

When my wife, Doris, and I decided to upgrade the master bedroom of our 28-year-old home, we turned to our most trusted source of building information for help—family. Dale Berns of Metro Homes, a builder and remodeler in the Minneapolis area for over 30 years, is Doris's brother. We had dreamed about a master-suite addition for years and had developed several plans, which included everything from absorbing an adjoining bedroom to accommodate a large master bath to creating a completely new space built over the garage. In the end, Dale came up with a plan that didn't require an addition or losing a bedroom but gave us exactly what we were looking for: a dedicated bath for the existing master bedroom.

Two baths from one

A full bath was serving the entire house, and itself was in need of a remodel. Dale developed a plan that took a small amount of space from three areas—the existing bath, the master bedroom, and its adjoining walk-in closet—to create a new master bath.

Dale didn't require the space of a typical master bath to provide a luxurious, spalike experience. His innovative plan showed that utilizing a single vanity and eliminating the traditional bathtub in the master would require less real estate. This provided room for a generously sized walk-in shower. A new soaking tub with a tiled surround would replace the old alcove tub in the main bath. A slightly smaller footprint also meant that we would spend less overall on materials, allowing us to choose higher-quality finishes for both baths. A new walk-in closet would be positioned directly off the master bath, separated by a pocket door with a mirrored panel. To accommodate the new bath and closet configuration, the bedroom area was reduced by less than 10 sq. ft. As part of the plan, the existing main bath would get a complete remodel at the same time.

Construction solutions

The project started with the usual messy demolition. Dale removed most of the walls and ceilings from both the existing bath and the closet. He uncovered and repaired some minor water damage and roughed-in new plumbing and electrical. Somewhat outside the scope of the bath remodel, we decided to take the opportu-

Neat and discreet. A built-in linen closet with low-profile pulls is barely discernible.

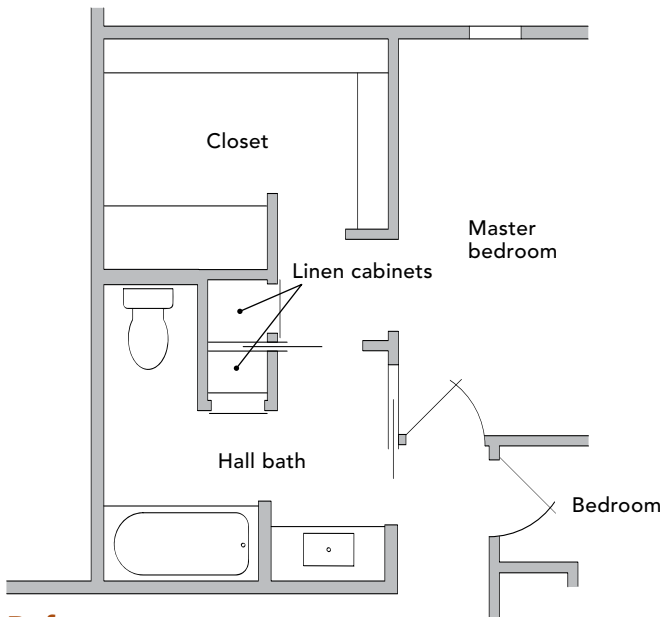
Game of Inches

A builder's clever solutions for storage and style shine as he fits a master bath into a tight floor plan

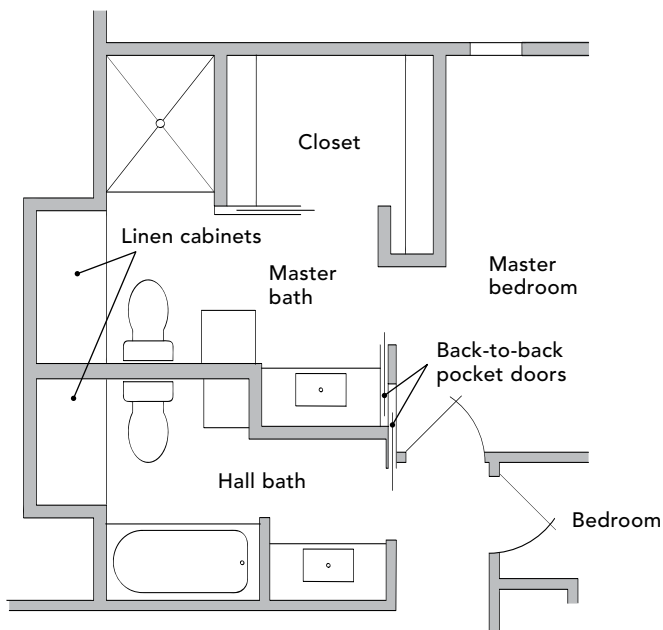
BY MICHAEL R. ANDERSON

SQUEEZING IN A MASTER BATH

Taking just a little space from the bedroom, closet, and existing bathroom allowed the builder to create a new bath for the master suite without losing the hall bath that serves the other bedrooms on the floor. Existing utilities were relocated, allowing him to rearrange the walls. In both baths, built-in closets that push into the space over the garage make up for lost storage, as does a wardrobe in the master bedroom. A generous shower area in the master evokes the feeling of a larger bath.



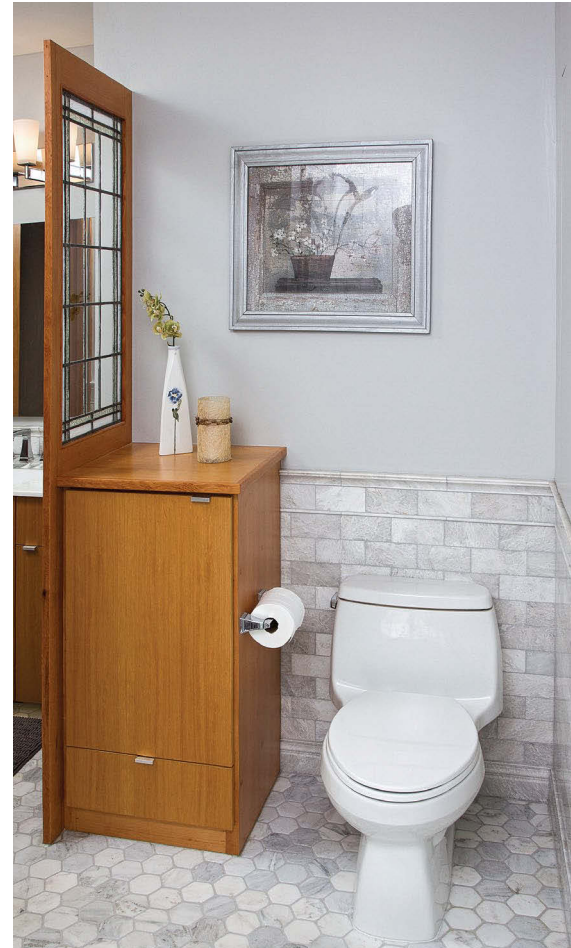
Before



After

0 2 4 8 ft.





LIGHT WOODS AND WHITE TILES

To create a clean look in the master bath, the cabinetry is all clear fir and matches the trim in the master bedroom. The counter and tile are Carrara marble. A salvaged lead-glass window panel creates some separation between the vanity area and the toilet. The recessed linen cabinet on the back wall has doors that blend into the painted wall paneling.

nity while the house was under construction to replace our outdated heating and air-conditioning systems and to add a new water heater. And, of course, we added ducting for new exhaust fans in each bath.

The original bath had pocket doors, and given the tight space, we wanted the same in the new design. But the main and new master-bath entries were side by side, which posed a problem. The frames would overlap and would have to be sandwiched to make room for both the doors, resulting in a thick wall. Dale came up with an idea that saved space. He modified and combined two pocket-door frames so that the doors pass by each other inside the wall as they open. With no windows available, opaque glass in the

master-bath pocket door allows natural light to filter in from the bedroom windows.

Dale specializes in finish carpentry, so we had him build custom vanities and linen cabinets for both baths. He was able to add even more storage by recessing cabinets into the back walls of both rooms, utilizing unused attic space above the garage.

A style of their own

Each bath had its own design considerations. The intent was to design the main bath in a traditional style, while letting the master lean toward a more modern aesthetic. Dale used quartersawn oak, soapstone, and a matte-finish white subway tile with tumbled marble trim and flooring for the main bath. He

refit antique oak doors for the cabinets, evoking a Craftsman look.

In contrast, the master bath was wrapped in Carrara marble and trimmed in clear fir to match the master-bedroom trim. A tall side panel built into the master's towel cabinet frames a piece of leaded glass, allowing in light while creating privacy. Access to the new walk-in closet also has a space-saving pocket door, made functional with a beveled-mirror panel for dressing.

Tying it all together

Both baths have recessed LED lighting in the ceilings and toe-kick lights under the vanities. In the main bath, Dale installed recessed LED strip lighting around the medicine cabinet as well.

The master closet was smaller than the original, so Dale also installed a built-in wardrobe cabinet in the bedroom for additional storage. It was also updated with a new bay window, new flooring, new recessed lighting, and sconces, and Dale removed the popcorn ceiling. He also updated the hallway outside the master suite with oak flooring, new doors, and new trim.

"It's a game of inches," says Dale. "The most important thing is to look at the way the space will be used and then make the most from what you have to work with." We couldn't agree more. □

Michael R. Anderson is an art director, writer, photographer, and technical illustrator. Photos by the author.

MORE DETAILS

Countertops: Master, Nu Shapes Carrara marble; Main, Nu Shapes soapstone

Cabinets and millwork: Master, Douglas fir; Main, quartersawn white oak (custom by Dale Berns)

Wall tile: Master, Tile Shop polished Meram Carrara; Main, Tile Shop, Imperial Brite White subway

Flooring: Master, Hampton Carrara Tumbled Hex; Main, Biltmore Tumbled

Mirrors: Master, Kohler Verdera; Main, custom by Dale Berns

Sink and faucets: Delta

Tab: Kohler Bancraft alcove bath

Toilets: Kohler Santa Rosa

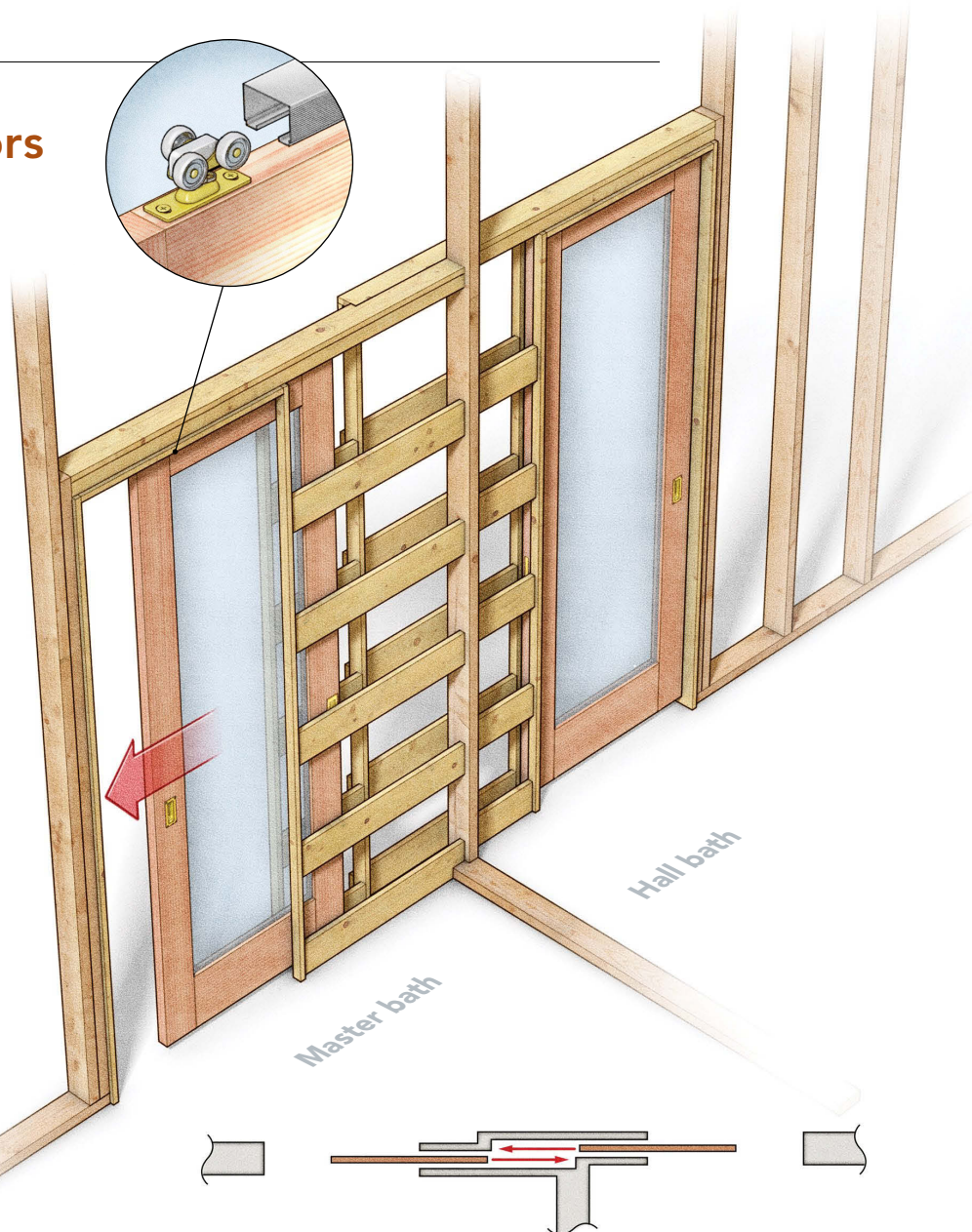
Back-to-back pocket doors

With the entries to two bathrooms, a bedroom, and a walk-in closet converging in a tight space, swinging doors would have made this remodel a nonstarter. Pocket doors were an obvious solution, except that the two baths would both need to use the wall space between the entries



to house the doors, creating a thick wall in an already tight space. Builder Dale Berns's solution was to modify and join two individual pocket-door frames, offset from one another, to create a bypass pocket door without letting the wall thickness get out of

hand. The door frames were cut on site with a circular saw and joined together with screws. Dale describes the process as very straightforward. What was most important was making sure there was a superstraight, perfectly flat, dead level 2x6 above the door for fastening the assembly. Dale says that he always upgrades to ball-bearing rollers (johnsonhardware.com) when he orders pocket-door hardware.





A TRADITIONAL HALL BATH

Quartersawn oak cabinetry, a soapstone counter, green marble floor tile, and a subway-tile wainscot and shower surround evoke a Craftsman design in the hall bath. A band of mosaic tumbled-marble tile adds a splash of color to the white subway tile. The recessed linen cabinet has salvaged antique oak and obscured glass doors.

