

News from Peef & Lo

If These Walls Could Talk...

What **WOULD** a 1927 Milwaukee Bungalow have to say if it could speak?

We've just begun to find out. After closing on our first home on May 2nd, we've begun the adventure of homeownership... and have decided that listening to what the house has to say can make for pretty interesting conversation.

One of the first projects we tackled in our new home was the **SUPER TACKY** kitchen! Wallpapered from head to toe, the room was in desperate need of aesthetic renovation.

The first step, of course, was to get rid of all of the nasty wallpaper — not an easy task, since we found that in many places there were up to **FOUR** layers of wallpaper (sometimes four layers of the same wallpaper and sometimes four layers of four **DIFFERENT** papers). As we removed the wallpaper, we also found that there was some damage to the plaster walls beneath the paper — and in some places the former owners had resorted to replacing whole areas of the plaster with drywall (blech!).

Obviously, just **PAINTING** the walls was not going to be an acceptable solution.

So, after much contemplation, we decided that some good old fashioned texturing might be a



good idea. So, we went out and bought a big vat of joint compound and some tools — and went at it. We managed to come up with quite an interesting effect — a cross between a smooth "stucco" effect and a hand-textured "skip trowel" effect. It gives the kitchen a bit more of a "rustic" feel and definitely masks many of the imperfections!

Once we'd tackled the foundation of the walls and moved along to painting, we found out that paint often times has a mind of its own when it is applied to one's walls. We picked a color called "**AMBITIOUS AMBER**" for the bulk of the room, and a secondary color ("**EMOTIONAL**") for the little alcove. The second color was supposed to resemble terra cotta. But, as it turns

out, we had to play with it quite a bit to achieve the finish that we were looking for. At long last, it resembled a mottled terra-cotta pot. The hue wasn't **QUITE** what we expected, but it worked. We also ended up toning down the "**Ambitious Amber**" with some flat white paint — since it was a little bit **TOO** ambitious.

Now we have a bright, cheery circus of a kitchen — not an altogether **BAD** thing, but definitely **NOT** the Tuscan Utopia we had originally planned out in our naïve minds :) It's definitely a lot **HAPPIER** looking than we originally intended.

Since finishing the paint job, we've also added a few more final touches to the kitchen — new appliances, a new floor and a whimsical wallpaper border.

So, what's new?

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At this time of the year, probably due to some strange, unnaturally sappy memory of a Summer Reading Program at my local library, I am always inspired by Shel Silverstein.

And so, I'm sharing this with you... In the hopes that it will inspire you to do something truly entertaining this summer. The loony-goony dance happens to sound pretty darned good to me!

*"Draw a crazy picture,
Write a nutty poem,
Sing a mumble-gumble song,
Whistle through your comb.
Do a loony-goony dance
'Cross the kitchen floor,
Put something silly in the world
That ain't been there before."*

-Shel Silverstein

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If These Walls.. continued

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At this point, the room is the most finished room in the entire house.

WHEW

Having spent more time than we'd ever dreamed possible on that one room (the guesstimate put us at somewhere between 72-120 hours total work time), we decided it would be prudent to HIRE someone to take care of refinishing the hardwood floors in the living and dining areas. So, we made lots of phone calls and entertained numerous bids. And finally we found a contractor from the South side with good references who could get the job done quickly and affordably.

What we discovered is that even when you HIRE someone to do a job for you, there's still work involved. Before the flooring guys arrived, we had to rip out three rooms (and a hallway) worth of carpeting. Lovely blue carpeting :) Lovely, HEAVY, blue carpeting. Lovely, heavy blue carpeting with naughty tack strips and zillions and zillions of tiny staples. It was an exhausting project — but we managed to get it done before the flooring guys arrived. And we breathed a sigh of relief.

Of course, for every sigh of relief we offered up, there would be a new challenge awaiting us. Most of our experiences thus far have been positive, but we have had a taste of



tragedy (early on)...

It started innocently enough — we were sweeping the basement, and Paul accidentally (and lightly) bumped the water heater with his broom. The drain valve flew right off of it and hot water started SPRAYING all over the basement. The good thing is that no one got hurt! The bad thing is that we had to call a serviceman and get the water heater replaced. NOT an expense we were anticipating (and not a cheap one either) -- but probably a good thing, since the water heater was old, and (apparently) genuinely needed to be replaced. We like to think that it was God's way of saving us from an even more untimely tragedy.

ALL of these adventures occurred before we'd even moved INTO the house. Now that we're in the process of getting settled, it's become even more exciting to figure out what sorts of things we'll have to do to really make this house into a home.

The copious boxes of art that we moved with us from our apartment are still sitting in the midst of our dining room — after our attempts to hang it up resulted in the shocking realization

that we now have BIG walls. And BIG walls generally require BIG art. So, it looks like Art Fairs are in our future! (we're crushed about that, as you can probably

tell)

Buying this house has not only been an exercise in hard work — it has also been a definite learning experience. For instance, Lori now realizes that EVERYTHING CANNOT BE DONE ALL AT ONCE. She's developing a more patient disposition as a result. And Paul has decided that he actually MUST have a few "handy" genes in his DNA, cuz he's starting to really like the idea of home improvement.

We've also grown quite interested in all of the "excavating" that we're getting to do. It's fascinating (if sometimes infuriating) to discover all of the different things people have done to a house over the years. Our house was built in 1927, so it has plenty of history to go around. We've unearthed all sorts of interesting things as we've worked — strange pipe configurations, eclectic electrical set-ups and crazy-lazy paint jobs. It's been a drain to our pocketbooks, and sometimes a test of our inner strength. But we feel really blessed to finally have a home that we can call our very own. The adventure has begun!!

I think I hear the house laughing...

Mowing our own WEEDS

I don't think you really think about how fast the grass grows — until you actually have to mow it yourself!

Paul and I had a rude awakening — moving into our new house and watching the weeds growing up around the windows. Our lawnmower hadn't arrived yet — and we were starting to get worried. How big DO dandelions get, anyhow?? Ask us — we know!

By the time our mower finally came (a brand new Brill Luxus 38 reel mower),



our lawn was in pretty desperate need for attention. So, it was fortunate that it could be assembled quickly and be put to use right away.

We made the decision to go with a manual reel mower out of a certain sense of environmental awareness (no point in wasting gas/oil for such a small space) — and also because we're planning to take an organic approach in our yard/garden care — so we figured we'd start off on

the right foot.

The mower has 5 blades, weighs a mere 17 lbs, and cuts the lawn like nothing we've ever seen. We're very pleased.

One of our neighbors is a little old man named Joe. Joe thinks we're NUTS for buying one of those old mowers. He says had one when he was young and it was the heaviest thing you'd imagine. Although he's impressed by the way history seems to repeat itself, he also seems quite grateful for his new self-propelled gas guzzler.

The new Moven

There is nothing — and I repeat — nothing more infuriating than making an attempt to actually COOK on a new stove.

It's strange enough to stand in front of a new appliance. Gee whiz, you're half blinded just from the shiny NEWNESS of it — and that's before you've even had time to check out all the buttons and knobs that they added since you inspected it in the showroom!

Even in my young-age, I'm ASTOUNDED by the way technology has taken something as simple as FIRE and added so much to it. With my new stove, I think I can heat up a can of soup twelve different ways. And I can do it quickly or slowly — with anywhere between 700-12,000 BTU's of gasoline power.

In my oven, I can bake and broil — but I can also do things more quickly and efficiently by making use of

"True Temp" heating and two different convection functions... one for baking and one for roasting.

Honestly — I'm delighted by my new appliance. But I'm also befuddled by the amount of power and the number of options I have at my fingertips. I ask you: What happened to the the simplicity of the wood-burning stove??

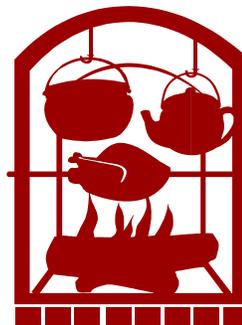
Since beginning my initiation into the world of modern gas appliances, I have performed numerous tasks —

Some positive...

1. I have brought water to a boil at record speed on my "high output" burner.
2. I have caramelized morel mushrooms to utter perfection.
3. I have created a perfectly al dente pot of risotto.

And some NOT so positive...

1. I have forgotten about how quickly handles warm up on pans when there is a gas flame below them.
2. I have presented a half-raw chicken to my guests while growing accustomed to using the "convection ROAST" feature — which is fast, but not THAT fast.
3. I have been reminded that — yes, BLACK stays cleaner than white, but it also gets visibly DUSTIER!



Yes, I fear I have somehow regressed in the presence of technological advances. Even the simplest things no longer seem simple to me. And the most complex tasks — are quite nearly impossible at this point.

One of these days, I hope to master cooking again. Until then...

Hello, my name is Greta...

So, we moved. And we moved the cats. And the cats took to the house immediately and we've had little/no adaptation issues.

It's almost a crime — the owners of the home have had more adjustment issues than their fine little feline friends. I should mention that Elmo LOST his diary in the move, and since we haven't had the time to work on replacing it, his writing habit has waned a bit. And Zoe has developed this odd little habit of sliding down the banister upstairs — which was amusing at first, but has grown a bit disturbing.

But, since there's really no news in describing how the cats have acclimated quickly and well to their new surroundings, I guess I have to find something else to amuse you in this issue.

What if I told you that I found a Japanese website that sells CLOTHING for cats.

Now I realize that people here in the states dress their dogs in goofy little outfits and prance them around for other people to see... but do they dress their cats? Apparently they do — and they can order the clothes directly from Japan!!

In case you're curious (and I know you all are), the web address is:

<http://www.petoffice.co.jp/catprin/english/#hiyoko>

The site turned up as a humorous discussion on one of the other sites I frequent... and when I checked it out, I couldn't believe what I saw. There were cats in all sorts of get-up — from CHICKEN costumes to frog suits to "Dalmation-style Tippetts". It was quite



nearly obscene.

I mean — whose cat is going to want to embarrass his/herself dressing up like another animal? It made me wonder if there's a possibility that our cats have masquerade balls when we're not around... quite the amusing thought. Still, I

doubt Elmo and Zoe would want Paul or I buying costumes FOR them. These are the kinds of things that one likes to pick out for oneself.

In any case, I'm feeling like a pretty good cat owner at this juncture. Our cats, after all, made an impressive transition into our new home. They seem to be happy and healthy. And at the very least — I don't dress them up like little Russian housekeepers!!

So, what's new?
with you?

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New Homus Abodus

