

ROOM WITH A *View*

*Once a dilapidated eyesore,
this bungalow, with its unique
enclosed porch, is restored to its
true American roots*

BY REBECCA J. RAZO

The flag pillows juxtapose nicely against the red ticking of the porch-swing cushions.

(Opposite) Rita's father fashioned the porch swing out of an old metal cot. Years later, she recovered it from her parents' house where it had suffered years of neglect. Rita's husband Jesse brought it back to life: "Every time I sit on it, I think of the labor of love it was on his part. It holds many memories," she says.





I SHOULD NEVER BE SAID THAT A woman's home is not her castle, particularly when the woman who owns the castle has had to completely gut and renovate the entire structure on her own.

When Rita Razo and her husband Jesse purchased a c. 1911 bungalow in Rita's rural hometown of Woodlake, California, they did so with little more than a cursory walk around the property and a glance inside. They knew that the house would need some work, but they really liked it and were more than ready to exchange their digs in the city for a peaceful country retreat. "My husband was a suburban handyman and felt confident that he could tackle the job—whatever it turned out to be," says Rita.

Unfortunately, Jesse died unexpectedly soon after the couple purchased the home, leaving Rita to do most of renovating herself. "I had a lot of help from my kids, but at the end of the day, I had to plow through and finish. The most challenging part of the transformation of this house was going it alone," she says. But even going it alone didn't stop Rita from working tirelessly to create her dream home.

With the precision of an experienced contractor, Rita systematically upgraded one room after another, pulling out soiled carpet; refinishing the home's original hardwood floors; replacing dated hardware, light fixtures and plumbing; installing central air; and replacing the drafty aluminum windows in the front enclosed porch with energy efficient double-hung Milgard windows. Rita then painted over the bland white walls and dreadful brown trim that dominated the home's interior. "Since the inside of my last house had been painted all antique white, I wanted some color," she says.

True to her word, Rita infused the bungalow with bright, cheery hues, which is evident to visitors the moment they walk through the front entrance into the enclosed porch—one of Rita's favorite spaces in the house. She painted the drab grey porch floor a subtle shade of seafoam green, and covered the walls and ceiling in creamy shades of yellow. "The porch, my bedroom and the hallway are all in some shade of yellow—I love it," she says.

To add depth and contrast, Rita daringly painted the porch trim a forest green and painted the front door a deep red. "I just did what pleased me, not really caring what other people might say," she says. Clearly her instincts paid off: The diverse combination of color meshed beautifully.

Rita, who loves the simplicity of Americana country décor, filled the space with white wicker furniture, antique shaker boxes, baskets and tin stars. She made lace curtains for the windows so that she could have privacy but still enjoy views of the garden. She also added a swing—her favorite feature of the porch. Rita made the swing's cushions using red ticking fabric, and then added pillows that she made using vintage American flag material. The pairing of the red, white and blue pillows against the swing's red ticking is just one hallmark of Rita's unique and imaginative design sense. A ceiling fan keeps the porch cool on warm days, adding to the overall comfort of the space where Rita often spends time reading or napping.

"It's a very pleasant room," she says.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF RITA RAZO



(Above) Visitors who enter through the front of the house must first walk through the enclosed porch. The sign over the entrance reads, "Enter as strangers, leave as friends"— words that embody the warmth and comfort of Rita's home.

(Opposite) White wicker chairs with blue ticking cushions create an inviting space while softening the vivid colors on the porch's trim and front door.