

Remodeling

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Southern Comfort

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Remodeling Before+After

SouthernComfort

NINA PATEL SENIOR EDITOR

An arts and crafts attic pops up
as part of a whole-house remodel.



Photo: Warren Bond

Before+After

Atlanta remodeler Danny Feig-Sandoval started working on this house in 1996 and hasn't left. Over the years, the owner of Small Carpenters At Large and his crew have worked on the kitchen, baths, study, attic, and garage. "I think there's only one bedroom in the house we haven't touched," he says.

Homeowners Carol Smith and Steve Kraftchick discovered Feig-Sandoval's company when they were considering remodeling a main-floor bathroom. The clever name caught their attention, but they also acted on the advice of a friend who had seen the company's work. Smith and Kraftchick liked Feig-Sandoval's personality and his approach to remodeling.

The couple's 1920s house is located in the historic Druid Hills neighborhood, north of downtown Atlanta. Kraftchick is a professor of theology at nearby Emory University and enjoys strolling the few blocks to the campus.

THE WARM UP

When the first job expanded from the main-floor bath to include the kitchen, Feig-Sandoval recommended independent architect Ben Green, and the team began working on the design.

All gray cabinets and countertops lined the walls of the original kitchen. It was a good size but didn't have an efficient layout. Adjacent to the kitchen was a butler's pantry that connected the kitchen and dining room,



Homeowners Carol Smith, left, and Steve Kraftchick, right, had remodeler Danny Feig-Sandoval working on their house for seven



which the couple considered wasted space. Smith chose to bring kitchen designer Jackie Emmons in to the team to work on the details of the work triangle and help in selecting the appliances.

During the design phase, Smith and Kraftchick mentioned their wish to finish the attic. Feig-Sandoval suggested preparing for that remodel by adding a 4-foot bumpout to the kitchen. That would give them more space in the kitchen as well as in the future finished attic.

There were other preparations to make, too. While the crew was working on the bumpout, they also prepared the upstairs for the next phase. New joists extend out the

length of the 4-foot bumpout and create a new floor system for the attic that is separate from the ceiling system for the kitchen. At the same time, carpenters extended the existing front rafters with new 2x8s to support the transfer of loads over the long span of the ceiling over the living room.

Smith and Kraftchick's house looks deceptively small from the outside, but it feels large and spacious inside. They wanted to retain that modest elevation and the character of the house. But they also wanted the new attic to work well spatially. Kraftchick says when they were shopping for houses, they saw a lot of attic renovations that still felt like an attic. "I wanted it to feel like the roof was



Warren Bond



Erica George Dines

The remodeling team created a consistent design by repeating the arch shape throughout the attic. The arches in the stained glass window that separates the shower and sitting area and in the window over the tub echo the curve of the ceiling.



Warren Bond

Out-of-House Help

Remodeler Danny Feig-Sandoval used to have an in-house cabinet shop and an in-house painting crew. The owner of Small Carpenters At Large started subbing out that work for several reasons.

First, in the two years he had the cabinet shop, it was never a profit center. He started it because of timing. Just as he started having problems with cabinet delivery, a carpenter approached him and offered to build cabinets in-house.

At the time, Feig-Sandoval worked out of his house and decided to start the shop in his basement. However, the shop was not big enough to produce a high volume of cabinets and it was difficult to find enough work to keep the shop running. "We thought about making cabinets for other

contractors, but then we would be controlled by their schedules," Feig-Sandoval says. His advice for remodelers who are interested in running a cabinet shop is to run it as a separate business.

Feig-Sandoval also brought a subcontractor on board as an in-house painter for four years. He had better control over quality, but here also he had problems keeping the crew busy. He often started the painting crew on a project before the carpenters were finished.

Now he has painting subs and a great cabinetmaker who meet deadlines and deliver a high quality product and service. Feig-Sandoval says he would never consider subbing out carpentry, because he needs control of the carpentry crews to deliver the old-world craftsmanship that is the focus of their company.

Before+After

not right on top of me," Kraftchick says.

So when Feig-Sandoval raised the roof by 6 feet and changed the ridge to accommodate the higher ceilings in the attic, he kept the same roof outline and dormers to maintain the scale on the exterior.

THE SPACE RACE

A year and a half after completing the kitchen and bath remodel, Smith and Kraftchick were ready to tackle the attic. By this time, Feig-Sandoval had added design to his in-house services and had hired architect Brenda Sosa. (The cost of having the architect return for on-site decisions in the kitchen phase of this project, the remodeler says, started him thinking about in-house design.)

Smith and Kraftchick say that having an in-house designer helped the second project run more smoothly than the first. With revisions or details on the kitchen remodel, they would have to set up a meeting with the outside architect and bring him up to speed on the progress. They saved that added step with Sosa. "She was in constant contact with Danny and the crew," Kraftchick says.

The finished top floor consists of a sitting area, a master bath, two walk-in closets, and the master bedroom. The couple wanted the space to have an open feel. They started with the stairs that lead to the attic. The original stairs were closed off from the hallway by a wall and a door at the bottom of the stairs. The crew removed the door, demolished the wall, and rebuilt the stairs. The group had discussed redirecting the stairs toward the front living area, but that would have required removing a set of the original French doors, which Smith nixed.

Upstairs, the homeowners wanted a few defined areas without chopping up the space into tiny rooms. To divide the rooms but keep light shining through, Feig-Sandoval used pocket doors. He also suggested placing a stained glass window in the wall between the sitting area and the shower to let light through. On the shower side of the window, Feig-Sandoval used a marine varnish to seal and waterproof the wood frame.



Warren Bond



Erica George Dines



Warren Bond

Feig-Sandoval's talented crew installed the Oxford-style posts on the stair railing, the built-in cabinets, and the trim. Local artist Susan McCracken worked with the homeowners to create the pattern in the attic's stained glass window.

Most attic conversions use peaked angles, but Kraftchick wanted something different. Sosa worked with him on the design of a barrel vault ceiling. To accomplish that, carpenter Kevin Kelly nailed curved plywood to the rafters to provide a base for nailing drywall. The curves in the arched windows and arched stained glass frame and design echo the curves of the barrel vault.

Smith's wish list included old-fashioned barrister bookcases and oak trim in the sitting area, a project Feig-Sandoval completed through his company's in-house cabinet shop (see "Out-of-House Help," page 59). His

cabinetmaker built the cabinets and cut the millwork for the project. The same craftsman worked on the staircase. One member of the crew dedicated himself to cutting the squares in the Oxford-style post pattern on the railing. The couple says he spent hours perfecting the arrow points on the top rail.

All that detail work paid off. Smith says visitors often mistake the attic for an existing second floor and think the built-ins were original to the house.

For the master bath, the group chose oval fixtures to mimic the elliptical effect of the arches and curves in the upstairs space.

Before+After



Warren Bond

The kitchen, above, started off the seven-year project that ended with rebuilding the garage, far right. The crew set the new garage a few feet back from the original structure to create a larger back yard. The homeowners were happy that the remodel maintained the house's modest facade, right.



Erica George Dines



Before



Before



Erica George Dines

Smith was concerned about heating the large, open bathroom. She opted for an electric floor warming system and says it's one of the best remodeling decisions she's made.

FUN FINISH

The last large project the couple tackled was replacing the detached garage. The 1940s garage had cedar siding, a sauna, and loft space. But it was structurally damaged and didn't match the house. The crew demolished the old garage and placed the new one farther back on the lot to create a larger back yard. The peaked roof now matches the roof on the house and leaves the couple the option to create a loft space in the future.

Even after the \$200,000 estimates for

each of the two previous projects, the \$97,000 price tag for the garage took Kraftchick by surprise. He didn't expect to pay that much for what he considered a simple project. But overall, the couple feels they spent a reasonable amount of money for the satisfaction of knowing there is not one item in the house they wish they had upgraded but didn't.

During a visit to the jobsite, an architect friend of the couple commented on the precision of the rough framing. Kraftchick says it is the behind-the-wall items such as framing, plumbing, insulation, and wiring that show the quality of the work by Small Carpenters At Large. "What makes this structure great is what you can't see," he says.

The constant company for six years took an emotional toll on the couple. With the crew arriving early in the morning, Smith says at times it felt like there were seven people living at the house. "I had to keep focusing on the end product," she says. For each project phase, the couple dealt with a different project manager. Though they all worked differently, Kraftchick says they all had strong communication skills. That was "critical to the success of the projects," Kraftchick says. It's a testament to Feig-Sandoval's management skills, he feels, that all three project managers and a carpenter have started their own businesses. "Danny hires good people and gives them the opportunity to learn and grow," Kraftchick says. **R**