



Eagle-Tribune photo by Ken Yuszus

Satisfied with new setting: Shelby and Jack Banks like the new area that resulted from an attempt to correct a slanting kitchen floor. Before they finished, it involved major renovation.

Sloping kitchen floor sparks major home renovation plan

By Linda Bean
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SHELBY BANKS drew the line when the kitchen floor of her Methuen house began to slant.

"It wasn't bad enough that you had to walk cock-eyed," she said, "but the kitchen actually began to tip."

That is when Mrs. Banks and her husband, Jack, took a look at both their budget and their needs and decided to remodel.

"I think the kitchen always makes the home anyway," said Mrs. Banks. "And we definitely needed a new kitchen."

The Banks' first step — and the one they say was most important — was choosing a contractor.

"We looked around, talked to people," said Mr. Banks.

And they finally chose John English, who looked the house over and warned them the job was bigger than it first ap-

peared.

Supporting timbers in the cellar had grown weaker with age.

To redo the kitchen would require gutting one end of the house from the cellar up.

He advised the couple to cut costs by doing the demolition work on their own.

Mr. Banks still shudders at the memories.

"It was really a mess; we had to tear everything out," he said.

"Everything" included three layers of flooring and ceiling tile — each representing some previous owner's stab at remodeling the only bathroom in the 1912 home, the dark and dreary dining area and pantry.

The debris filled two industrial dumpsters.

"There wasn't much left," said Mr. Banks.

"I said if we didn't get a divorce going through this then we probably never

would," said Mrs. Banks.

Once the demolition was complete, supporting timbers were replaced, the walls were re-framed and the house was equipped with new pipes and wiring.

Mr. English makes a point of never criticizing a customer's choices or plan, he said.

At the same time, however, he wants to be sure their expectations do not outpace the reality of the finished job.

"Sometimes you have to bring people down a little bit, show them why something won't work in the space they have," he said.

"He was very good at never saying 'you can't do that,'" noted Mrs. Banks. "He would say 'Here is something you can do.'"

Meanwhile, the Banks were shopping for tile, wallpaper, cabinets, appliances and bathroom fixtures.

They were also showering at the homes of friends and looking forward to bathing

in their own tub once again.

"Anytime you only have one bathroom, it's tough," said Mr. Banks.

Sympathy for a homeowner's plight is a necessary attribute in a contractor, Mrs. Banks said, since remodeling can be messy, stressful and expensive.

"You have to keep everybody happy," said Mr. English.

The renovation took six weeks from start to finish. The final touches, wallpaper and paint, were applied by Mr. and Mrs. Banks.

Now, the old bathroom is a pink oasis and the formerly dark kitchen is a bright spot.

Sunlight streams through a new bay window and glances across a collection of cobalt blue glassware.

The almond countertops shine and new appliances hum quietly in a space filled with light.

"It is wonderful," said Mrs. Banks. "It is just wonderful."