new beginnings

Anyone who has raised a family knows how attached you can become to the home in which it all began. That mantel is where myriad Christmas photos were taken; this table is where the kids ate their after-school snacks. But typically the fondness is tied largely to the memories, not the physical space.

That’s why when Dr. Juan Nosti and his wife, Nancy, found their nest finally empty after 34 years in their Mission Hills home, they realized it was time for a change. “The old house was totally destroyed,” Nancy Nosti says. “We raised four children and half the neighborhood. We either had to move or we had to fix it.”

Though her choice of the words “old house” may be misleading, she and her husband actually chose the latter option. They commissioned Eric Negrete to redesign their space. “At first we were just doing a very little reconstruction—changing out finishes, updating the kitchen,” Negrete remembers. “As the project progressed, we ended up taking basically everything out, everything back to the studs.”

Negrete led the couple through the 1.5-year renovation process, but Dr. Nosti had a clear vision for this new chapter in his and his wife’s life. “He wanted a modern feel, but he wanted it to be classic, timeless,” Negrete says. The doctor’s Argentinean heritage greatly influenced many of the design decisions; because his homeland incorporates many European influences, the home is also peppered with French design elements.

The Nostis and their grown children refer to the renovated space as “the new house.” Reflecting interests and tastes the couple has amassed over the course of their lives, it represents new beginnings while still welcoming and accommodating a growing, extended family. As Nancy Nosti says, “Really, it’s just home.”
Architect Howard Nearing designed the blueprint and layout of the Nosti’s original home; it was the second home he built in Kansas City. When the couple decided to renovate the space to open up the rather compartmentalized floorplan, Nearing had the opportunity to come back and help with that design. “We told him, ‘Regarding our old house, we just don’t live this way anymore,’” Nancy Nosti says. “So he got a chance to go back through and change things.”

One of the biggest changes was opening up the space along the front of the house, giving Dr. Nosti a clear vista from his study on the west side of the home all the way through the dining room and into the butler’s pantry on the most easterly side (see bottom photo).

The living room (previous spread, below, right and opposite) is separated from this elongated space by a U-shaped wall. Most of the furnishings, including the sofa, were already in the Nostis’ collection; Negrete simply changed the finishes or reupholstered the pieces for a fresh look. This space’s main new feature is the fireplace, which Negrete completely renovated. What used to be a heavy, brick and white timber feature is now a sleek focal point. Cottonwood limestone from St. Marys, Kansas, covers the façade. Every edge of each tile is beveled. “I wanted dimension, to cast a shadow,” Negrete says.
“Dr. Nosti is meticulous in his job,” Negrete says. “He really pays attention to the fine details, so he was really involved in the finish decisions, the style of millwork, the style of furniture. It was a great experience.”

The doors to Nosti’s study are custom-made replicas of French doors that Nosti saw in a photo and fell in love with. Negrete reinterpreted the design to fit the room’s shorter scale, then outfitted the space with built-in cabinet bookcases that maintain the study’s clean lines and simple aesthetic.

Dr. Nosti’s desk is a custom piece the couple commissioned in Argentina. The Japanese horse print propped behind once hung in the doctor’s childhood bedroom; it was a gift from his French aunt.

Max Key, an artist recognized by the Charlotte Street Foundation, was the talent behind the faux painting on the office walls. One of the doctor’s favorite colors, the mottled blue reflects the light well and creates a serene atmosphere in the space. The oversized arc lamp adds a slight modern edge to the simple and tailored space.
The custom installation in the butler’s pantry (opposite) is another homage to Nosti’s heritage. It was inspired by a similar piece in the doctor’s mother’s home in Argentina. “Her console was more of a Directoire (piece with white marble); it had more of a French feel to it,” Negrete says.

The designer’s updated console features St. Laurent marble and zebra wood legs. “We worked with Carthage Marble, and the legs were created by Eighth Floor Woodworking. The mirror is by The Dolphin Gallery,” Negrete says. “Getting the three fabricators together with the (Nostis and myself) was pretty challenging, but I think the execution is very strong.”

In the dining room (this page), Negrete matched two modern captain’s chairs from City Studio in Los Angeles with the shorter chairs from the Nosti’s personal collection. The room brings several design styles together, from antique to modern. The dining table was custom-designed in Argentina; it extends from nine feet to 14 to accommodate the Nosti home’s new role as a gathering place for the ever-growing extended family.

The rugs throughout the home are from Sabear’s Oriental Rugs on State Line; the chandelier is an Italian piece ordered expressly for this space. “Dr. Nosti’s wish to have a clear vista, a clean sightline from his study to the butler’s pantry console; that was the reason for not doing a long, drop chandelier,” Negrete says.
While the Nostis and Negrete worked together to come up with ideas for the kitchen's layout, the space was largely the domain of Portfolio Kitchen & Home's David Zebley. "They played a large role in helping organize and program the kitchen and butler's pantry," Negrete says of Portfolio. Negrete raised the countertop heights throughout the house, another detail that takes into consideration how the home will best grow old with its inhabitants. There aren't a lot of high cabinets, which Nancy Nosti says took some getting used to, but in the end, it helped her pare down her kitchen utensils to what she really needs. Eddie Cummings did the tilework on the backsplash and throughout the rest of the home.

The custom millwork cabinetry in the butler's pantry hides a washer and dryer, and the ironing board. It also houses a compact wine storage system. "We were trying to keep it convenient so (the Nostis) don't have to run up and down the stairs," Negrete says.

One element in this extremely modern space isn't new. "This was my kitchen table that every one of my children drew on, crayoned on," Nancy Nosti says. "Eric put a special finishing gloss (on it). It's my old, new table, so I have something from the past." Negrete even found David Edward chairs that matched that "old, new" finish.

The pass-through between the kitchen and living room (below) is extremely functional, as well. The panel on the living room side hides a flat-screen television. "It really establishes a sense of separation without it feeling closed off," Negrete says. The space between the ceiling and top of the pass-through makes all the difference.

"Everyone wanted an island, but we probably would have left the space as one (big room) if it hadn't been for my husband. He did not want that," Nancy Nosti says. The lights on top, as well as inside, the pass-through add extra depth. The chairs on the left-hand side of the living room were made in Argentina; they flank an Art Deco table (not pictured) the Nostis found there on one of their twice-yearly trips.
The lower level represents a very different style of living, yet it is just as functional as the upper two floors and even more grandkid-friendly. The space houses Nancy Nosti’s office. Negrete outfitted that space with a sleek stainless steel sheet, so Nancy could post notes with chic magnets. The desk is also equipped with accordion doors, so she doesn’t have to clean up when the couple entertains there.

“I didn’t want to do a lot down there because there’s a door that accesses the pool,” Negrete says. “So we scored and stained the existing concrete floor.” That floor work was done by Insideout Concrete Creations.

Negrete also put in a new bathroom. “Again, thinking of wet swim trunks and towels, we tiled the walls and the ceiling, and instead of having towel rods (in that narrow space) we built in niches, so towels can be stacked.”

The mirrors in the space are installed flush with the tile edge, an innovation with which Nancy Nosti’s architect friend was most impressed. It’s just another example of the couple and Negrete’s fine-tuned attention to detail. The bathroom vanity is made from polished concrete stained orange and gray—the work of Urban Stone Concrete. “It’s fun, it’s modern, and—most importantly—it’s functional,” Negrete says.