



BY JANICE SAWKA · PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN JOHNSTON

MIRAL, HER HUSBAND AND HER THREE GROWN sons were finding the kitchen in their 1965 home left something to be desired. Namely, space!

“It would be so nice to be in the kitchen and feel crunched,” Miral mused.

In 2005, the family had owned the home for eleven years, but renovation efforts had been pretty much limited to repainting. And then...

“The cupboard doors wouldn’t close, the garbage disposal broke, and an element on the stove broke. I said to my husband, This is IT!! I want a new kitchen!”, Miral recalled, adding, “It was like a sign from the heavens to finally get our act together and renovate!”

On the recommendation of a friend, Miral met with Stewart Reimer of Legacy Originals cabinet makers, to begin to design the new kitchen.

“I wanted contemporary,” said Miral, who admitted her husband pretty much left the design decisions to her. “Not an ultramodern look, but minimalist. No fussy details.”

Once Miral had selected her cabinets –a warm honey brown to replace the former stark white -Stewart brought in Tony Chaput and Michael Kerr, co-owners of All Canadian Renovations, to handle construction and overall redesign. Miral and her husband met with them.

“They gave us a plan. We were thrilled. We signed and they went to it.”



The “crunched” kitchen before All Canadian Renovations’ transformation.

“Most people come to us looking for direction, “ explained Chaput. “They often have an idea of what they’re after, but don’t know what the first step is. That’s where All Canadian Renovations excels. We have a site foreman, designers and engineers. We work hard to keep renovations in style with the rest of the house- you don’t want a room that looks like it belongs in another dwelling! We do a lot of work on character homes, but houses from the 50s, 60s, and 70s are just as valid. The renovation really has to flow, to maintain character but also bring in the new amenities and look.”

Part of Chaput and Kerr’s service includes personally taking clients shopping to help them choose items to best compliment their cabinetry and complete their renovation.

“Without Tony, I would’ve been lost,” Miral admitted. “He took me shopping for the flooring, the granite



countertops, the sink, faucets and lighting -all in one whirlwind day!! There were so many options. But Tony helped me narrow them down. He has a really good eye, and he understood what I was looking for.”

But it wasn't all fun and shopping sprees. There was also the small matter of removing the walls...

“It was a very complex renovation,” Kerr said. “It was a two-story house, and we had to remove two weight-bearing walls to enlarge the kitchen. They were either side of an L-shaped hallway, which had been wasted space, extending the length of the kitchen and leading to the back door.”

The problem was solved by having beams spanning the ceiling, supported by “cripples” (large vertical wooden beams to support the ceiling beams). New Problem #1: The ceiling beams were thicker than the existing beams, (i.e. their bottom edge hung down lower), necessitating the installation of a false ceiling. This wasn't all bad, however, as it accommodated pleasing new inset lights.

New problem #2: The cripples were 1 1/2 inches wider than the exterior walls. Chaput and crew installed a false wall, with minimal space loss, so the cripples wouldn't jut out. But it wasn't over. New Problem #3: Weight distribution was now concentrated on the cripples, which meant changes were needed in the support structure, down in the basement.

“The weight is being transmitted down two vertical posts—that's tremendous weight pressing down,” said Kerr. “We had to break the concrete floor, pour concrete pads and set teleposts on them to support the weight. Our engineers drew this up, submitted the plans to the City of Winnipeg Building Department for their approval, and had a city building inspector inspect and approve the work before we re-poured the floor.”

All Canadian Renovations also handled replacing the old copper pipes, relocating the plumbing to the second floor bathroom to accommodate the new support beams, and bringing all plumbing and wiring up to current code standards.

All this time, the family (minus Miral, a teacher who

arranged to spend the summer away from the renovations at the family cottage as much as possible) lived in the house. The fridge and microwave were moved into the family room to create a substitute kitchen amid the chaos.

“My sons didn't seem to mind,” laughed Miral.

“Boys can put up with anything!”, Chaput added.

From start to finish, the project just over two months.

“Tony had estimated the time, and he was right on the money!”, exclaimed Miral. “The carpenter, Chris, was wonderful. He swept up and vacuumed at the end of each day. He was a nice, friendly guy. I had a good personal vibe from Tony and all his tradespeople. A good relationship between you and your contractor is absolutely vital.

“I could always phone Tony with questions, and he or Michael would look into the issue immediately and get back with answers. It certainly takes the stress off. After all, that's what a contractor is for -removing the homeowner's stress! I came back from the cottage and things were done. Our entire family is very happy, and result is just gorgeous!”

Concluded Chaput: “I just work on the principle that I want the results to be something I'd be proud to have in my own home.” 