

Rolling with Life's Punches

Having just built their dream home, a medical diagnosis forces a young couple to re-think their dreams.

For Kris and Jose, life just couldn't get much better. Settled in their recently built new home, they were finally living their dream.

Nestled in a beautiful, new, up-scale development, this 2,500-square foot dream home had all the bells and whistles and a floor plan that perfectly suited their lifestyle. Having three levels provided plenty of room for their young son and daughter to romp—while affording mom and dad plenty of space for quieter times. This house and its neighborhood was absolutely perfect. This was the home where they would raise their children and grow old together. This would be the house where lasting family memories were to be made.

Unfortunately, things didn't quite work out as planned. Shortly thereafter, Kris started experiencing physical sensations that she was well too familiar with. As a critical care nurse working in a neuro-trauma unit, Kris had her suspicions. After some testing, those suspicions were confirmed. Kris was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis—a chronic, debilitating neurological condition.

Being the realist that she is, Kris knew what was likely in store for her. She didn't know the timetable, but she knew MS and the life-altering changes that come along with it. Together with Jose, decisions needed to be made about their future and that included their wonderful new home.

Kris knew full well that their three-level home was not compatible with her condition and what was ahead of her. Already she was experiencing weakness that taxed her ability to climb stairs. Carrying the baby up and down a flight of stairs was no longer safe and she knew it. Eventually, more than likely, she'd be in need of a wheelchair. As much as Jose hated the idea of moving from their dream home and his neighborhood friends, he too knew they had no option.

Aside from one level, Kris and Jose agreed on two other requirements for their home search. The



This before and after comparison captures the dramatic transformation of this 1960's rancher. Through a combination of siding, brick, and flexite (stucco-looking material), the exterior creates the appearance of a complete original design. To tie in with the architectural elements of the three-car garage addition, two gable roof lines and a barrel vault ceiling with columns were added to the new front porch entry. Overall, the entire exterior was facelifted with new soffits, fascia, and siding.



property must be located in one of their preferred school districts (they had two in mind), and they wanted a good-sized lot. The search was on. Here's their story.

Q. So, when you spotted this home, was it love at first sight?

(Jose..chuckling) No, not hardly. It was nice, but it wasn't my style. I liked the lot size and its mature trees, but I really didn't see how this was going to work given what we were used to and what we wanted to do with it. It looked like too much work and too much money.

(Kris) Going into this, we knew it was unlikely that we'd find exactly what we were looking for. What I saw in this house was something different than what Jose was seeing. This house had character and I saw great potential. Providing we could get approval to do what we wanted done, I thought this home could work for us.

(Jose) And that was a big if. We actually didn't make an offer to buy until we talked with our remodeler. We needed assurance that things were doable.

Q. And that remodeler was James Perron at Perron Construction. How did you

select him?

(Kris) While out looking at homes, we stumbled upon a neighborhood rancher that had what appeared to be a new addition—we liked it very much. It was our good luck that the owner just happened to be in the driveway so we stopped and introduced ourselves. We complimented her on her attractive addition and asked her who did the work.

(Jose) That's how we got in touch with Perron Construction. The woman just couldn't say enough good things about "JP" and his team. To make a long story short, we called him and he offered to look at the property and give us his assessment as to what was doable as

project description

Type:	Addition with major renovations
Contractor:	Perron Construction Inc.
Designer:	Quality Design & Drafting Svcs., Ltd.
Trade Partners:	Calder Door & Specialty Co., Gary Good Electric, Horizon Kitchens, Indoor City, J.H. Brubaker, Inc., John K. Gettle Painting, Kopp Excavating, Martin Appliance, Mervin Zimmerman Inc., Melissa Burkhart Custom Cabinetry Designer, Select Security, Wiggins Asphalt
Additions:	3-car garage, mudroom with closet and storage area, front porch, two gable roofs
Renovations:	Interior—kitchen, breakfast nook, family room entry, hallway; Exterior—soffits, fascia, siding, rain spouts, driveway

well as a rough estimate on the costs.

Q. So what was on your list of things that needed to be done?

(Jose) Probably the main things were getting all the floors flush to the same level, opening things up to accommodate a wheelchair and improve traffic flow, the addition of a master bedroom with a large bath, and an expansion of the garage to accommodate three bays.



By eliminating a wall and building up the floor of the old breezeway (above), space was created to dramatically increase the kitchen size—providing a much improved work flow and tons of storage. The remodeled breakfast nook with its new vaulted ceiling and skylight offers a cozy corner for more intimate moments.





Overlooking the kitchen's new island bar is the entrance into the existing family room. This before and after comparison clearly demonstrates the elegance and openness created by the widened transition. Note the built down barrel vault soffit and columns which complement the design features created for the home's front entrance.



Q. I thought you said that this was a rancher...other than the basement, wasn't everything already on one level?

(Jose) Not quite. Both the breezeway area which housed the breakfast nook and the garage were not on the same level as the rest of the house. The step down was probably close to 8 or 10 inches.

(Kris) We also wanted some cosmetic work to spruce things up and tie things together. We wanted a more modern look. We've always taken great pride in our home and this one would be no exception.

Q. I take it that the meeting with JP went well?

(Kris) It did...remarkably well. He met us at the property and we went through the house room by room and walked the property. We went over our list of things we had in mind and what we were looking to accomplish. As we were going through the house, JP was making an assessment of the home and it's condition. He took a bunch of pictures as well as measurements.

(Jose) Yes, the meeting went well, but I was still skeptical. Although JP threw out some interesting ideas that we hadn't considered, I still couldn't envision how it would all work out.

Q. What were JP's ideas that you hadn't considered?

(Jose) The first thing that comes to mind was his suggestion to blow out

the breezeway wall and enlarge the kitchen. This seemed like such a good idea seeing as how we definitely needed to open things up. The existing kitchen was way too small.

(Kris) The other idea that made a lot of sense was JP's suggestion to convert the existing garage into the master bedroom suite and attach the new three-bay garage to the front of that end of the house. Up to this point, we were thinking that the master suite would be an addition at the other end of the house, adjacent to the other bedrooms.

Q. So the cost estimate was within your budget?

(Kris) The estimate seemed reasonable and from JP's favorable assessment of the house and property, we decided to go ahead with the purchase.

Q. And with that decision, the remodeling project was on and Perron Construction would be your contractor?

(Jose) That's right. By this time, we had already established a great rapport with JP as well as his design consultant, Kevin Bollinger of Quality Design and

Drafting Services in Lititz. We liked them both and the plans were starting to take shape.

(Kris) Although JP brought Kevin to the project, we were delighted with his selection. As it turned out, we had used Kevin years earlier in another project and were really impressed with his work and creativity. To have him involved again was very reassuring.

(Jose) It probably wasn't until I started seeing Kevin's drawings that I started to come around. Up until then, I wasn't very excited about the house or the changes we were planning. Seeing the plans on paper helped me immensely.

Q. In addition to Quality Design, I understand that Perron Construction had a team of trade partners lined up and ready to go. How did that work out?

(Jose) Absolutely wonderful. In addition to selecting his team of subs, JP handled all the scheduling and oversaw every aspect of the project. I can't tell you how relieved we were to have those details taken care of. We had enough to worry about.

(Kris) I agree, JP did a great job in selecting his team. You could tell they've all worked together before. Everyone from the excavator, to the plumber, to the kitchen installer, to the garage door company, everyone was extremely professional and meticulous. And that was really important to us. We're both extremely particular and demanding people and it's important to us that things are done right. It was great to see that these guys were equally fussy. They took pride in their work and it showed.

(Jose) We had experienced first hand the after effects of shabby work. Seeing how things were handled here, I don't think we'll have any quality issues down the road. These guys did things right. I know, I was checking.

Q. You made some dramatic outside changes. How did they come about?

(Kris) The outside appearance was very important to us. We wanted it to be inviting, something to be proud of, and something special to come home to. Maybe it was because of our earlier relationship with Kevin and Quality Design, but he nailed it right away. After a brief meeting where we discussed ideas in general, abstract terms, Kevin came back with some drawings that we absolutely loved.

(Jose) Kevin's suggestion to add the double gables to the front was perfect. This clever feature tied together the original architecture with the new addition. Along with the new front entry with its pillars and the use of complementing finishes—everything looked coordinated...it really looked great.

(Kris) We also liked the way he staggered the garages rather than having them in a straight row. Instead of a blah rectangular box, Kevin's design added interest and helped create the carriage house feel we were looking for.

Q. This project consisted of a major transformation of this house, do you have a favorite feature?

(Jose) I don't know if I can single anything out. Everything turned out great—the kitchen, the garage, how it looks from the outside, I like it all. Okay, maybe it's the kitchen design, JP's kitchen consultant, Missy, did a great job fine tuning the final layout. Everyone raves about it.

(Kris) As odd as this may seem, I think my most favorite feature is the breakfast nook. I love its new look with the vaulted ceiling and new skylight. My favorite thing is sitting there in the mornings, looking out into our woodsy back yard. We're using the same

furnishings as our previous house so there's a sense of familiarity that I like. It's so cozy and peaceful.

Q. Earlier you started talking about the construction team, let's talk more about that. Tell us how things went?

(Kris) From a construction point of view, things went like clockwork. JP's foreman, Brian, and project coordinator, Dave, were great. Brian was here on site every morning at 6:45 and oversaw everything—the work by Perron as well as everything done by the subs. Each week, we had a progress meeting with Dave and Brian where they'd brief us on what got accomplished that week and what was scheduled for the upcoming week. All this was well documented in a weekly report that we received religiously. These meetings and the reports were very helpful in keeping us informed as to the progress and what to expect in the days ahead.

(Jose) What was nice was we knew beforehand what was scheduled to be accomplished, who would be in our home and when. We knew, for instance, when the plumber was expected. This may sound trivial, but it wasn't to us. There were a lot of workers involved in this project and it was reassuring to know who was who. As Kris said earlier, we are very particular people and we



As seen above, the original kitchen was significantly smaller and had a single point of entry. In addition to improved work and traffic flow, the expanded kitchen also made possible space for wall ovens, an oversized refrigerator, and additional cabinets. The resized kitchen window allows for a very practical work desk overlooking the front lawn and driveway.



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liked staying informed as to who was coming into our home.

(Kris) The other thing, was when things fell behind schedule, it wasn't uncommon for the guys to work well into the evening to get caught up. They did an outstanding job of staying on track. In fact, despite all the change orders we requested, and there were many, the job was completed on the same day as they said it would be. What's amazing is that the completion date was set at the very beginning of the project. They told us that they'd have it done for Christmas—and they did.

(Jose) And they did an outstanding job keeping the jobsite in order. Before leaving each evening, they had the place cleaned up and their tools were put away.

(Kris) Which reminds me of a safety issue that we witnessed. Early on, just after some demolition work, the crew was finishing up for the day when one of them noticed our two year old daughter eyeing some loose cables hanging from the ceiling. Without being asked, the worker secured the wires and put them out of reach of the little ones.

Q. What was it like living through such a major project?

(Jose) Considering the extent of what we had done, it really wasn't that bad. Make no bones about it, living in a construction zone can be a little disruptive. Luckily, we had a finished basement with a bathroom and kitchenette that helped take the edge off.

Q. Did you hit any snags? And would you do anything differently?

(Jose) I don't think we'd do anything differently. The only disappointing thing was that we ran out of money to complete the master bedroom suite. This was our decision and we came to that decision early on. Rather than compromise on other aspects of the project or on any of our selections, we decided to postpone the master suite and save it for what we're now calling Phase 2.

(Kris) It would have been nice getting everything done at once, but our



primary interest was completing the exterior and opening up the kitchen area. And we did that. We even did a lot of the prep work in getting the old garage area ready for the master suite. We completed the priority items and like Jose mentioned, we made no compromises.

The new mudroom (door to the left of the garage doors above) provides an additional entry to both the house and garage. Within the generously-sized mudroom there is plenty of space for new arrivals as well as a closet and separate storage area.

Q. So in the end, was it worth it?

(Kris) Absolutely it was worth it. I think we were incredibly lucky to have found this home. Believe it or not, I actually take greater pride in this home than in the two we had built. I think we both share a tremendous sense of accomplishment in seeing this transformation. This home came with a lot of charm and character—we just put our stamp on it, we made it ours.

(Jose) We were also lucky to have found Perron Construction. The ideas that JP presented as well as those from Kevin at Quality Design helped immensely. These guys threw out ideas and gave us options that we never would have thought of. I think the end product is far better than what we had ever imagined.



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