



# Indoor Camping: Living Through a Whole House Remodel (Part I)



**BY KATHE RUSSELL, CKBR, CAPS AND MIKE RUSSELL, CR**

“Welcome to Camp Shari”, jokes Roger Merle, two weeks into his whole house remodel. Homeowners Roger and Shari Merle had just gotten back from a two week vacation in Morocco to deliberately miss the demolition portion of their whole house remodel. “Camp Shari” became the nickname of the project, as Roger liked to joke about how the remodel was his wife’s idea in the first place. Let’s face it—even under the best of circumstances, remodeling is no day at the beach. It’s disruptive to almost all of your daily routines and can be a nightmare without a well executed plan.

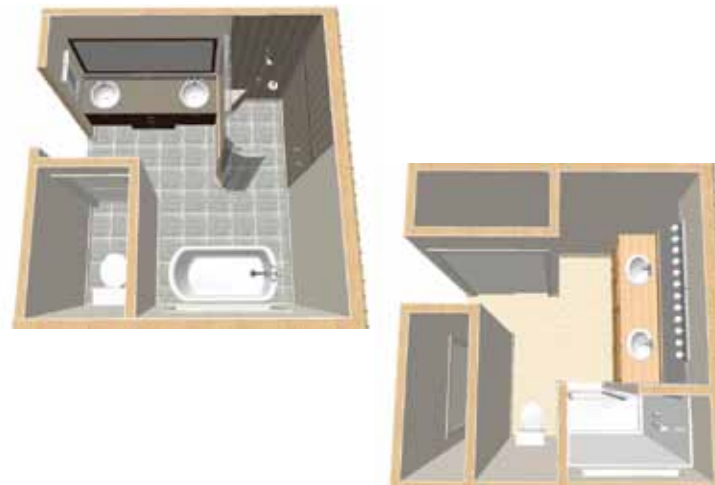
Even a simple replacement kitchen means no place to prepare meals for at least three or four weeks. And eating out every day gets expensive. In the case of Roger and Shari, they had larger issues. They were not only remodeling their kitchen in a major way, but also all of the three bathrooms, bedrooms, and the whole house. The project was challenging enough, but was even more so because they wanted to live in the home during the remodel. This meant that they needed a safe place eat, sleep, and bathe.

In order to accomplish this, DreamBuilders created a comprehensive schedule with two overlapping phases. This involved the cooperation of not only all of the trades but also the building department. It meant that there would be extra

trips for the subcontractors and for the inspector. Having a detailed schedule made it easy for the subcontractors to plan and kept the project moving according to the timeline. The schedule also helped the project superintendent to call in for job inspections at the right times. “Having a detailed schedule is one of the most critical aspects of running a remodeling project,” says DreamBuilders Home Remodeling superintendent, Paul Holmquist. “It keeps the job running and the homeowners are happy because they know exactly what to expect and when to expect it,” explains Holmquist.

The goal of the first phase was to accelerate the completion of the master suite, including the bedroom, bathroom, and new walk in closet so that the Merle’s could move into it and have an oasis from the rest of the project. In addition, most of the demolition and rough in electrical and plumbing work was completed for the rest of the house. During this phase, Roger and Shari moved into the guest bedroom and used the hall bath, which was left in tact. The laundry room was left partially intact so that it could be used as a temporary kitchen and laundry area during the remodel.

The DreamBuilders team helped the Merle’s set up a temporary kitchen that could be used during the remodel. While Roger and Shari planned to eat out some of the time, they still needed a place to prepare



a simple meal or make a cup of coffee. Much like camping, using paper goods, a hot plate, and outdoor grilling became the mainstays of survival during their remodel.

The Merle’s dog, Norman and parrot named Rocky, were also important considerations. Pets should never be left to roam a construction project and animals in a cage need to be in a safe environment so that they don’t get spooked. Fortunately, Shari Merle, the owner of LPL Financial in El Dorado Hills, was able to take the pets to her office for the duration of the project. The bird stayed at the office overnight and the dog went to work with her and came home with her everyday.

While one of the goals of their remodel was to gain more storage space, planning for storage during their remodel was equally as critical. While many of DreamBuilders clients store their furniture and other belongings in pods, the Merle’s were able to store most of their items in the garage. This is because they took this opportunity to purge many of their unused items and give them to charity. Since they were planning on getting new furniture, they were able to clear out their home prior to the remodel and store only what they planned on keeping. The Merle’s also took advantage of DreamBuilders’ green recycling program allowing their old cabinets and appliances to be removed in tact and donated to Habitat for Humanity’s Restore.

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## Ask Mike and Kathe

### 9 Tips for Surviving Without a Kitchen

**We often get asked for advice on how to survive without a kitchen during a remodel. Here is a list of tips that we’ve compiled over the years.**

1. Set your temporary kitchen up near a source of water. Garages, bathrooms, and laundry rooms are good choices. Ideally, you should have some counter space and cabinetry storage near by. You will also want to keep your refrigerator as close as possible.
2. Use your crock-pot. There are many simple and healthy meals that can be prepared using the crock-pot. Goggle crock-pot recipes and you will find tons of them.
3. Outdoor grilling is another great alternative. Fish, poultry, and grilled veggies can quickly and easily be prepared on the barbeque.
4. Use paper goods whenever possible, particularly for messy stuff. Trying to wash dishes in a bathroom sink or laundry tub is not a day at the beach. The less you have to clean, the better.
5. Cover the temporary kitchen work area with a tarp when you’re not using it and try to store things in air tight containers whenever possible to keep the dust out. You’ll be glad you did.
6. Plan to eat out some of the time. Invest in an entertainment book so you can save a little money and try some new restaurants. Trust me, you will get sick of eating at the same places. Take out food, like pizza, is also good. And you’ll get tired of this too, after a while.
7. Use a friend or relative’s kitchen to prepare additional meals that you can freeze during the remodel. Of course, never turn down an invitation to dinner at someone’s home!
8. If you have pets, make sure that they have a safe place to eat and fresh water to drink. Remodeling can be disorienting for pets, especially if they’re used to being in the old kitchen with you.
9. Enjoy a glass of wine or your favorite beverage. Spend time with your loved ones and try not to snap at them too much... Before you know it, your new kitchen will be ready.

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The scope of work in Phase I for the master suite was quite complex. It involved moving a wall in the adjacent oversized living room to create a walk in closet for the master suite.

It also meant removing two smaller closets from the existing master bath in order to create the space needed for a soaking tub, curbless walk in shower, larger vanity area, and separate water closet. Designed with easy clean and low maintenance in mind, the master bath also included intricate tile layouts, a heated floor system, a custom shower arrangement, and beautiful cherry cabinetry. The new master walk in closet included plenty of storage space to meet both Roger and Shari's needs.

Phase I was completed on schedule in four weeks. The Merle's were elated that they were able to move back in as promised to a beautiful master suite. They credit the smoothness of the remodel to the thorough design process that occurred before the remodel took place. "Everything was picked and ordered before the project even started", says Shari Merle. "This really cut down on the stress and eliminated delays to the project", Merle adds.

With phase I complete and the Merle's safely moved into the master suite, phase II could begin. Next month's article will feature the phase II of this project, including the kitchen and remainder of the house.

Mike Russell, CR and Kathe Russell, CKBR, CAPS are the owners



of DreamBuilders Home Remodeling, an award winning design build firm specializing in kitchens, baths, and whole house remodels. Their showroom is located in El Dorado Hills. Mike is a licensed general contractor and Kathe is an interior designer. Together with their design and construction team, they have helped hundreds of clients achieve their dream spaces. For more information, please visit their website at [www.ourdreambuilder.com](http://www.ourdreambuilder.com) or contact 916.933.7371 to schedule a consultation. ❖

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