

# PERFECT FIT

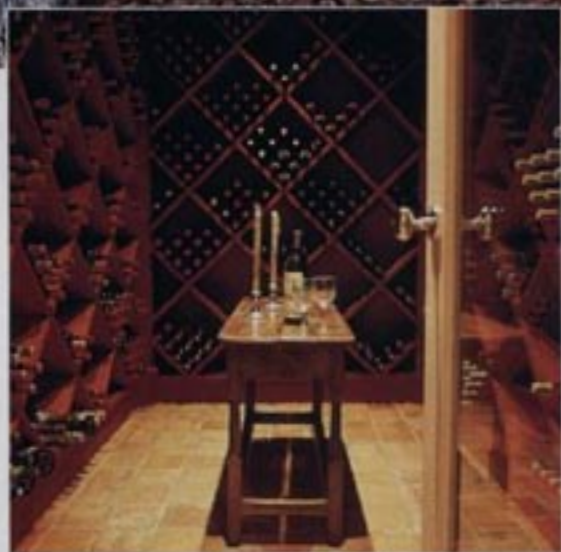
John Lease found that gutting his 1940s Chicago penthouse was the best way to get the maximum benefit from the available space.

By Elliot Nusbaum Photography by Peter Walters

Produced by Hilary Rose



John Lease focused one end of his living room around his piano. His plans included a new fireplace and bookcases. The glass door on the right leads to the wine cellar, below, in what was formerly a home office.



JOHN LEASE STARTED WITH A FAIRLY AMBITIOUS PLAN for his Chicago penthouse: "My original concept was to redo the kitchen, update the baths, add a fireplace, and enlarge the roof deck," he says. But by the end of the first day of renovation, he had abandoned that plan. At the urging of his friend, architect Steve Kadlec, John gutted the place. "With all I wanted to do, it just seemed like it would be easier to rip things out and start over. Then it got to be, 'Well, if we're going to rip things out, we might as well improve the flow of the apartment.' And then it turned into a total gut job." In less than a week, John had an empty shell to work with.

That shell was a modest 2,100 square feet with another 1,100 square feet of decks. Built in the 1940s atop a 1920s apartment building on North Lake Shore Drive, it lacked the charm and the ▶