

home expansion

increasing the space...maximizing the view



As any realtor will tell you...the name of the game is location. Actually, most of them will repeat it two more times in succession for emphasis (just in case you didn't hear them the first time...or the second). For home shoppers, Annie and Hunt, no one needed to remind them of the importance of location. After a very lengthy process of looking, they not only narrowed their search to a specific area, they knew the exact house that they wanted. So what if it wasn't for sale.

As the saying goes, some things are meant to be.

The following excerpts from our interview with Annie and Hunt will fill in the blanks on how they acquired their dream property, how they, over time, formulated an overall vision on what improvements they wanted to make, and how they selected the award-winning Ephrata-based home remodeler, Renovations by Garman (a division of Garman Builders) to make it happen.

At the time you purchased this home, we understand it wasn't even on the market? Did you make a Corleone-type offer...an offer they couldn't refuse?

Hunt: We were actually getting married at the time and Annie wanted to stay in Manheim Township where her boys had just begun school. So, we started looking. We looked at every corner of the township—every development, and every home on the market. We talked to a lot of realtors, went to a bunch of open houses, played with a lot of ideas, but there just wasn't anything that appealed to us. On top of that, the housing market was going crazy at the time and everything was WAY overpriced. Long story short, we took a walk from Annie's home at the base of Blossom Hill to the top of the ridge scoping out properties along the way—as we always did—whether they were for sale or not. We found this one, on the highest point of the ridge, visible only by breaching the large wooded area beside it.

Annie: For me, one look was all it took—this was it. Right then and there, I told Hunt that this is the only house I'll move for.

Hunt: And here I am...asking myself, how in the world am I going to make this happen? I can't just walk up the driveway and make an offer. That evening, I mentioned the property in talking with my father. On Tuesday, my father mentioned it to his hairstylist, who as it turns out, was friends with the owner. Not only was the owner interested in selling, he was actually just in the process of listing it. On Thursday, I was writing a check for the house.

Annie: I couldn't believe how things fell into place—it was definitely one of those meant to be happenings.

SPOTLIGHT

project description

Type:	Major addition and renovations.
Contractor:	Renovation's by Garman (see ad p. 35)
Trade Partners:	<p>Bed & Bath Affair (see ad p. 38) Classic Granite (see ad p. 42) Good Painting (see ad p. 38) Haller Enterprises, Inc. (see ad p. 40) Martin Appliance (see ad p. 46) Musselman Lumber Inc. (see ad p. 37) Ralph L. Wilhelm, Jr., Inc. Seamless Spouting (see ad p. 36) Shrock Fabrication (see back cover) Swartz Kitchens and Baths (see ad p. 44)</p>
Scope:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish a large portion of the unused attic • Add a master bedroom, bathroom, and walk-in closet • Add a 2nd bedroom and hall bath • Complete demolition and redo of kitchen and 1st floor hallways <p>In planning for this renovation, Renovations by Garman took advantage of the unused attic by reframing the rear roof line to allow for finishing 1,466 square feet of new living area. The features in the master suite included 70 square feet of windows to show off the exquisite view, a gas fireplace, a private balcony featuring a glass railing and a 20'x14' his and her walk-in closet with a laundry area. The master bath has a large walk-in shower with body sprays and multiple shower heads. There is a sitting room at the top of the stairs with colonial wood wainscoting and a glass railing.</p> <p>In order to update the kitchen, Renovations by Garman did a complete demolition of the existing kitchen. Instead of two smaller doors, the new kitchen would have one large door to provide a more open feel to the room. An island with 3" granite countertops and a raised glass bar top was added to provide more usable work space. The smoked mirror backsplash and state-of-the-art stainless steel appliances added the finished touch.</p> <p>The primary challenge during the project was staying true to the period of the home while incorporating the homeowners' contemporary tastes. Another challenge was the design and installation of an updated HVAC system that required new feed locations.</p>
	<p> Winning Category Whole House Remodel Division 3</p>



BEFORE



REAR VIEW

And yet, despite being the perfect home, you eventually came to the conclusion that it wasn't big enough. Instead of adding on, did you ever consider relocating to a larger home or having one built?

Annie: Moving was never an option. We absolutely love this property and its views.

Hunt: She's right, relocating was never on the table. We knew that when we moved in. As I mentioned earlier, Annie had decided this was the house she was going to move to before we even made the offer. The property was absolutely what we wanted and, over time, a vision for what changes we wanted to make to the house and property started to take shape. As our family grew the need for additional living space became more and more apparent.

Earlier you mentioned that the home was built in the '40s. What can you tell us of its history?

Hunt: This was the second home built up here on Blossom Hill. Although it was completed in 1949, much of it was built during World War II by the original owner, Dr. Sam Houck, who was a physician in the Navy. In between his six month deployments in the Pacific theatre, he would come back and work on the house a little at a time. He and his family lived here until 1981. After Dr. Houck, the home had two other owners—each staying around 10 years or

so. And since we're talking history, here's an interesting piece that we only became aware of after our purchase in 2005. As it turns out, this was the home of a childhood friend of my mother, Helen. My mother lived on a horse farm here in Manheim Township and would ride her horse over to visit Dr. Houck's daughter, Susie. They put the horses in that little barn down there in the front yard.

Annie: It was so cute when Helen found out this was the house that we bought. She has some great memories here.

If this was the second house built on Blossom Hill it's hard to imagine that there's a better view than yours.

Hunt: Well, it wasn't always that way. Back in the day—100 years or so—this whole area was an orchard, mostly peach, apple and pear trees. As they built years later, the lots were cleared out and I think everyone at the time had a pretty good view. When we moved here, the trees that Dr. Houck had planted in the 40's and 50's were huge and the woods were very thick. When we moved in you couldn't even see the house from the road. And when you were in the house, you could only see the sky in one spot—the center of the driveway. It's taken some time, but we have things thinned out quite a bit. To maintain our view out the back, many of the trees have to be topped off every few years.



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Annie: Because of its spectacular views, this property will always retain its value. We feel that any extra money we put into it will be well spent. It's an investment in our future.

Tell us about your selection process and your decision to choose Renovations by Garman as your builder.

Hunt: As soon as we moved in, actually even before we moved in, we knew the projects we were going to do. We could just see them—inside and out. Early on we tackled the den, the basement, and



the barn—all with different contractors. So you can see, we had some project experience already. The trick in any project is to match the right company to the job.

Annie: If you have too big of a contractor for the job you may get lost in the mix. Too small of a company and you may not get the expertise that's required or the manpower necessary to get things done in a timely manner.

Hunt: And that's a critical point. When you're taking off the roof like we were, you have to have someone who knows what they're doing, has a plan, and can work very quickly. When the roof comes off, you can't mess around—you can't take 6 months to figure it out. You literally have hours to get things under control and safe from the elements.

Annie: To answer your question, while we were already leaning towards Renovations by Garman, an article in R&A magazine helped seal the deal. It was actually a cover story in which you showcased a beautiful Garman renovation that was similar in scope to what we were planning. The before and after project photos were very compelling and homeowners comments reinforced what we were already thinking—that Garman was a really good builder who looked out for their clients.

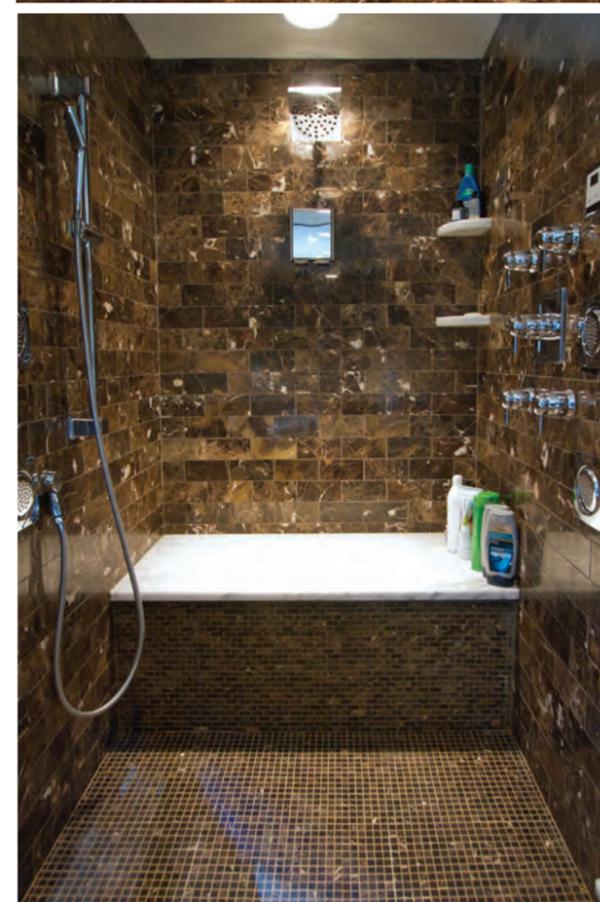
Hunt: The thing that steered us toward Garman to begin with was their history—they had a good one. Starting with

their father early on, they had built a number of single family homes here in Manheim Township—and along the way their reputation has been stellar. I also personally knew Noel Garman, who married Jason Garman, when she worked for our family horse business. We had that sort of feel good going in. When we sat down to discuss our ideas and preliminary numbers with Garman's Vice President of Operations, Fred Heim, we felt very comfortable moving forward. Seeing the design plans was the clincher—the staff at Garman nailed them!

Annie: Fred's expertise and calm manner really impressed us. His understanding of what we wanted to accomplish and his know how of how to get there was very reassuring. He had a plan for everything—the foundation, floor joists. Nothing seemed to be a big deal to him. I was especially impressed with his ability to gauge my taste. Not only does he know construction, he has an interest in design. I'd show him photos of kitchen features that I liked and he'd come back with ideas that I liked even more. Fred was very resourceful finding the contemporary finishes that I was interested in. For example, he suggested the glass railings on the stairs and on the balcony as an extension of the kitchen's glass counter-top. He was very creative that way and knew where to find subcontractors who specialized in these types of custom niches. This know how really helped things go smoothly.



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Earlier you complimented the design work performed by Garman, can you elaborate?

Hunt: That was a huge plus in Garman's favor. I think it's vital that there's a connection between the homeowner and builder. They have to be well matched and be able to listen to each other. In our case, we had some specific ideas but needed Garman to put it together and make it work. From the very beginning, we appreciated Garman's ability to listen as well as their creativity.

Annie: My parents were very skeptical when they heard that we weren't using an architect. They were convinced that the second-floor addition would ruin the home's original lines—that it would look like it didn't belong. After the project was complete, my father drove up the driveway and, although little could be seen from the front aside from

the new dormers, he was impressed with what he saw. The big test would come from the rear of the home where the big dramatic changes were made. Without looking up, he immediately walked to the back of the house and slowly lifted his head. He looked hard from side to side inspecting everything.

"Whoa...oh my...this looks like it was always here." He was shocked! To get that from my dad was a monumental seal of approval. Bravo Garman, bravo!

Hunt: That's one thing we were very conscious of—as was Fred. It was imperative that the additions blend smoothly into the existing lines. They couldn't look like they were added on and they don't. Surprisingly, we agonized not so much over the back of the house as much as the front. There were times when we would shut the project down so we could go

out there and agonize over the placement of the dormers. At issue was whether they appeared balanced. In the end we made the decision to move one a few inches to gain two feet of interior space. It was a great trade off based on the comments we've received. No one even notices the dormers...it's as though they were there all the time. More kudos for Garman for making it all blend together.

Annie: And to think that they gave us everything we wanted on the first drawing. They gave us the two bedrooms, the two bathrooms, the fireplace, the balcony, all the windows that we wanted to take advantage of our views. It was amazing that they were so close on the very first drawing.

Hunt: We just tweaked things a bit...made some changes on the windows but nothing all that significant.

Annie: In addition to the savings on the windows, Fred also cut our costs significantly by reconfiguring the opening to the kitchen to make it work structurally.

Let's talk a little about the schedule that Garman set up.

Annie: We were living onsite throughout the project's early stages and having a schedule was really a huge help. I believe it really kept the project on track. And they pretty much stuck to it. When things got hung up, it was usually because of me and the choices I had to make.

Hunt: Doug Kauffman, the site foreman, did a really good job keeping things on schedule, but Annie is right—we were the ones that caused the headaches. We added some extra things as we went along and with each change they had to readjust the schedule with all the subcontractors.

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Probably most affected was the group from Haller Enterprises—who did our electric, plumbing and HVAC work. Because of the original systems that were being replaced, this was not an easy job and I feel that Haller sent us their best, most experienced guys. It seemed like they were here on a full-time basis. All three were great guys and they did a super job.

Annie: As far as the schedule was concerned, the project

started in September and we were able to stay onsite until November 15th. Garman did a great job in sealing off the construction—they were very conscientious and a pleasure to work with. Despite all the different guys who were here working, I always felt comfortable and safe.

Hunt: By February things were basically wrapped up and we were able to move back in.

As I'm sure most of our readers will agree, your selections are beautiful. Did you have help?

Annie: The in-house designer at Garman, Bonnie Martin was a great help throughout the project and she actually helped tone me down a bit—which was a good thing. The guy who did our paneling did an amazing job and Fred has a great eye for trim and mouldings. We knew we wanted white paneling and trim and get a nice contrast with the dark wood, wall paint, and carpeting and Bonnie did a great job walking me through that process and I think it all turned out beautifully. In the kitchen and master bath, I wanted a classic look with a contemporary edge. I knew

that my finishes needed to be marble and stone, paired with polished chrome for a contemporary feel.

Hunt: Annie's not into anything cookie cutter. She has a flair for adding contrast to traditional design and making a statement.

Annie: A very helpful thing for me was laying out tile and going simple rather than going for all those little built-in niches. This really helped me stretch my budget and go with a nicer marble and granite. Speaking of which, I have to comment about Classic Granite in Lititz—they were wonderful! I've been a great fan of the extra thick countertops that you see in the upper end hotels and Classic Granite ran with that idea. Designer, Jessica Bair has a very good artistic eye and because we were going with such dark cabinetry suggested that we go lighter with our granite and our countertops. When they brought in the surround for the master tub—I could not have been more pleased.

Are there any other trade partners that you'd like to single out?

Annie: Pam Clements of Swartz Kitchens & Baths did a fantastic job with our kitchen design—we absolutely love it! Her layout has made things so much more functional and her guidance on what seemed like little things—like where to put

cabinet handles, what size, and on what doors—turned out to be extremely helpful. She recommended things that I know I would have overlooked—such as quiet, soft closing drawers and doors, conveniently located built-in spice racks, and things like that. These seem like such little things, but they make a huge difference once you start using them.

Hunt: Kendall Shrock at Shrock Fabrication did the custom support work on our raised glass countertop on our kitchen island. Kendall subbed out the glass work and took full responsibility for making it all work. Shrock Fabrication stood behind their work—they were great!

Annie: Tim Gibble at Martin Appliance in Brownstown, is another one I'd like to mention. Tim was very knowledgeable



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of his products and was a great help in our decision making. As it turned out, we bought all our kitchen and laundry appliances under one contract and Tim put together a great package deal which really helped in stretching our dollar.

I also got help from Wendy Dowling, owner of Bed and Bath Affair on College Row by F&M. Wendy assisted me with the selection of the beautiful upholstered chairs and benches for the master bedroom and second floor landing.



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Hunt: I was especially impressed with our painter Kevin Good, owner of Good Painting. Kevin is a heck of a nice guy and he and his crew did a wonderful job.

So how satisfied are you with the finished project?

Annie: When we wake up and look at the view and sunrise, or at night to see the lights of Lancaster, we feel like we live in Disney World. I feel so blessed. It never grows old. I just can't believe we have this additional room, this beautiful space—it's amazing.

Hunt: It's easy to forget that the entire second floor was unfinished attic space. Our son Hank couldn't go up for fear he'd stray from the runners and fall through the ceiling. I was the only one who would go up there because it was either too hot or too cold. Back then I'd go up there for hours and envision the renovations. It's interesting because I still see the old floor, the old roof and the whole look of it when I'm up there. What a transformation.

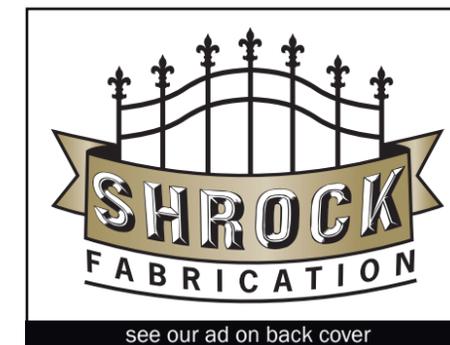
Annie: We cannot believe that we have all this additional space. Talk about family harmony—we now have

our own space. We aren't crammed in the back anymore. The kids can have friends over for the night—we can have guests. We actually hosted Christmas for the first time in five years.

Hunt: Our old bedroom is now our guest suite. It seems like its own separate area that can be closed off making it very private and comfortable for guests.

Annie: The best thing is that we now have space. Space for the kids to entertain on the first level and space upstairs for us to retreat! It's great to be able to take

our wine upstairs and sit by the fire or watch television. This expansion has made the house so much more livable.





Do you have any advice for homeowners contemplating a project?

Hunt: I would think of what you want to do, the size and scope of the project, and how quickly it needs to be accomplished. Then I would choose a contractor who would be a good fit. Don't get a contractor too large for a little project or too small for a big project.

Annie: What helped us was actually living here for a number of years and getting a feel for our home and the property. We had time to think things out and envision what we wanted to do.

Hunt: And I'd recommend that the homeowner be involved with the project the whole way through. Despite the best plans, almost all projects have wrinkles that will require attention. Being involved allows you to be proactive as these things surface.

And if you had to do it over again, would you do anything different?

Hunt: I suppose there's always something that you'd do a little differently. Overall though, I would agree with Annie—we are incredibly pleased with the way things turned out. The whole crew at Renovations by Garman was top shelf as was their team of subcontractors.

Annie: We would definitely go with Garman again—in a heartbeat! We've already recommended them to neighbors and friends.

R&A



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