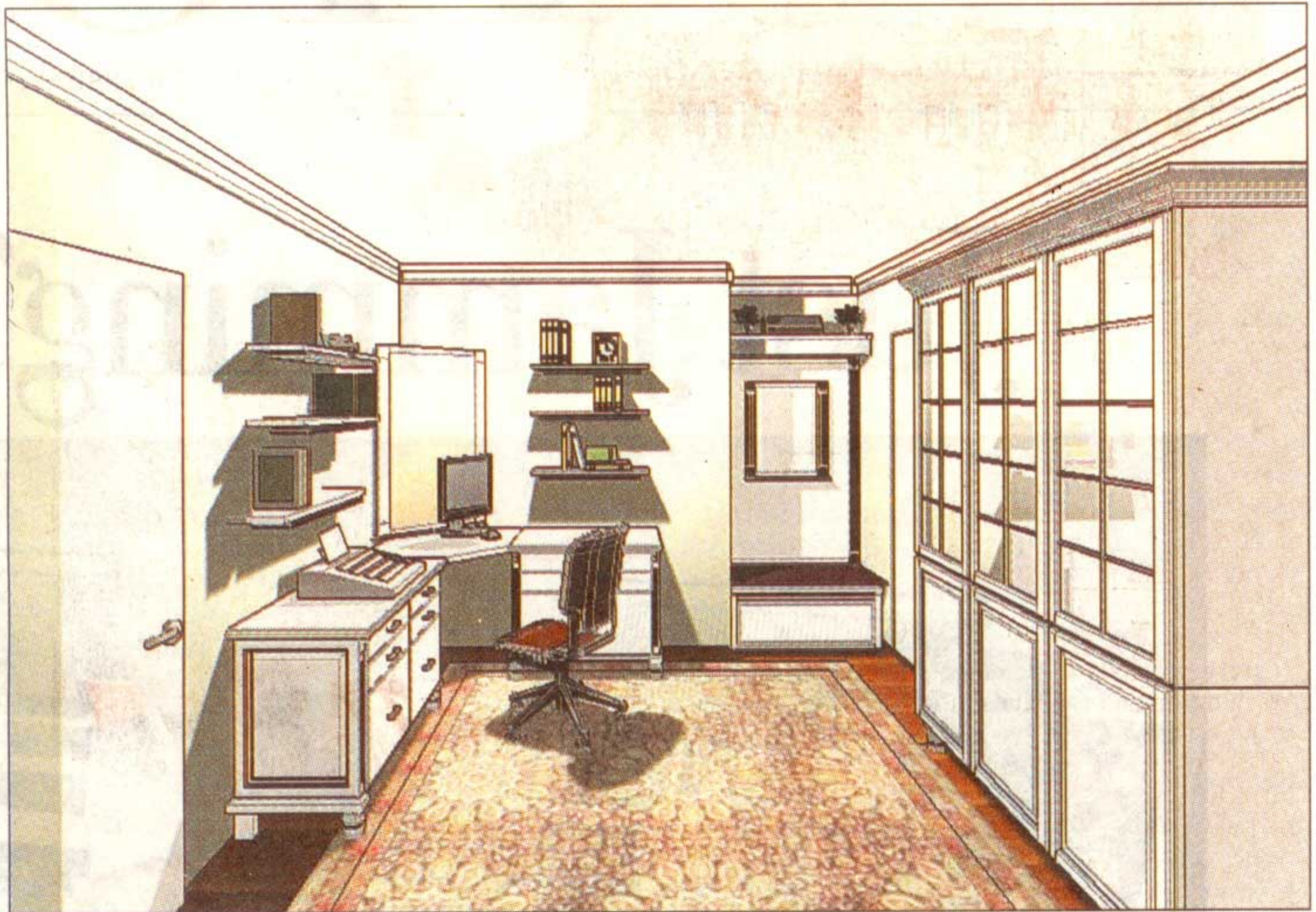


HOUSE CALLS

One room in Peri Ulrey's Fairfax home poses a particular design challenge. The 11-by-11-foot space, leading directly into the house from the garage, is too large to use strictly as a mudroom, though when the family sheds coats, boots and outdoor gear, that is what it naturally becomes. "I would like to see the room double as an office and mudroom," Ulrey wrote, "but the layout of the room is confusing." She is open to investing in custom built-ins and would like to incorporate an existing area rug into a new design. Frederick designer Sarah Fretwell (www.sjfinteriors.com) weighs in.



Creating an informal entry area could address both office and storage needs in the oddly placed room.

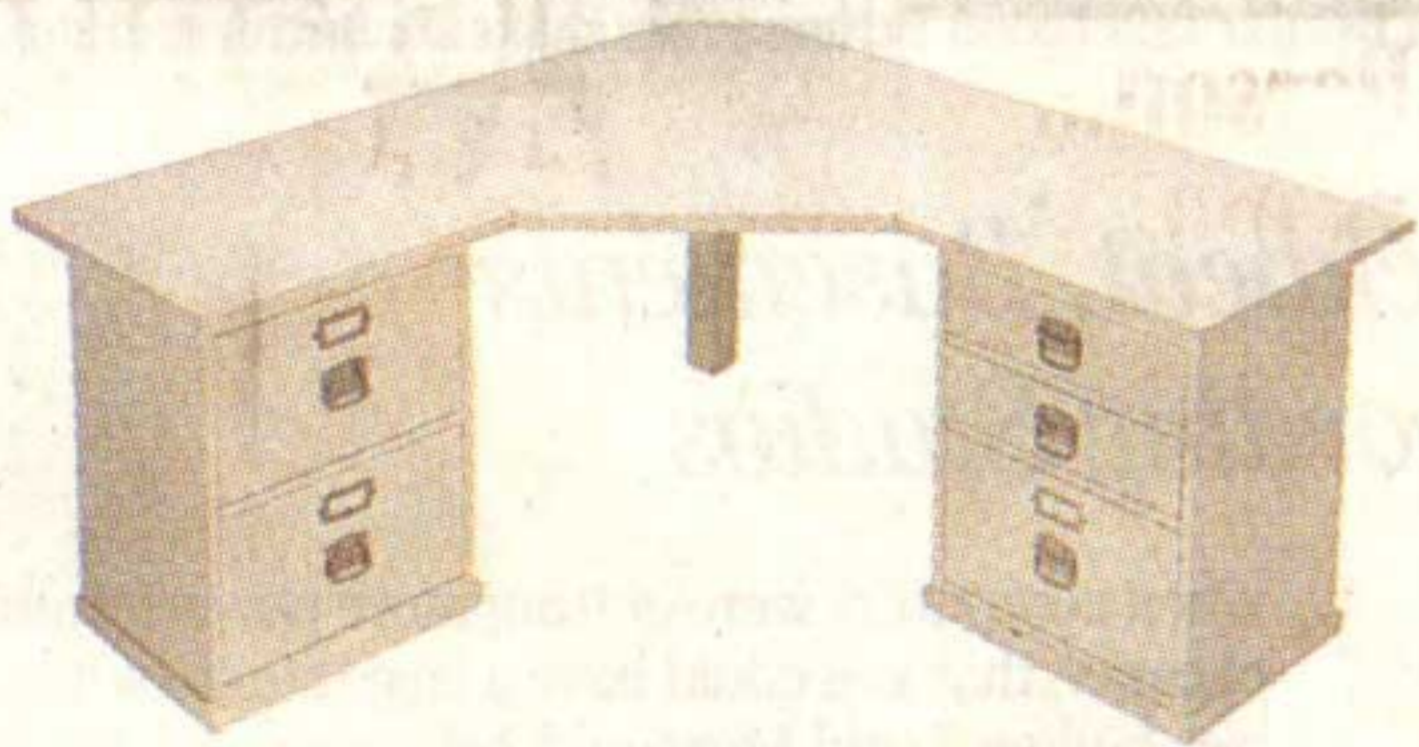
Paint using soft, calming neutrals to complement, rather than compete with, the Persian area rug. Try Sierra Hills, a creamy brown, on the walls and lighter Swiss Coffee on the doors, windows, trim and ceiling, both by Benjamin Moore.

Add architectural detail with crown molding. Paint it to match the ceiling to make the eight-foot ceiling feel higher. Outwater Plastics Industries, an on-line source for architectural products, is a great source for trims (www.outwater.com).

Then, define a distinct entry area:

■ **Remove the closet doors and install a bench and shelving in that recess.** The seat can provide a place to pull off boots or muddy sneakers; choose one with a hinged top for storage underneath. Install a shelf above for baskets or boxes. Free-standing shelves are available in various sizes and finishes from many home improvement stores.

■ **Hang a mirror** above the bench for last-minute checks on the way out the door. Hooks can be added for keys, hats, scarves and the dog's leash.



Pottery Barn's Bedford Corner Desktop Set.

Create a work area:

■ **Invest in a corner desk** to maximize the space, and add matching filing cabinets for more work area and storage. Consider a custom desk (Fretwell's estimate: \$3,500), or look at Pottery Barn's Bedford Corner Desktop Set in antique white (www.potterybarn.com, \$699).

■ **Consider the Beadboard Message Board** in rubbed white (starting at \$49) and the Brookwood armless desk chair in walnut (\$279), both from Ballard Designs (www.ballarddesigns.com). Hang shelves for books, files and photos.

■ **Add storage with built-ins.** Fretwell suggests having 15-inch-deep cabinets installed along the wall opposite the desk. The top can provide space to hang coats and backpacks, while the bottom stores books and of-



BY LEN SPODEN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

An oddly placed room off the garage can be redesigned for double duty.

fice supplies. Such a piece could be custom-designed (Fretwell's estimate:

\$3,000) or created by a semi-custom cabinet company. Alternatively, the smaller Cottage Revival Mackinaw White China cabinet from Stanley Furniture would do the job (www.stanleyfurniture.com,

\$1,499). If you opt for this stock item, Fretwell suggests replacing the glass with mirror or adding fabric panels to conceal the contents.

Sarah Fretwell says: *Mirrors can make a small space appear larger. Here, using mirror instead of glass behind the mullions in the cabinet will make the room feel bigger and will make it seem as if the cabinet is taking up less space than it is.*

New furniture would meet office and storage needs.

