

## KITCHEN REMODEL BACKSTORY

Two years ago an interior designer friend suggested I look on Craigslist for kitchen cabinets since ours were not only dated, but starting to fall apart after 28 years of use. I began to look every few days to see what might be available. I was surprised to see that people really were taking down pretty nice kitchens just to change things up. Every now and then I'd find one that might work, but they were always sold before I got to the owner.

Then one morning I saw some that I was sure were perfect for us, and when I found out they were still available, the journey began. After a flurry of texts back and forth, we made plans to check them out in person at a warehouse across town. They were even more beautiful in person, and then when the owner, a warm and energetic guy named Todd, told us he headed up a nonprofit and all the proceeds went to building homes and orphanages in Mexico, I was sure we had to have them.

The problem was, we couldn't find anyone who wanted to mess with used cabinets, so we couldn't even find out if these could be adapted for our kitchen. After a couple of dead ends, Todd volunteered to drop by himself and measure our kitchen. As we talked that day, we weren't surprised to find out he was a Christian and we had a great time sharing stories. He measured the kitchen, offering suggestions about moving a window and expanding a wall and it all sounded doable, with one exception. To make it work, he insisted we'd need to buy the sub-zero refrigerator that was with the cabinets, because it was several inches less in depth than the fridge we owned. But he wanted an extra \$2000 for it, and I told him there was just no way we could do that. When he left, I was discouraged, but hadn't given up trying to figure out a way to fit those cabinets in.

Within an hour I received a text from Todd, telling me he'd lowered the price of the cabinets by \$1000 and he would gladly just trade our refrigerator for the sub-zero so it would all fit (FYI-we owned a Kitchenaid fridge we'd bought used for \$650 and the sub-zeros run in the thousands of dollars). This was the first of so many incredible gifts God gave us that enabled us to have this kitchen.

When we had the cabinets delivered, Todd had also thrown in the high end dishwasher, some garbage disposals and other sundry items. Later he donated the two chandeliers that were with the original kitchen, also worth hundreds of dollars.

We still had no idea of how we could install these, or who could help us figure out how. When we called a contractor friend named Bob just to get some references, he immediately offered to do it himself, insisting he had some vacation time he needed to take anyway. He did the work as a gift, telling us if we wanted to pay him something, to just give a gift to charity, which we were thrilled to do. Of course, we had no idea the vast amount of time and creative genius he would bring to the table. Given our limited experience and naiveté, it's a good thing that Bob understood what was ahead.

So many friends helped after that, offering their time, talents and professional assistance—some as a gift, some at huge discounts and all joyful at being able to help us with this project. We enlisted friends, family and neighbors to assist, and I functioned as the clean-up helper and painter, while also learning how to do everything from drywall patching to scraping ceiling asbestos to designing and distressing molding to match the Cherrywood cabinets.

Our expenditures in total ended up somewhere around \$15,000, which included new floor in the entry, family room and kitchen, as well as a new window!

One day we needed a small piece of the original trim to finish the job, so Joe visited the showroom where the kitchen had originally been sold. There he met the designer who had put the kitchen in a La Jolla home in 2006, and he told him the total cost was close to \$80,000. We were astounded.

All in all, we know without a doubt this kitchen is a gift from God, and are grateful every day as we live our lives in the middle of it!