

Lititz Chocolate Walk • A Garden Railway Tour Kitchen Trends

# Lancaster

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## Stauffers of Kissel Hill

The Rohrerstown Store is a Shoppers' Delight

Paul and Eric Stauffer

In the booming days of real estate, when homes sold in a matter of weeks, Sue and Walt Ali looked at a house that had been on the market for months. In their opinion, that most important of rooms – the kitchen – was probably the deal breaker.

BY SUE LONG

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALLAN HOLM

# *Kitchen Encounters...*



*The kitchen doubled in size thanks to an addition. Space for the addition was claimed by eliminating a portion of the deck. Stained/glazed maple cabinetry replaced the pickled oak that delivered a pink effect. The kitchen is home to nearly one-dozen appliances, most of which are disguised by cabinet panels or are located on the work side of the island. The addition also provided space for a dining table that seats eight.*

# *of the Remodeling Kind*



Above: Prior to the remodel, the kitchen was somewhat isolated from the rest of the first floor. The addition and some remodeling provided for a wider opening between the family room and kitchen, while continuing the flooring through the family room and foyer helped to integrate the kitchen with the other living spaces.

Opposite top: The refrigerator/freezer drawers demonstrate how the appliances seamlessly blend with the cabinetry. Such appliances are natural energy savers – no opening and closing the side-by-side refrigerator to retrieve ice and beverages.

Opposite bottom: The interiors of the cabinets were designed to bring organization to the kitchen. Tall cabinets take on the duties of a pantry thanks to pull-out shelves that keep items organized, as well as easy to see and reach. Pull-out cabinets on either side of the cooktop hold necessities such as herbs, spices, condiments, cooking oils, etc.

**Sue saw multiple** problems with the kitchen. First, it was small. Second, it seemed to be cut off from the rest of the first floor (the house was built when the great-room concept was just taking root). Third, she hated the aesthetics. “It was pink,” she says, referring to the color impression the pickled-oak cabinetry presented (the Euro styling that was popular in the early ‘90s was already looking dated). And, the adjacent laundry had its own issues (it was small and dark).

Nevertheless, the family of six needed space to grow and the large house would definitely provide the room that was needed. They also loved the secluded location that was just minutes from shopping and downtown. With more pluses than minus-

es on the tally sheet, they bought the house with the idea that they’d remodel the kitchen and improve upon the laundry room.

As we all know, life often gets in the way of even the best-laid plans. Time flew by and before they knew it, six years had passed and the kitchen and laundry remained unchanged. “I lived with that kitchen for six years,” Sue remarks. “I hated to cook. We never entertained. Thank goodness the kids were small or we all wouldn’t have fit in there.”

The laundry room also retained its cave-like demeanor. “I’m always doing laundry,” Sue notes, adding that the backyard pool ensures a “constant load of towels.”

Luckily for Sue, an intervention

was in the making. In 2007, David White and Bob Aungst joined forces to launch a new kitchen business that they named Kitchen Encounters. They brought diverse but complementary talents to the venture – Dave’s background is carpentry and cabinet installation, while Bob’s is sales (he reps for a cabinetry company). The two became acquainted through a builder for whom each had done work.

Needing some marketing expertise, they turned to Walt, who owns Riverview Publishing and was a high-school classmate of Bob’s. The first time Dave and Walt met, they recognized each other from attending their children’s basketball games.

One day, Walt stopped by the company’s showroom to drop off proofs.



## Survival Tactics

When Kitchen Encounters entered the very competitive kitchen market in early 2007, the economy was still zipping along. David White and Bob Aungst felt they could be competitive from the outset because they brought diverse but complementary talents to the business. As a carpenter and cabinet installer, Dave knew the how and why of kitchen design. As a manufacturer's rep, Bob knew the nuts and bolts of the business.

Still, launching a new business in any economic climate is challenging. "Ours is an expensive one to start," Dave admits. As in any real-estate venture, location is everything and Dave and Bob's business plan included a showroom in Manheim Township. As luck would have it, a property along Route 501 in Neffsville had become available. "It was perfect," Dave says. "The really expensive renovations had already been done by the previous tenant."

Visitors are often surprised when they walk through the front door. Interior-wise, the building still resembles a home, therefore you walk into a kitchen that also features a wet bar. To the left is Dave's office, which is designed to show how crown moldings can take ordinary cabinets to an all-new level. Walk through the kitchen and you enter the design center. "We originally planned to rent out the second floor, but business was so good, we turned it into a bath showroom," Dave explains.

He will always remember the company's first job. A man walked in unannounced and explained that he and his wife were contemplating a major remodel that would entail much more than the kitchen. Dave got the idea that he was frustrated by the fact that he couldn't find a contractor who could carry out the project from start to finish. He asked if Dave would consider taking it on. "It was great!" he says. "It fit our business model perfectly because it touched on a bunch of areas." When the job was completed, Dave recalls thinking, "Wow, this is going to fly!"

A year later, the economy began to falter. Dave acknowledges that after those first few heady months, "it's been a trial by fire. We consider ourselves fortunate to have survived. Our location is part of our saving grace – a lot of traffic passes by our front door." He also credits the company's diversity for its ability to survive. "Our focus is on remodeling and renovating," he says

of the aspect of the industry that is flourishing. And, the fact that Kitchen Encounters is the manufacturer's rep and exclusive dealer for Illinois-based Brighton Cabinetry is another lucrative aspect of the business.

Most important is Dave's can-do attitude. "I won't allow the economy to dictate my attitude or determine my success," he vows. "I look at every sale, job and experience as being important. This economy forces you to think all the time. I have a lot of hope for the future and when things do improve, I think we'll be sitting in a good position."

Kitchen Encounters is emerging as a family business. Dave is appreciative of his wife's support. Starting a business is daunting, and in a slow economy and with a family to support, it's not for the faint of heart. "She's used to the self-employment thing," he says, adding that her supportive attitude "takes the pressure off, although she does like to play devil's advocate."

His two children periodically accompany Dave to the office to do little jobs that he devises for them. "It makes them feel a part of the business," he says. "They take pride in it."

Dave's brother also works for the company as a cabinet installer. Dave says it's ironic that the two landed where they did, explaining that a Mount Joy-area farmer took an interest in the two young brothers and often invited them to his farm. Their visits typically included a stop at his workshop, where they'd take scraps of wood and attempt to build things. "Never in my dreams did I imagine where it would take us," Dave says. Between there and here, he always worked – paperboy, restaurant employee and landscaper – and he earned good grades in high school, as well as a number of letters for athletic accomplishments. "I suppose I was viewed as being well-rounded, so F&M gave me a large portion of the money necessary to enroll," he says. Despite the monetary help, college was a financial hardship – he had to work full-time – and he left F&M after a semester. Looking on the positive side, Dave says his well-rounded life and work experiences laid the foundation for his role as business owner.

*Kitchen Encounters is located at 2603 Lititz Pike in Neffsville. Call 509-4679 or visit [www.lancasterkitchens.net](http://www.lancasterkitchens.net).*

He mentioned to Dave that he and his wife were contemplating a kitchen remodel and thought that it only made sense to partner with a business associate on the project.

Dave visited the couple's home and immediately saw the problems. He describes the kitchen as being "disproportionately sized" in relation to the overall square footage of the house. In theory, it needed to be twice its size but with nowhere to expand, an addition would be needed. Space for the addition would ultimately be gained by taking over a portion of the deck.

Dave worked with Sue to devise a design for the kitchen. She jokes that after spending six years amassing pictures of kitchens that appealed to her sense of style, selecting cabinetry, counter surfaces and flooring was a piece of cake. "I could tell she had been doing her homework," Dave

says. "She came in and made all the selections in an afternoon." Dave adds that the job was made even easier due to the fact that he and Sue have similar tastes. "We were always on the same page from a design standpoint," he recalls.

However, the project was not without its challenges – namely appliances. Sue wanted a lot of them. Dave sent her on a shopping trip to Martin Appliance and when she was done, the tally included two dishwashers, a side-by-side refrigerator and freezer, a beverage cooler, an icemaker, refrigerator and freezer drawers, a double oven, a microwave, warming drawers, a cook-top stove and a coffee machine. Dave's challenge was to not only find homes for all the appliances, but make them disappear. The latter was achieved by facing the fridge/freezer, dishwashers and drawers with cabinet fronts that create a clean, uninterrupted look. The large, multi-

level, multipurpose island holds quite a few of the appliances, plus provides ample storage space. The placement of the appliances also created multiple work triangles.

The cabinetry reflects Sue's preference for dark wood. The maple cabinets are stained and finished with a glaze. Black paint (with distressing) was used to accentuate the island, cook-top surround and crown molding. Glass panes in the overhead cabinets add an element of antiquity to the design.

The cabinets' interiors bring organization to the kitchen. Pullout cabinets on either side of the cook-top hold spices, herbs, condiments, etc. Other cabinets contain pullout components that allow for easy access to cereal boxes, snacks, etc., thus allowing the children to be self-sufficient.

Two colors of granite were chosen for the counters – a lighter one was used for the island and a darker ver-



sion for the counters. Tile was used for the backsplash.

Tile (executed in a Versailles pattern) covers the floor in the kitchen and laundry and extends through the family room and foyer, where it replaced the original white marble that Sue felt was cold-looking. The new floor, coupled with columns that were wrapped with wood panels that match the cabinetry, helps to make the kitchen appear to be part of the floor plan. "We love it," Sue states. "It doesn't look like an addition. We never entertained before, but now we do and as usually happens, everyone ends up in the kitchen."

The remodel was projected to take six months, which caused Sue some trepidation. Doing without a kitchen for that period of time would be a hardship. A steady diet of take-out and eating out would take a toll on the budget. So, she approached Dave with an idea. They could build a kitchenette downstairs using the old cabinetry, counters, refrigerator and microwave from the kitchen. With some modifications, the recycled kitchenette took over a hallway closet that was located outside the media room. With the addition of a dining table and the aid of the grill, the family could enjoy home-cooked meals. "It was really handy for

*Thanks to it being accessible from the garage and the front of the house, the laundry was an ideal candidate to be transformed into a mudroom. Space to expand was gained by eliminating the staircase that led from the garage to the basement. Cabinets were recycled – they were saved from the kitchen remodel. Paint and new hardware gave them an all-new look.*



Two closets were also removed and replaced with storage systems. Each of the four children now has cubbies and overhead cabinets for his or her personal items. (The swinging bar lowers the coat rack, thus allowing for easy access even for children.) The framed cork board allows the family to track their many activities during the school year or display artwork during summer vacation. The once-dark room is now light-filled thanks to the addition of French doors.

Upon hearing the kitchen project would take six months to complete, Sue Ali came up with an idea – create a kitchenette in the basement using the kitchen appliances and cabinets that were being replaced. The kitchenette was set into space that held a closet. The addition of a dining table plus easy access to the grill made meal prep easy. Now, the kitchenette is used to store drinks and snacks for the adjacent media room.



breakfast and lunch,” Sue remarks.

The kitchenette is still in service – now it’s used to store munchies and drinks, making it unnecessary for the kids and their friends to run up and down the stairs when they want snacks.

As for the laundry, Dave remembers that “when you walked through there, you had to follow a narrow path that separated the washer and dryer from two closets that were on the other wall.” Sue adds that when the door that led to the kitchen was closed, the space was dark and claustrophobic.

Solving the laundry room’s issues also was achieved by increasing its size – only in this case, an addition was not needed. Instead, space was gained by eliminating a staircase that led from the adjacent garage to the basement. By opening up the stairwell, valuable footage was gained for placement of the washer, dryer, sink and overhead cabinets that also were recycled from the kitchen. As with the basement project, the old kitchen cabinets were painted a bright white in order to eliminate the offensive pickled-pink color and new hardware was added. The original sink and counter were reused, as well. “It was an easy tradeoff,” says Dave. “There are other ways to access the base-

ment area.” (The space that held the staircase at the basement level was transformed into shelf-lined closet that holds DVDs, tapes, video games, etc.)

The added space served to open up the room. Because it was accessible from the garage and from the front of the house, the room became an ideal candidate for a mudroom. Sue and Walt saw the wisdom in creating a more inviting, multitasking space. “Everyone comes into the house through that door,” she points out. In view of its new role, Dave took the closets into consideration. They really weren’t that functional. As in most homes, the closets were being used to store winter coats and contain clutter.

Plans called for the elimination of the two closets and in their place, storage cubbies for the four Ali children were added. Dave designed the cubbies and had them custom made by Round River Woodworking. Storage bins with pop-up lids hold boots and shoes. Depending upon the season, outerwear, backpacks and athletic equipment can hang on the pegs that line the open space. Overhead cabinets are perfect for storing out-of-season items. Racks that hold the clothing can be brought down to a child’s level by a swinging bar, thus what would have been wasted space

is put to good use. “We work with a hardware company that sells closet components,” Dave explains of the handy device he discovered. “It’s easy for kids to use.”

The laundry/mudroom was made to feel more connected to the kitchen through the addition of French doors that also admit natural light to the area. The final touch was a huge corkboard that serves as a command center when school is in session and the activities for four very busy children must be tracked. “In the summer, it’s mostly filled with their artwork,” Sue says.

Needless to say, the family is thrilled with the results. “I wouldn’t change a thing,” Sue says. ❖

#### Credits

Kitchen Design: David White, Kitchen Encounters  
 Custom Cabinetry: Brighton Cabinetry  
 Custom Laundry Lockers: Round River Woodworking  
 Carpenters/Cabinet Installers: Philip White and Shane Krow  
 Appliances: Martin Appliance  
 Framing Contractor: Keystone Construction  
 Interior Design: Trish Stillman, Inspired Design  
 Electrical Contractor: Mummau Electric  
 Plumbing Contractor: County Mechanical  
 Drywall: Millcreek Drywall  
 Painting Contractor: F&M Painting