

## Yes, We Did It

*by Mari Lu McGinnis*

Listen up my son, have I got a tale for you tonight. It's the story of a big itch. One that took more than seven years to get rid of. And you know sometimes scratching that itch was just as satisfying as getting rid of it. You have asked me about how it all happened, and now that I have you all comfy in my best bed for a night, I'll entertain you with the story. It happened so many years ago that it seems like a fairy tale, but we really did bring it off. It's good for a lot of laughs and a few groans.

First off, it was all my fault, as usual. I had it on my bucket list to rehab an old house. Somehow it seemed that this was the right time. You and Kelly were gone to college and beyond and I had a friend in Real Estate. She didn't know anymore than I did – this was her first sale. So I plunked down the earnest money on this two-storey 1916 hip roofed house. The only really good things were the price and a new roof. My husband reluctantly but gamely agreed to the transaction. So we were committed. This was the year 1977, so it really is a fairy tale. We both needed a challenge and a change.

I don't remember a truck on moving day. I just remember a lot of friends and relatives and their trucks, and boxes and boxes of things and stuff that just kept coming into the new house. After all the white glove inspections of the air force moves and the impeccable movers and their huge trucks this was strictly unmilitary. We were just winging it in many ways. We did sleep there that night, camping really. Everyone thought we were crazy. We thought we were crazy.

The next day began the carrying out, ripping down and ripping up. Never was a VW pickup so needed, used and loved.

Keith tore down our shanty garage, built a new two car garage, jacked up the front porch and poured concrete pillars underneath, pulled off the back porch, using a winch and his trusty Ford Bronco. That was really fun! I was in charge of the kitchen (peeling plaster from our double bricked walls), remodeling one bath (tearing out a closet and moving the bathtub and building a new cupboard, and finding a spot for another new one-half bath and the subsequent contracting for its installation.

Together, with the help of many friends and relatives, we stripped wallpaper from five rooms, mended old plaster, stripped paint from woodwork. An architect designed a sunroom for the back of the house, which we had added on. When we needed to sell our old house in 1998, we quadrupled our investment – even including the costs of the renovations. You, my son, appeared later on to add some of the finishing touches – the stained glass front door panel, and the transom windows.

So that's how it all started and it's a story you can tell your grandchildren. Once upon a time there was an old rundown house that two people, with help, turned into a bright welcoming haven for friends and family. We reshaped the house, and in a way, it reshaped our lives.