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READERS' REMODEL

Take down a wall and build a dream

By Ann Parquette
Special to The Examiner

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For 10 years, my family has lived in a four-bedroom, split-level home with a tiny (10-by-12-foot) kitchen and equally tiny dining room. These two rooms were separated by a wall whose only purpose I could tell was to enable the home's features to be listed as "country kitchen" and "formal dining room."

Holiday meals were especially hard as I struggled to find counter space and juggle dishes coming and going from the oven. Then I had to deal with the dining room table — where to put all the delicious courses I had just struggled to cook, without a sideboard or counter?

It was during these holiday dinner cleanups that I would dream of my perfect kitchen. The first thing I would do is take down that good-for-nothing wall and open up the two rooms onto each other. I imagined replacing the wall with a breakfast bar counter where my sons could gobble down my pancakes as we chatted about the events in their lives.

I dreamed of counter space for a TV with cookbook storage underneath so I could watch my favorite Food TV cooks while I prepared dinner. My dream plans included mounting the microwave over the range to free up even more counter space and a special area of the kitchen just for baking. A deep country sink with old-fashioned fixtures

and open shelving for my Fiesta-ware collection were also part of my dream.

About a year ago, we decided the time was right to make a move. Our home was worth more than double our purchase price, so we decided to use our equity to make my dream come true. I scoured design magazines, took notes while watching just about every kitchen design show on TV and interviewed contractors. One week ago, my dream kitchen was completed. It is everything I had imagined during my frustrating holiday meal cleanups. The breakfast bar is the perfect dividing space between the kitchen and dining room. Unfortunately, there won't be daily chats with my sons over breakfast; our youngest son is leaving for college in a few weeks.

We will welcome our sons back home at Thanksgiving with a meal that will be a pleasure to prepare and serve. And while I deal with the inevitable cleanup, I will be dreaming of my next project. Maybe we could take down the wall between the master bedroom and Will's bedroom and make one large, dreamy master suite. Don't let your walls keep you from living your dreams.

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