

Hi All - (Mid Year 2005 Newsletter.)

A few updates from your Kuntry Kuzins.

Most of you know that I have been digging away in the crawl space ever since I met Debi. It started out as just cleaning it up a bit, to making room for Maw's many plants during the winter. But has later become an obsession to gain more storage space. Years earlier, Debi's father Delbert (Deb), now deceased, had removed some of the dirt in order to install their hot water heater down there. So one small area was already down to about 5 foot below the floor



joists, where the hot water heater sits, a pathway was down about 4 feet below the floor joists, that also led toward a stack of blocks holding up the floor. But that was about all that had been previously removed from the crawl space.

The current access to the crawl space is this small door shown on the left.

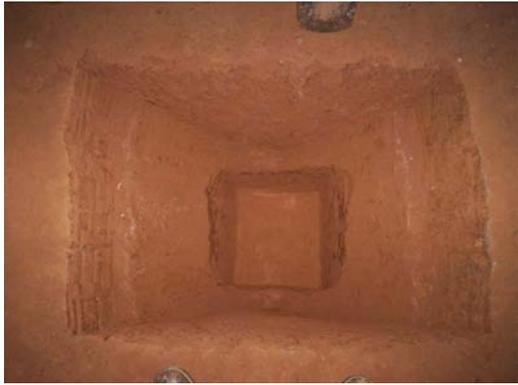
When one first looked into the small door all they would see is dirt and debris. Because I had already begun to do digging in the crawl space before the photos were taken, the first two pictures are only typical of what it once looked like near the door entrance. They were taken looking under another area of the same crawl space. The idea was so you could see what it looked like viewing straight in, then 45 degrees to the right, then 90 degrees to the right, where the hot water heater is located.



The below left photo is a view looking from inside toward the door. You can tell by the color of the fresh red clay where I had removed some dirt to make a couple of steps. Where the two concrete patio blocks are is where the original floor used to be, except for a dip down to the base of the hot water heater. As you can see, I have already dug below this point around it and leveled the area where the plants now sit. A scary thought, look at what was holding up the floor. A teetering stack of blocks. In the background you can see how much deeper I now am in lowering the floor, I now have 6 feet from the floor to floor joists across about 1/3 of the crawl space area at this end of the house. But there are other reasons for my madness too, hi hi.....



Like getting rid of that stack of concrete blocks and supporting the floor properly. To this end, I have dug a hole ALL the way down to 9 feet below the floor joists in this solid packed clay. Placing the excess dirt along the driveway to bring the yard up to level with my edging boards.



The next step was to install welded wire fabric, rebars and a concrete footer, then allow it to cure for 30 days before installing the new supporting post. My reason for going so deep with this new supporting column was that someday I may make it down far enough that we would have an 8 foot ceiling in the basement.



During the time the concrete was curing, we evacuated our existing bedroom, moving our bedroom suite into



what was our current living room. Using the chest and a curtain as a privacy divider. Our plans call for the living room to become a guest bedroom in the very near future.



Needless to say, in order to use the living room as our temporary bedroom, all of the furniture that was in the living room had to be moved out. Most of it was given to relatives and a few pieces put into storage for later retrieval.

We had planned on having the new master bedroom finished before Mom sold her house. That way we could have redid the living room with furniture she no longer could keep. But even the best made plans of mice and men often go astray. We did get some very nice pieces from her that we moved into the living room after we finished the bedroom. They look nice too!

This is an interesting house to renovate. Built post-war, during a time when materials were impossible to get and everything was very expensive. Needless to say, they had to build with what little materials they could get their hands on and no building codes existed back then. Over the years improvements have been made to the appearance of the home to keep it warm and cozy. It has stood grand for over 60 years, but time has caused it to settle and sag from old age.



I don't want anyone to think I'm knocking the place at all, it is a wonderful, very charming little house. But it does pose some interesting problems that crop up during the planning and renovation process. Such as, the bathroom addition (behind the wall on the right) made the bedroom much narrower than when it was originally built. As was a part of the living room to the right of the bathroom.



The closet on the left of the room was the original closet installed in the room, long before the bathroom addition came to be.



To gain more storage space after the kids married and moved out, another closet was constructed to the left of the existing closet, leaving a window between the two closets. A home built dresser and chest of drawers were also added as well and a bookcase (not visible behind the door).



Our next step was to get the room completely emptied. We were in that process when the above right photo was taken. It's normally loaded down 10 times that much, hi hi..... Did I mention that we have yet another puppy? Her name is Marcie! A Staffordshire Bull Terrier mix.



She appeared on our front doorstep when she was about 6 to 7 weeks old. We gave her to a neighbor the next morning and it came back again later that same evening. Talking to neighbors and putting up signs in the area never produced her owner.

The renovation process begins!



After cleaning off the home built dresser, we find three nails protruding through the wall. These nails are holding the washer/dryer water and waste assembly in the kitchen laundry area, so they just couldn't be cut off.

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Every contractor NEEDS a GRUNT, so I put Debi to work trimming drywall edges back to the center of studs.

The area she is trimming on the left is for a future linen closet in the future hallway. We also plan a pantry in the kitchen. But more on that later!



Not that it's a big deal or anything, but you do find some interesting things. In the wall on the right was a tin cover that at one time was over a hole in the chimney from the cook stove. The cook stove and chimney have been gone for decades, but the cover plate in the wall on the bedroom side was plastered over. So, this section of drywall had to be cut out and replaced also.



After I began the removal of the original closet, I find that we have two ceilings in this room, separated by 3/4 inch furring strips. The original ceiling severely water damaged. In addition, the original drywall walls inside the closet had never been taped, the upper storage area had never been painted and these walls were also heavily water stained.



Not that I did not expect to find this. The house was wired knob and tube style in it's first electrification. Later additional wiring was done using the old early style of Romex. I didn't expect to find the absence of pull boxes. It didn't really matter though as I would be rewiring the entire room to code and with extra conveniences such as phone and cable TV jacks. The dangling wires running left to right are just phone wires that were lifted up out of the way until new phone outlets could be installed in other rooms.



In the photo on the page above showing the ceiling, you will note a circular plaster pattern texture on the ceiling. It's not that I did not like this pattern, but there were cracks where each drywall joint in the ceiling was located, and matching such a pattern with all the new work that would be being done would be nearly impossible. Other work in the house where the ceilings were repaired, even though the same person did them, the texture pattern just does not match. And the only way to keep a drywall joint from cracking is to joint and tape it properly. Removal of the existing texture and original jointing was necessary.



Then I had to insulate and install a vapor barrier along any outside walls. At the same time I decided to install a vapor barrier by the washer/dryer plumbing so that a leak in that area would not damage this room.



I chose to renovate the ceiling and existing walls and get all the drywall repairs completed before starting on the new closet addition. In the long run it would make the later work so much easier. I also spray painted the windows, mainly to change the aluminum edging to white, but decided to prime and paint the windows themselves also. They would later be painted with the trim paint.



I'm sure your already bored to death with all the steps I have shown above to get the room up to the point where I could begin the actual renovation process. The rest of the work from this point forward is standard construction and normal finishing of a renovation project.

However, I'm not going to let you off that easily, hi hi.....



You gotta see the metal trim on the windows and their final jointing pass.



I can't resist showing you a couple of photos of the new electrical system, phone and cable TV wiring, considering that is a major part of this renovation project.

The first photo is where the Armoire will be located between the closets on the South wall. It has Cable TV in the left pull box. The center photo is along the west wall, the third and fifth pull boxes in the photo will contain enough phone wire pairs for 4 telephone lines. The third photo shows the two new outlets at the edge of each window, as well as the existing outlet. The existing outlet is abandoned and will be removed. Electrical codes require 2 outlets on that wall.



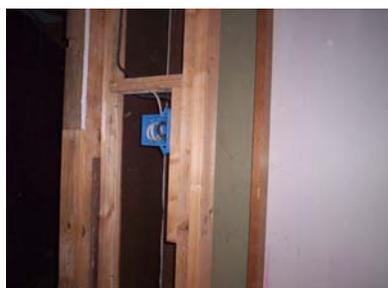
The first photo in this section is the east wall. The outlet on the left is another 4 line phone. The center photo shows the metal ceiling pull box that will hold the ceiling fan. It is wired such that the lighting will be on a dimmer switch and the fan on a separate switch. It is also very heavily braced to hold my own weight when hanging from it. The right photo shows all the preliminary restoration work completed and now ready for priming and painting.



Next we begin the construction of the closets.

This time I will spare you and not show every little detail. I will only show the entry area where the switch box is located for the lights and fan, the area between the closets for the Armoire, center photo, and a shot after the drywall was going up.

The purpose for the first closet starting 15 inches away from the left wall is to facilitate a linen closet in the future hallway.



It just dawned on me that NONE of the photos I have shown so far disclosed where the door to the room was. In order to make the closets work out where they are, I had to relocate the existing door 2 inches to the left of where it was originally. It also works out better there too. And of course, I couldn't be working without my FUEL, a can of Pepsi, hi hi.....



I needed a break while the joint compound was drying, so I planted this little garden for Debi to the left of the back entry door to the house.

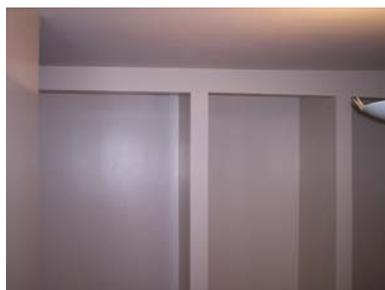
Well, it looks like the mud is dry and sanded.

THINK WE OUGHTA PAINT?

Not until you get my GARDEN in she says!



Well, I've got the primer on, two coats (first photo), two coats of paint (second photo), floor leveling compound down and all the wiring hooked up and the cover plates installed.



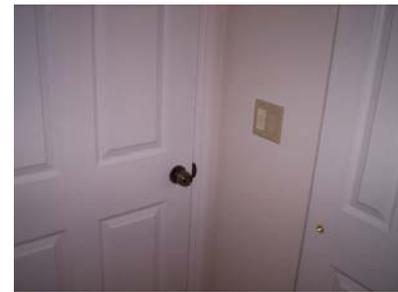
Thought we were through didn't ya?

Still LOTS to do, sorry.

The next step was to install the new flooring (left photo). Purdy Ain't It! (center photo). The flooring is now all done! (right photo).



Put up the ceiling fan. Hang a few doors. Schlock some paint on them and add the hardware.



Install the new baseboards and paint them, paint the windows and install mini blinds. Install closet shelving and clothes rod. How about a fancy wooden register cover with filter.



Almost forgot, how about shiny brass window hardware, handles and locks. Now, lets connect the electric, turn on the breakers and see if it blows up. So far so good. Does the dimmer switch work? How about that! Halogen even.



Think were done yet? Hey, we gotta move in don't we.

The first things I brought in were the chest and dresser. And of equal importance was to get Debi's computer set up before she got home from work.



And next the Armoire, which everyone said wouldn't fit. Ha..... I put appliance rollers under the Armoire to make it easy to pull out from the wall for cleaning and access to the wiring.

Hooked up the TV, 2 VCR's and the DVD. I wonder how long it will be before that cabinet is filled to the hilt?



Then the side towers were brought in and leveled. Took some grunting to get that headboard up on top of the tower edges. That puppy is HEAVY!

Debi cleaned and oiled all of the furniture with a high quality lemon oil which made it look like brand new. We have hung the mirror and Debi is busy with the interior decorating.

We put up the bed frame and bed and moved all of our clothes and STUFF into the room. I don't have a photo of the room with our STUFF in it yet, BECAUSE nobody made the bed up!

I will save the linen closet and pantry renovation project for a different letter.

However, I did want you to know that I DID plant grass seed in the dirt and this proves it DID grow.

From our house to yours,
May God Bless

Love Debi, Gary and Maw.



Thought I would add just one more page, don't want a blank side on the paper, hi hi.....

We went to a local photographer to have our portraits taken.

Now I need to tell y'all that the photo-graphers down here in these here parts ain't likely to be the kind y'all are accustomed to back home.

The first thing they had me do was empty all my pockets so there wouldn't be any bulges in them thar photo thingies.



Then they tried on different apparel so I would look like a home boy. But we had a little trouble getting the hat to fit right. Ouch!



Since goin' fishin' is a big thing down here, they thought perhaps a pose of me going fishing would fill the bill.

It wasn't exactly the type of pictures Debi was looking for and had her own ideas of what the pictures should look like.



I liked the first ones better myself, so thought I would knock her idea right out of the ballpark.



Now I was thinking prices down here might be a little cheaper than back home.

But when they hit the KaCHING button on the register, it went KaTILT.



CU All again at Thanksgiving!