

As seen in the LA Times on June 10, 2001

A Clean Break with the Past

By Kathy Price-Robinson, Special to the Times

From the year it took David Shall and Susan Corzilius to design and remodel their home's master bathroom, one moment stands out as especially gratifying.

It was the August evening last year, after five months of planning, when Shall, a lawyer, and Corzilius, a physician, took sledgehammers to their old bathroom tile.

"It felt so good," Shall says, recalling the destruction of the cream-colored tile with terra cotta trim that a designer would later decry as "so 1970s."

"We hated the old bathroom so much, we wanted to take the first swings," Corzilius adds. "It was hideous."

The couple bought the traditional two-story home in 1998. It was spacious enough for them, their three young daughters and two dogs. Best of all, its pool and wide decks overlooked a verdant canyon thick with wildlife and, beyond that, the Santa Monica Mountains.

The sturdy wood-and-brick home was custom-built in 1979 and sits along a winding road in a quiet Westlake neighborhood of other upscale custom homes. But though the general quality and layout of the house were exemplary, the master bathroom missed the mark.

Most egregious was the bathroom layout, which had three major flaws. First, except for a small corner window, the only view of the canyon came from a window over a large bathtub. So unless one enjoys baths--Corzilius and Shall do not--the view



was squandered. Second, the shower, which the couple did use, was of miserly dimensions despite the generous 250 square feet of bathroom space the original designer had to work with.

The third design mistake was the placement of the toilet and bidet. They were situated, correctly, in a small room behind a door. Unfortunately, that same room functioned as the entryway to the shower to the right and the sauna to the left.

"It was really awkward," Shall recalls.

The couple might have endured the bathroom even longer than they did, but the shower pan was leaking to a patio below and they feared that rotted floor joists might give way. Then, the final insult: a large mirror tumbled off the wall at 3 a.m. one morn-

ing when, as Shall points out, there was "not even an earthquake."

Though the couple had never done a remodel before, Corzilius says they knew this one would require some "significant structural changes." And so they wanted to hire a top-notch contractor, even if that meant paying more for quality and peace of mind. "Your time is worth something," she notes.

They found what they were looking for in Matt Plaskoff, a Tarzana contractor known in Southern California for producing a

large volume of upper-end homes and remodels. He was recommended by a colleague of Shall's whose husband is a former contractor.

Once the couple decided on Plaskoff, they interviewed a few designers his company recommended. One of

them, Toll Hammerschmidt Design, had done design work on a sleek, modern building constructed by Fox Television, Shall's employer.

The designers, Heidi Toll and Velvet Hammerschmidt, were surprised at the contrast between the rest of the house and the bathroom.

"Where did this come from?" Toll wondered at the time. "It didn't fit the house or the couple."

Shall and Corzilius gave the designers equal measures of direction and freedom to create.

"We knew what we didn't want," Corzilius says. "It was claustrophobic. We wanted it opened up."

They wanted the toilet in a separate room, one not used as a hallway to the shower. As for the bidet, Shall says, "It washistory."

For colors and materials, they handed the designers photos of a maple-and-granite-infused bathroom they found in a magazine.

Working closely with the contractor to make sure the design ideas were cost-effective and compatible with what was possible to construct, Toll and Hammerschmidt began in March to solve the bathroom's problems.

The biggest change would be moving the toilet from the far end of the bathroom to a new water closet closer to the bedroom.

As Hammerschmidt points out: "You don't want to walk the furthest distance to use the toilet in the middle of the night."

The nook would include the existing corner window, for air and light, and a textured-glass door.

Perhaps in reaction to the former use of the space, Toll and Hammerschmidt suggested making the entire bathroom open,

except for the toilet room and the existing sauna room and closet. The vanity, bathtub and a giant tiled shower would be in one open area.

The change was almost too much for Corzilius. "I was uneasy with it," she recalls. "It's pretty open. That design had to grow on us."

It did.

By August, the plans were finalized and the contractor was ready to send in his demolition crew to take the bathroom down to the floor joists and framing studs. First, though, a demolition setup crew laid panels to protect the wood floors leading from the bathroom, through the master bedroom, across the hall, down the stairway and out the door.

Plaskoff's company is a "very well-oiled machine," Shall says, adding that he could contact the project supervisor, Chris Richards, via a "full-blown office staff," by pager or cell phone. The company sometimes gives homeowners pagers to facilitate communication. Indeed, the company claims that project supervisors will return calls and pages within five minutes.

Once the sub-floor was removed, an unfortunate fact was discovered: the floor joists ran opposite the direction designers had anticipated, making it impossible to run the drain pipes along the sides of the joists from where the toilet was to where they wanted it to be.

And there was not enough room to run the pipes between the joists and the first-floor ceiling below. After some delay in working out a solution, the drain pipes were run outside the house, in a specially built box above the patio cover. With siding and paint to match the house, the box is barely discernible.

The window, once centered on the

wall, was moved to the far left, drenching the shower with sunlight and affording stunning mountain views. Once the rough plumbing and electrical were in place, the maple cabinet and bathtub were installed. The green slate tile on the floor and walls took three weeks to lay out and install, with spacers used for uniformity. The green color, the designers said, accents the view.

Dark green granite was chosen for the counter, topped by above-the-counter, bowl-type sinks. Identical granite was used for a small shelf in the toilet room. Chrome lights hanging over the sink area "have attitude," according to the designers.

By December, Shall and Corzilius were able to start using their new bathroom, but it took a few more months for details to be finished. Since then, they have been enjoying the serene, Zen-like room, especially the dual shower heads that send wide streams of water straight down like rain.

If he had it to do over again, Shall would put a window over the sink area.

But his wife disagrees.

"I love the bathroom," she says. "I wouldn't change it for anything."

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Cash Flow in This Bathroom's Redesign

Design fees: \$7,000	Cabinet finishing: \$400
Demolition: \$1,800	Painting/staining: \$2,000
Framing labor, lumber: \$1,700	Plumbing, electrical fixtures: \$6,000
Rough plumbing: \$4,700	Mirrors: \$1,000
Rough electrical/TV/ phone: \$3,100	Window shade: \$1,000
Sheet metal ducting: \$350	Weather/site protection: \$1,400
Move vent: \$300	Temporary phone/ power/toilet: \$600
Drywall: \$1,400	Trash hauling, cleanup: \$1,600
Stone tile labor: \$3,700	Professional cleanup: \$700
Stone tile materials: \$4,500	Supervision: \$5,600
Granite labor: \$2,900	Contractor profit, overhead: \$7,500
Granite materials: \$1,300	Other: \$500
Hang door/ install towel bars: \$150	Total: \$65,000
Cabinets and installation: \$3,800	*Figures are rounded off.

Source Book

Project: Gut and redo master bathroom in Westlake home.

Designer: Heidi Toll and Velvet Hammerschmidt, Toll Hammerschmidt Design, Santa Monica, (310) 526-0333, heidi@t-hdesign.com

Contractor: Matt Plaskoff, Plaskoff Construction, Tarzana, (818) 654-2737, <http://www.plaskoff.com>.

Duration: one year, including design, four months of construction and finishing details.

Cost: \$65,000: