

Togetherness — that's the best part

Who would expect a romantic date to end up at the nearest home improvement store? Yet that's where my husband and I have been going for the past five months every time we go out.

Instead of going to a movie after Olive Garden, we've been going to pick out tile and examine shower heads, holding hands while strolling down aisles of toilets into the sunset.

We have been in a state of constant remodel since we bought our first home five months ago. We knew when we bought the home it needed work, and that was OK with us because it meant we could afford a little more house. We've found it also means lots of quality time together.

The remodeling blitz to get the house ready for winter started about three weeks after we moved in. We figured, as long as the house kept out the wet and cold, we could live with the inside for now. So the first half of our life so far in our new house consisted of pizza and burgers to the intoxicating aroma of sawdust and fresh paint instead of home-

cooked dinners by candlelight. Well, there was plenty of candlelight until we got the chandelier installed in the dining room.

There was so much work to do, including siding, a new roof on the carport and a new front door, we decided to use the last of our vacation time for the year to get it done. My father-in-law also took some vacation time and was a great help to us.

It was no Orlando, Fla., which is where we wanted to go for vacation, but all the sweat and sore muscles were worth the money we saved on labor and the satisfaction of enjoying something we've done with our own two (six?) hands.

Once we got into the project, I was glad for all the planning we'd done to find the materials we wanted at the best prices. Still, as a tight wad, the budget issue was a little sticky for me. A few things were more expensive than we anticipated, and we had to go back for a few items we hadn't thought about before we started the project.

Although it physically hurt me to shell out a few bucks over budget, we decided it would be better to get quality materials we liked and pay a little more than to settle for something inferior and not like it or have it fail later on. I don't

regret it now.

Since the big outside remodel, we've done a few small things inside like painting and installing some new light fixtures.

Now, we are ready to start our next major project — the worst of the two bathrooms, which is very small and has several ... problems. We already know that it needs a new subfloor and a more functional layout and that we'll have to redo all the plumbing.

So far, we think we've drawn up a good plan to solve most of the space problems. We're well armed with experience from our exterior remodeling project, so we'll build some leeway into the budget, count on some unexpected work and be careful not to forget the little things like towel racks and storage cabinets. And we've already launched the research/dating mode.

The week before I wrote this,

we went out to eat and look at bathroom fixtures; the next night, we cuddled on the couch while watching "How Do I ... Install Tile Flooring." HGTV's "Save My Bath" has suddenly become one program we can both agree on. It won't be long until we're spending quality time scrunched in a small space laying tile together.

Together — that's the best way to build (or remodel) a home.



SALLY PETTY
Staff Writer

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