

Leleu worked with his nephew, Ben, his brother David and one worker, Jesus. They did almost everything themselves, from digging the dirt, to laying the tiles in the bathrooms. After a month we were fortunate enough to be able to rent the house next door. From there we saw them everyday, in the heat of September and October and in the cold of December, from dawn to dusk, moving our project forward.

The rapid construction was a blessing in many ways, but represented a challenge for us. Every day choices had to be made and since we were in charge of all the finishes, a lot of research, visits and negotiating had to take place for everything from the floors, to cabinets, paints, tiles, etcetera. That's where we could have used some additional help—working with an interior designer would have eased the stress.

Now we have a very large kitchen with a center island and a charming breakfast area, and lots of natural light. The new dining room has proven very functional for the few guests we've had so far. The mud room, where shoes are dropped and bags hanged, is currently underutilized, largely because there is still so much stuff in the garage, but it will certainly prove useful in the future.

My favorite new space is the master bathroom. It feels private and serene; perfect for long, relaxing baths.

I am enjoying the sense of cleanliness and comfort that was hard to find in a house that had not been touched since it was built, some 60 years ago. Now the whole house gets warm when we turn on the heat, and the bathrooms no longer feel damp all the time. We have learned so much about construction and material that if we ever remodel again we will feel like pros.

Even the cats have adopted the new house—this must be a good sign.



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Wendy Holcenberg
wendy@holcenberg.com
925.253.4630

Michelle Holcenberg
michelle@holcenberg.com
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