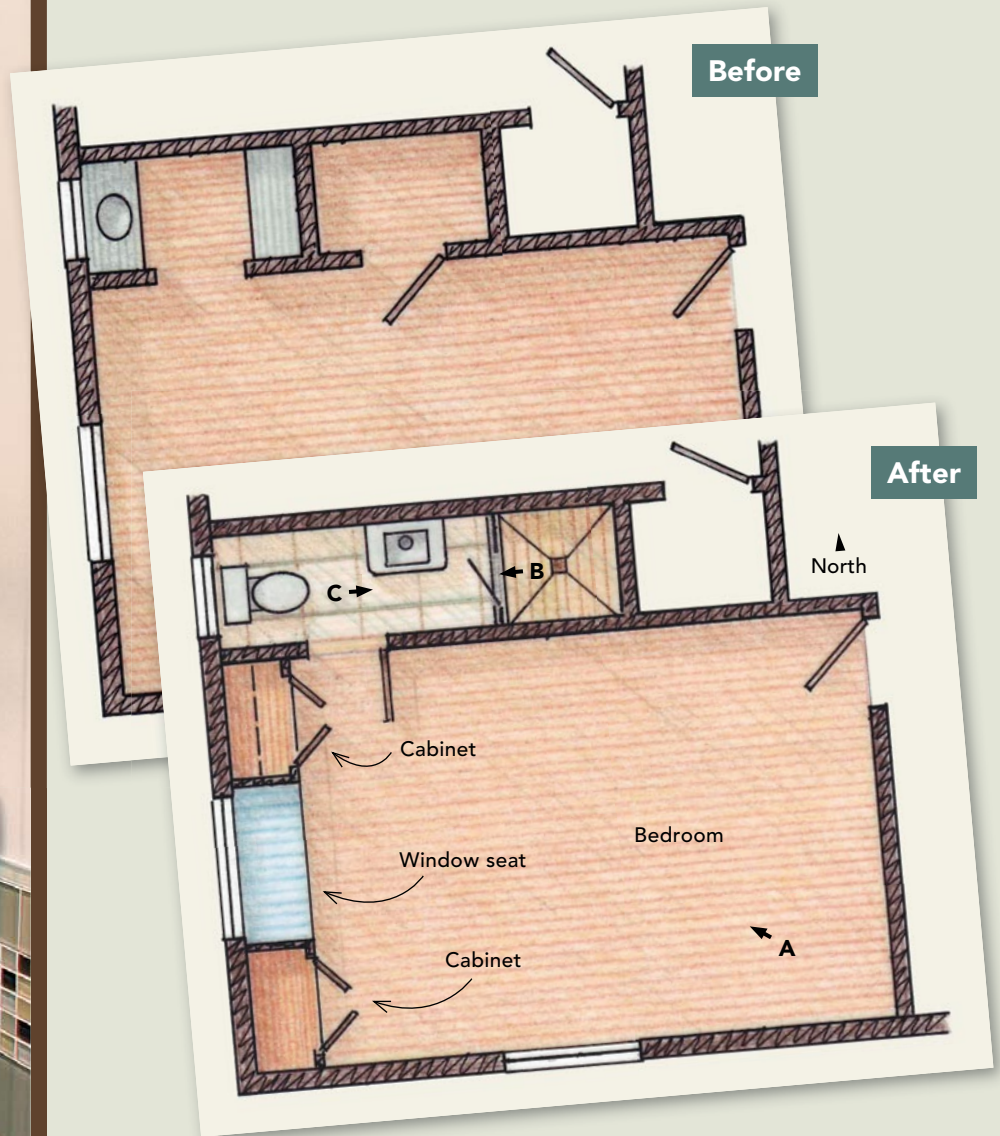
Emphasize the space. Horizontal bands of mosaic tile draw the eye toward the shower, where reflective glass tiles bounce the light around and wall-hugging showerheads intrude minimally on the space. Aluminum strips in the floor add an edgy overtone. Photo taken at C on floor plan.





FILLING IN THE REST OF THE BATH

A closet that didn't use space efficiently gave way to a shower in the new bathroom. Built-in cabinets flanking the bedroom window replaced the lost closet space, and then some.



Photos taken at lettered positions.

0 1 2 4 ft.

SOURCES

Body-spray showerheads: www.kohler.com

Carpet: www.flor.com

Glass tile: Contemporanea Rainshower;
www.italics-stone.com

Lavatory: Lacava Alia, ALO26;
www.lacava.com

Shelf brackets: www.expodesigninc.com

Toilet: Toto, dual flush; www.totousa.com

