

## Sharing our Experience

... continued from page 12

Going into the project, I severely underestimated the amount of work that this would require – I remember telling my wife that we could just take a weekend to do all of our shopping, to which she laughed in disbelief. To further punish me for my unrealistic expectations, my wife then proceeded to make me go with her on all of the shopping outings.

### Selecting a Contractor

As mentioned above, the more details you can provide to the contractors, the more accurate their estimates will be. By outlining all the details in your bid package, the contractors will be able to give you

accurate prices for your specific items, as opposed to providing a general ‘allowance’ amount for your finishes. This will help to ensure that there are no surprises down the line, and that the cost of your project doesn’t balloon because the finishes you want are more expensive than the generic ‘allowances’ that the contractor provided in the initial bid.

After speaking with fifteen contractors, we elected to get bids from five of those contractors. When we received the bids back, we were a bit surprised to find that the difference between the highest and lowest bid was over \$100k. This may not be the norm, but I asked each of the contractors to

also provide me with their subcontractors’ bids to allow me to better compare the numbers for each line item (i.e. roofing, flooring, electrical, framing, etc.)

Not surprisingly, we found the highest and lowest bids to be the least detailed and thorough. Therefore, it was easy for us to throw out the lowest and highest bidders, as is often recommended. That left the three middle contractors, who we felt were the most thorough in their bidding process. Each of these contractors brought out their subcontractors to walk through the job. When I compared each of these bids, they were within \$25k (~4%) of each other. Therefore, we felt very comfort-

able with the accuracy of the numbers for each of the remaining three bids.

In the end, picking a contractor was a lot like dating. There are various aspects of consideration that go into the decision making process. The four biggest for me (and for most people I would imagine) are:

- Did I trust the contractor?
- Would he/she do a quality job?
- Would he/she finish the project in the time stated?
- And do it for a price that I could afford?

In the end, we went with Stubblefield Construction, based out of Moraga. In fact, Rob was the contractor who did the kitchen remodel for the neighbors on our friend’s street that we visited while trick-or-treating on Halloween night. The owners graciously invited us in to take a look at their new kitchen. They were so happy with Rob’s work, that they were holding a party for their friends the following Saturday, to which Rob and all his subcontractors were invited. They even invited us to join them so that we could meet him. To make a long story short, we ended up going to their party and meeting Rob, and that was the start to what we are hoping will be a beautiful relationship. Our remodel started in the beginning of

June and we are scheduled to move back in before the end of the

year. I’ll keep you posted on how things go...



Ken Ryerson

Ken Ryerson lives in Moraga with his wife, Linda. They have an 8 year daughter and 6 year old son who are both attending Los Perales Elementary School. Ken is a Lamorinda Residential Real Estate Specialist with Pacific Union in Orinda. If you have any questions or comments, he can be reached at 925-878-9685 or via email at Ken@RyersonRealty.com

### Nurture your garden at

# McDonnell Nursery

- Open Daily -

**254-3713**  
www.mcdonnellnursery.com

196 Moraga Way, Orinda

- Shrubs
- Garden Accessories
- Flowers
- Personalized Service

*Come in for advice about water conservation and retaining moisture in your garden. We're here to help keep your garden beautiful!!*

## JV LUCAS PAVING

QUALITY • INTEGRITY • EXPERT WORKMANSHIP  
THIRD GENERATION PAVING COMPANY

- Driveways
- Private Roads
- Tennis & Sports Courts
- Parking Lots
- Subdivisions
- Seal Coating

It's Time to Seal Coat!

**925-283-8027**

**LUCAS PAVING, INC.**  
RESIDENTIAL + COMMERCIAL

Lic # 195560

# Bay Area Drainage, Inc.

*“For All Your Drainage Needs”*

- French Drains
- Underfloor Drains
- Downspout Systems
- Subdrain Systems
- Sump Pumps
- Retaining Walls

General Engineering Contractor  
Locally owned and Operated  
Contractor LIC # 762208

925-377-9209

visit our website  
[www.bayareadrainage.com](http://www.bayareadrainage.com)

## Saving Money on Good Nutrition

By Theresa Tsingis, D.C., M.S.

**S**hocked that a decent gallon of milk costs as much as gasoline? Here is a potpourri of ways to cut your costs while still eating healthy, nutritious foods:

- Cook one to two meatless meals a week. Meats (and some cheeses) tend to be the most expensive items in a shopping cart. These foods should be organic whenever possible though, because of their high status on the food chain (see the last article, “Dinnertime and DNA”). Beans, peas, lentils, nuts, and seeds all contain protein and more fiber, minerals and vitamins. They also cost less than meats. If you get gas and bloating from eating these foods, “Beano” is one name of a group of products that reduce that reaction. See recipes for tasty meatless dishes.
- Make one of your meat meals turkey-based. Turkey costs less, contains less saturated fat, and is a ready substitute for ground beef. Chili, Sloppy Joes, tacos, enchiladas, and many other meals can be made using turkey meat without

compromising on flavor or texture. Those dishes also allow you to incorporate other healthy foods into them, like different vegetables.

- Get to know where your favorite healthy foods cost less. Shop at large membership stores for organic products. Organic milk costs about 25-40% less at these stores. A local trader also carries organic products, such as eggs, at lower costs, yet other stores, even supermarkets, are rising to that challenge due to competition. Farmers markets carry fresh, organic and relatively local produce. They can also be a “greener” food source due to support of local economies, using less gas to transport food, etc.
- Another way to save money, time and effort in the kitchen and eat healthily, is to buy in bulk, cook and then freeze several meals. It takes a bit of planning, but saves you time and money in the long run. The key is to not overcook, and when you reheat the dish, add fresh snips of herbs, cheese or other condiments for zip and flavor. Examples of freezable meals are

stuffed shells, enchiladas, quesadillas, chili, lasagna, teriyaki salmon, pasta sauce, minestrone and other soups. (Note: potatoes do not take to freezing too well. Besides, they are high in ready sugar content and relatively low on the nutrition scale).

Moving from “Saving money” to “Saving your future” - Grilling can be hazardous to your health (sorry, wish it wasn’t true!). Many people grill frequently to reduce fat used in cooking and because grilled meats are tasty. Grilling however, causes the formation of “heterocyclic amines” (HCAs), a chemical group attributed to several types of cancers, including stomach, colon, breast and pancreatic. HCAs form when cooking beef, chicken, pork and fish at high temperatures. Grilling occasionally is probably fine, and I have not found information on HCAs in grilled vegetables, as the problem seems to stem from the chemical changes in muscle proteins during high temperatures.

... continued on page 20

## Women Contractors, Tough Cookies Among Us

... continued from page 13

Their creativity translates into very high customer satisfaction rates. Margie Goldstein hired Dinkle to remodel the family room and bath and the children’s bathroom in their Moraga home. It was love at first sight. “Judy immediately understood what we are about and created for us spaces that fit perfectly the function, our style and budget,” states an enthusiastic Margie, “she made the process as painless as possible for us, I didn’t experience any stress.” She believes that the changes Judy affected ended up being more than what she had ever expected.

Big Red customers Jay and Sventlana Hill live in Orinda Woods. Their kitchen needed a complete remodel. “Kathy did a great job from beginning to end,”

says Hill. “When we started she told us that her job was to make everyone happy and that’s what she did.” The Hills felt that they were listened to, that they could change their mind and be taken care of. “She cares for the workers, too,” adds Hill, “she’s like a mother to them.” “Everything was done quickly, they worked on Saturdays, the work was finished on time and for the price we were promised,” they add.

Kim Berry in Lafayette hired Grosz for the master bedroom and bath in their Lafayette home. “I loved working with a female,” says Berry, “Kari has a great sense of style, she adds feminine touches, it was awesome to go shopping with her.” Grosz’s reliability was essential for this family with two young

children and two working parents. They were even able to stay in the house during the work. “It’s more convenient for contractors to have people out of their house,” says Grosz, “but often it is not the case for families.” Berry confirms, “We lived in the house the entire time. The workers always cleaned every evening.” The Berry’s say they would hire Grosz again in a heartbeat.

The three women get their jobs through referrals. They are booked for months to come, but it is always possible to get on their waiting list and they might be available for small projects. Big Red Construction (925) 962-0145, JD Design (925) 631-0562, Lamorinda Construction (925) 899-7201.

# NEW CENTURY

## •Kitchen & Bath•

*One source, one commitment*  
We offer,  
Expert stone & tile installation  
Custom nature stone & engineering stone countertop  
Cabinetry & hi-end fixtures,

Also existing tear out & preparation, Specialists in Custom Countertop Fabrication & Installation

Showroom hours: Mon-Fri 8:00- 5:00, Sat 10:00-4:00

2500 Teagarden St. Suite B  
San Leandro CA 94577  
T 510-347-1818  
www.nckb.com