

STATE LINES ● RETREAT TO FREDERICKSBURG ● HOME DESIGN ● DAVE BARRY

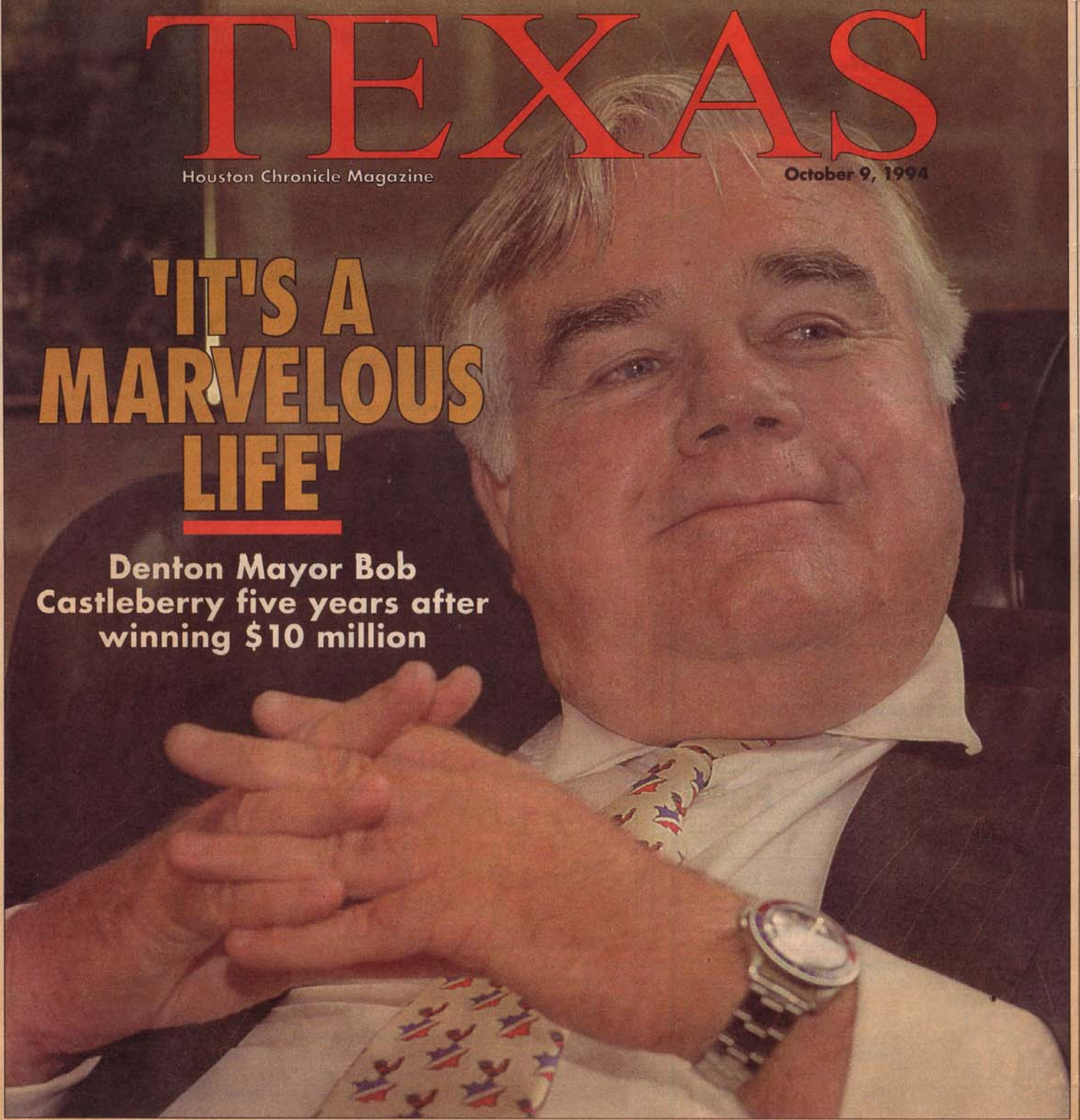
TEXAS

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SPECIAL AFFECTIONS

HOME DESIGN

A kitchen for comfort and convenience

By Madeleine McDermott Hamm

Whether the Houston couple would leave their home in Tanglewood and move into a high-rise condo depended on one thing: the kitchen.

Could the condo's smaller, nondescript kitchen be remodeled to provide the comfortable, heart-of-the-home feeling they had before?

"My wife likes to cook, and I like to eat," explained the husband. "We entertain a lot, and we use our kitchen extensively. If we couldn't make the kitchen work for us, we weren't going to move."

Gay Fly, ASID, of Gay Fly Designer Kitchens & Baths was called in to explore the redesign possibilities. "A high-rise presents certain problems because there are always some fixed things that can't be moved, and certainly you can't bump out exterior walls," Fly said.

But these clients offered a challenge that Fly, a certified kitchen and bath designer, had not faced before: planning a kitchen with no doors on the cabinets.

The condo owners wanted open shelving overhead, plus drawers and roll-out shelves below the counter tops, for maximum ease in reaching and putting away dishes and utensils. While some of the open shelves would be used to display inherited and collected platters and plates, others would hold stacks of everyday dishes and glassware.

The existing factory-built cabinets, which Fly described as "blah but good," were carefully removed and donated to Kappa Alpha at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, where the members were renovating an old house for a fraternity house.

Interior designer Herbert C. Wells, ASID, of Wells Design, who was working with the couple to blend their furnishings into the rest of the new home, collaborated with Fly to continue the feeling of the other rooms into the kitchen. Susan B. Boykin served as project manager, overseeing the installation.

In a few places, antique cabinets were used in place of built-ins.

A space that originally



Kitchen designer Gay Fly remodeled this high-rise kitchen with no doors on the cabinets, as per the owners' request.

The warm, traditional feel of the kitchen is continued in the adjacent room, top photo, with antique pieces.

contained a pantry now features built-in cabinets, and a handsome armoire close by serves as a pantry. The armoire anchors a cozy sitting area and an informal dining area that used to be separated by a wall. Another imposing

piece, a country sideboard, provides added work space and storage alongside the original wall ovens and eases the transition from living space to kitchen.

To repeat the warm wood tones of the antique pieces, the

new custom Heritage kitchen cabinetry with a baked-on white finish was combined with red oak counter tops and shelves. The existing cooktop was reused, and the hood was enameled white to match the cabinets.

All lower cabinets have a top drawer above the roll-out shelves. Small items are collected in baskets on the shelves to keep them together. At Wells' request, all edges are rounded. Cabinet doors could easily be added in the future,

Hickey-Robertson photos

The overall effect is sophisticated country, but this kitchen is really a chameleon.

Fly said.

Important to an easy entertaining style are two warming drawers. At the owners' request, the drawers that keep food hot until served are located along the pathway that guests take going through the kitchen to the dining room. Diners serve their plates buffet-style from the drawers.

A side-by-side washer and dryer were replaced with a stacked unit that needs less floor space, an important consideration when working with an area of less than 200 square feet. This also provided a place to relocate the refrigerator when a wall was eliminated.

An ample center island, with the sink on the kitchen side, functions on the opposite side as a bar and serving area, complete with an ice-maker. The island replaced a narrow peninsula that came out from a wall that's been removed to turn a glassed-in, patiolike room into part of the informal living area.

A backsplash of marble tiles that have been "tumbled" for a worn look gives an earthy, patterned effect that Wells subtly repeated with tone-on-tone, tilelike wallpaper. Brick pavers were replaced with parquet flooring, and a mellow Oriental rug softens the footing in the cook's work area.

While the overall effect is sophisticated country with simple antiques and accessories, this kitchen is really a chameleon. It has no strong style and could look high-tech with contemporary dishes and utensils, or it could stay traditional.

For now, the style is comfortable and convenient.

Madeleine McDermott Hamm is the Chronicle's home design editor.

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