

HOME

& Garden



Photo by KATY BARRACKS/The Chronicle

Sculptor Patrick E. (center) brought harmony to homeowner John McIntyre (right) and neighbor Dem Pilafian (left) with a nature garden that cooled off McIntyre's glare-producing aluminum roof.



Above: John McIntyre stands next to a praying mantis sculpture Patrick E. crafted for his roof. McIntyre used art to solve a sun glare problem that was annoying his uphill neighbor, Dem Pilafian. The butterfly, right, on McIntyre's roof is lit by its own solar panels.

Loving thy neighbor

Glaring problem metamorphoses into work of art after San Carlos homeowners work out solution

By Susan Fornoff
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Dem Pilafian knew he was venturing onto a slippery slope the day he decided to ask a favor of San Carlos neighbor John McIntyre.

There was first the literal slippery slope of the steep, Devonshire Canyon hillside from Pilafian's home down to McIntyre's. But that was a mere blip on the treadmill compared with the incline grade of Pilafian's request.

Which was, essentially: You've got to do something about your roof. The sun's reflection off the aluminum creates such a blinding, hot glare, I just can't stand it anymore.



"I felt bad talking to him about it," Pilafian said. "But it needed to be resolved. I like to garden in the backyard, and there were a couple of hours every day when it was insanely bright."

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Hiring a valet tops wish list for ways to strengthen a marriage

Today is my 45th wedding anniversary. As with others in long-term relationships, John and I have had our share of laughs and stony silences and yelling, and neither of us can imagine having to break in a new partner who wouldn't get the references to shared experiences, griefs and television shows past.

We've joked about the fact that neither of us can outwit the other, with John teasing that "if I ever get the upper hand, I'm outta here," but it wasn't until a couple of weeks ago in Spain that I almost answered his idle question: "How are you going to get rid of me?"

We had driven our rented yellow Mini Cooper convertible from Madrid to Barcelona in less time than the distance chart on the road map indicated and were feeling pretty smug when we entered the city — only to find ourselves driving in circles trying to find our hotel. After more than an hour of futile searching, the third time we passed the bus terminal, John suggested I hail a taxi that could lead us to the hotel — a

ploy that had worked years before in Budapest.

I hopped out at the taxi stand and climbed into a cab, telling the driver I wished to go to the Senator Hotel. Pointing to the Mini Cooper, I explained that my husband would be following us there. The driver, who spoke only Spanish (probably Catalan, although I couldn't be sure, what with not speaking either Spanish or Catalan myself), looked at the Mini Cooper, nodded and took off, veering sharply into an alley choked with buses and autos. Around the bus station, we caroomed, then off to the left, down a broad city street, where the driver swerved in and out of traffic, finally taking a sharp right onto a side street, then a quick left down a narrow alley. I looked back to see John zoom by the alley's entrance, then back up at him running the alley just as the cab turned out. "Wait! Wait!" I yelled at the driver. "We're losing him."

The driver glanced at me in the rearview mirror and it occurred to us simultaneously

Lynette Evans

ly that there'd been a serious miscommunication. He'd thought I'd pointed out the Mini Cooper because I wanted to escape from its driver. He slowed the cab, slapped his forehead and we shared a good laugh in different languages.

"That was some ride," said John, as he pulled up to the hotel behind the cab. "What were you trying to do, ditch me?"

"Something like that."

Of course I wouldn't want to ditch him. Who would want either of us after all these years?

John has always said that if we were rich, he'd want clean sheets every night, but I think if we were rich, I'd get him a valet. John is even worse than I am about leaving his clothes, tools and, most especially, the packaging that he's removed from purchases and pieces of mail, strewn about the place. Transferred to the farm, this habit



LYNETTE EVANS/The Chronicle

John and the Mini Cooper kept up with a speeding taxi in Barcelona.

has meant he's purchased the same tools and irrigation components repeatedly. A valet — someone such as Jamal ("Call me Jimmy"), our guide through the cabal of Tangier a few days after the Barcelona taxi incident — would be just the ticket. Jimmy not only steered us to all the shops where he stood to get a commission from our purchases, but he also waved off the

snake charmers when we shuddered and elbowed aside the trinket sellers when we said we weren't interested. He hovered just out of view as we ate bastilla and couscous at Mamounia restaurant in the Medina and ushered us through the customs lines at the ferry terminal as we prepared to return to Spain. Indeed, we had already paid Jimmy and were heading for the gangplank when he appeared beside us again. "No hurry," he said. "The boat has just arrived."

"What are you still doing here?" John asked, putting his pants pockets in search of his passport. "We've already paid you."

"It's my job," Jimmy said affably, pulling the passport from John's shirt pocket and handing it to him. "I do this for everyone."

I thought of all the misplaced eyeglasses and tools and wished for a Jimmy at home. After 45 years, a valet just might save the marriage.

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San Francisco Chronicle

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

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HOME & Garden

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2007

AROUND THE HOUSE

By Susan Fornoff

Cool new designs for hot seats



It is impossible to walk by Maloos Anvarian's new ABU chair, right, without giving it a test sit — and then being pleasantly surprised by its comfort.

ABU stands for "All Balled Up (and nowhere to go)." Anvarian heard that sitting on tennis balls for 20 minutes a day was good therapy, so she created an armchair with 25 balls on the seat and 30 across the back. Pitch, height and leg styles are customizable; the chair comes in three density levels, she said, "and the firmest has therapeutic effects on your lower back and circulation." It's especially eye-popping in orange.

Even newer, though in a vintage way, is Anvarian's Bondage chair (left). She bought a 300-year-old chair that was in such bad shape it no longer qualified as an antique ("just an old chair," she said), and wrapped the entire chair in stretchy gold vinyl. The face-lift completely updates the look while still showing the elegant bones of the original piece, and it earns ma-



jor style points for clever recycling.

"Now it's high design and you can actually see the lines of the original chair," she said.

Anvarian's showroom is DMW Interiors at the San Francisco Design Center; for prices (think four digits before the decimal point), call (415) 864-3857 or e-mail info@dmwinteriors.com. She's also thinking about creating a kit for DIY Bondage wrappers.

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Western show returns to S.F. in new spot

The Western Interiors Design and Home Show revisited San Francisco for a second go-round last month, moving from the Concourse out to Fort Mason, next door to the Antiques Show. Exhibitors were mostly local but included the likes of Harden, an old family-run furniture-maker in upstate New

