

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

When a galley kitchen expands outward, it needs to grow upward as well

| AFTER |

THE OWNERS |

Mark and Anne Cleve

THE HOUSE |

A 1976 ranch in Northwest Portland

THE BEGINNING |

The “starter house” the Cleves bought nearly 13 years ago is the only home Hannah, 11, and Luke, 9, have ever known.

The family loves the neighborhood, but a couple of years ago the couple began shopping for a house that would meet their changing needs.

They looked and looked, but they always circled back home.

“We just like this area,” Anne Cleve says of the wooded, established neighborhood off Barnes Road.

Their roomy ranch had good bones, but what could be done about the circa-1970 kitchen?

Anne, who takes to a kitchen like a Food Network star, had patiently two-stepped around her narrow galley without complaint. But when she and Mark started discussing remodeling, she zeroed in on her dream kitchen. She triangulated working patterns, considered colors and even sketched a design.

| BEFORE | | AFTER |



| BEFORE |

Before photos by Diane Plesset D.P. DESIGN

ROOF LIFT | One of the things that designer Diane Plesset noticed when she approached the Cleves' house was its extensive flat roofline and nearly invisible entryway. Lifting the roof over the kitchen and repeating that dormer effect over the entry broke up the roofline.

OUTDOOR ACCESS | Before the remodel, there was no easy access to the side yard. Turning the window into a slider changed that, and a second new slider opens onto a patio on the home's front corner.

DESIGN SOLUTIONS

THE PROS |

The Cleves called Jeff Jones of Olson & Jones Construction Inc. Jones signed on immediately, and he recommended that the Cleves bring in interior designer Diane Plesset of D.P. Design.

THE GOALS |

By now, Anne had winnowed her dream kitchen into a working list. She wanted a larger kitchen; better storage; an auxiliary sink; lots of countertop; good lighting; access to an adjacent patio; new appliances, including a warming drawer and high-BTU cooktop; and a floor plan that worked for meal preparations, baking and entertaining. Mark had a shorter list but was equally adamant. He wanted wine storage; a water/ice dispenser in the fridge door; and a place to entertain.

Before they started, they had a “house plans” party and invited Plesset to see how the house works when Anne is cooking, Mark is pouring wine and friends are milling about.

“It was neat to see that interaction,” Plesset says.

THE CHALLENGE |

The existing kitchen — a galley with a pass-through to an adjacent dining space — was closed in by exterior walls on two sides. Plesset figured she could push out the wall into the side garden and get at least 8 feet. When they measured, the setback allowed them to gain 12 feet.

“We did the happy dance,” Anne Cleve says.

Plesset’s mind was racing. Adding 12 feet to the existing space with its 8-foot ceiling would create a long box of a room — a “hobbit cave,” she called it, worrying that a tall guy like Mark would feel cramped.

So, she looked up.

If she popped a dormer in, the ceiling could be lifted in the middle of the room. And adding a large curved clerestory window in the dormer would flood the room with light.

The result is a dramatic layered ceiling that opens in a U shape in the center. An arching kitchen island below echoes the softened curves of the ceiling and clerestory window.

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THE DESIGNER | Diane Plesset

THE FIRM | D.P. Design

YEARS IN BUSINESS | 25

SPECIALTY | Kitchens and bathrooms

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY | Plesset’s priority is to understand the client’s goals and budget. Then, she works to bring a “feeling of serenity into a chaotic world ... a feeling of safe haven.”

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HIDDEN STOOLS | Anne Cleve wanted her kids to be able to pop up at the kitchen island but didn’t want stools always sitting idle in the walkway. Plesset came up with the idea of two “garages” to solve the problem.



*“We did
the happy
dance.”*

Anne Cleve

GREASING THE SKIDS |

“Anne gave me direction,” Plesset says of the two-way communication she and the Cleves practiced.

Anne Cleve loves the original reddish-hued woodwork in the house, making it easy for Plesset to follow that lead. But it would have been overwhelming to have all of the cabinets the same. Plesset stained the upper cabinets on either side of the kitchen sink golden blond, which lifts the eye and adds brightness.

Anne was attracted to the subtle color and clean look of the pendant lights. “They look like cigars,” she says without apology, “but I don’t care.”

Most important to her was a floor plan that worked. She knew she needed more than one classic working triangle from sink to stove to fridge.

She wanted to be able to go from her double oven to one of two counters in a single motion. She wanted a small sink by the fridge so she could drop produce in, wash it and — again in one motion — put it in the fridge. And she knew where her warming drawer needed to be in all of this, too.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS |

Although Anne originally wanted granite countertops, she and Plesset decided on Silestone. Anne’s thrilled that it’s easy to clean and doesn’t need to be sealed.

As for flooring, Anne did not want a floor she’d have to worry about when it came to spills or traffic patterns. They looked at laminate and tile and bamboo and cork. Anne wanted durability and the look of hardwood without the fuss. They went with commercial-grade laminate from Amtico.

“It looks like a board, and plays like a board. Not like plastic,” Anne says.

LESSONS LEARNED |

Don’t forget to look up: Adding the open dormer did nearly as much for the Cleves’ kitchen as pushing out the exterior wall 12 feet.

Work as a team: Plesset says this project went smoothly because the family, the designer and the contractor were all on the same page.

Be flexible: Anne says Plesset offered better and better ideas as the project unfolded. Anne calls it “continual listening.”

Perhaps this is why, two years later, Anne says she wouldn’t change a thing. ●

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