

Old Tahoe



**Architect:** Dennis Zirbel of Dennis E. Zirbel Architect  
**Interior:** Judy Harris and Dennis Zirbel  
**Year Completed:** 2007  
**Square Feet:** 4,900

# In the Shadow of Shakespeare

*Remodeled East Shore retreat captures Tahoe views and style*

**STORY BY ALISON BENDER / PHOTOS BY VANCE FOX**

The Glenbrook home was dramatically situated between Shakespeare Rock and Lake Tahoe, but the generic, ranch-style abode had almost no views of either.

"We'd owned the house for ten years before we began the remodel process," says Judy Harris, who lives fulltime in Las Vegas with her husband, Jeff. "In that time, we'd learned what works and what doesn't."

The couple, inspired by homes of neighbors and friends and landmarks like the Thunderbird Lodge, wanted an Old Tahoe-style retreat with plenty of space for themselves and their three adult sons. After an unsuccessful attempt working with a draftsman, they found Truckee architect Dennis Zirbel, who specializes in the region's traditional design.

"You had to climb the stairs to the deck," Zirbel says of the original floor plan. "That entrance basically threw you into the middle of the house and divided up the rooms. And the way the spaces were organized didn't take advantage of the views."

Saving a majority of existing framing and foundation, Zirbel turned the tract home into a retreat that is both rustic and refined. A large crawl space became a lower level entrance with a hidden mudroom ("the sense of entry is critical," says Zirbel). From there, stairs climb to an open dining room and



COURTESY PHOTO

*before*

(left) Judy and Jeff Harris' new and improved stately Glenbrook home is remodeled to fit its spectacular location. (above) "Before" picture of the Harris residence.



“The East Shore has a slightly different Old Tahoe style than the West Shore; it’s a little more refined.” –Dennis Zirbel



**(above)** The original house was gutted and spaces reorganized to take advantage of surrounding views. The great room's living area, formerly the home's entrance, offers a distant glimpse of Glenbrook Bay. **(right)** The lofty master suite boasts a sturdy timber beam vaulted ceiling.

great room, which flow into the well-appointed kitchen and breakfast nook. A master suite is at one end of the main floor, the billiards room—complete with wet bar and fireplace—and home theater on the other, ensuring Judy and Jeff quiet even when their sons have friends in town.

Upstairs are additional bedrooms, laundry and kitchenette, and a lofted sitting area that opens into the great room below. A backyard patio and fire pit sit in the shadow of Shakespeare Rock; a front porch overlooks Lake Tahoe. “The layout is really great for a family,” says Harris. “And it flows really well for entertaining.”

Despite the shaded lot, the home is bright and airy. A skylight brings indirect light into the loft and stairwell; dormers in the great room and upstairs bedrooms and bathrooms allow the sun to stream in.

Indigenous materials were key to creating a sense of place. “It resonates better,” says Zirbel. “It lets you remember where you are.” The interior wood is Douglas fir; cabinets are of alder. The flooring is an antique oak while beams in the





**(above)** The spacious kitchen, which opens out to the great room, is finished with knotty alder cabinets, granite counters, antique oak flooring and Douglas fir beams. The range backsplash tile was painted by Judy Harris's mother. **(right)** The home's remodeled exterior displays traditional elements like stone columns and board-and-batten cedar siding.

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A true family home, the Glenbrook residence will be the setting for the Harrises' oldest son's wedding this coming fall.


kitchen and bar were reclaimed from a barn in Colorado.

The exterior of the home is board-and-batten cedar siding, which, combined with the railings, creates a verticalness that blends with the tree-covered site. At the same time, the large stone columns ground the home.

"If you drive around Glenbrook, you can find rock outcroppings of granite," Zirbel says. "We were trying to mimic those outcroppings using deep joints and more boulder-ish types of stones. There aren't just flat lines on the installation of the stones."

Harris worked with Zirbel on the interior design, helping to decide where to incorporate built-ins and choosing paints, carpets, furnishings and fixtures that fit into the home's functional-yet-traditional theme. Special touches include art by Harris's mother, such as the tiled scene of Glenbrook Meadow over the kitchen range, and the silhouettes of pine trees that decorate indoor railings.

Together, Zirbel and Harris succeeded in bringing in views and organizing spaces. Perhaps even more importantly, however, they created a home that is now in perfect harmony with its dramatic Lake Tahoe location—versatile, fun and spectacular. **TQ**



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