

Good as New



The Hemphills completely transformed the kitchen, removing a cumbersome, old counter and adding a new cooking island topped with granite from American Granite in Kealakekua.

By Kristina Anderson
Photography by Giselle Thompson

Buying their Kailua-Kona home sight unseen, Carol and Mike Hemphill knew it had been unoccupied for several years and most likely needed a few renovations. Fortunately, the house was structurally sound and presented a few cosmetic issues, but the original floor plan left something to be desired.

Moving here from Washington state, the Hemphills were up to the challenge of purchasing the foreclosed home and making the necessary improvements. Their realtor, Gretchen Lambeth, had been scouting places in the area, sending the couple photos and videos. Located near the Sunset neighborhood, the home was a real steal.

"She knew exactly what we wanted," recounted Carol with a laugh, "the worst house in the best neighborhood."

A former carpenter specializing in building log homes, ►



Before

The previously outdated kitchen featured pressboard cabinets and a long counter that blocked access into the room.

Bargain Foreclosure Gets Transformation Makeover



Carol and Mike Hemphill, with their 13-year-old Westie, Bungo Baggins.

The foreclosed home was originally outfitted in dreary white tile and stark paint. A skilled carpenter, homeowner Mike Hemphill opened up the entry, as well as installed bamboo flooring directly on top of the existing tile.

Mike says the home qualified as a fixer-upper with tons of potential. “The first time we saw the house in person was the day we walked in here with our suitcases,” he said. “Yes, it was a great deal, but we had to commit to doing the renovations. I had the experience, which made it a good investment.”

Built in 1983, the home was dated, cramped and painted stark white inside and out, with the exception of one blue accent wall in the living room. The guest bathroom featured a brown tub, while the pool was a green and black mess.

Former owners of a dog-grooming kennel and boarding facility in Spokane, the Hemphills set out to make major improvements to the home, removing a cumbersome counter to open up the kitchen, extending the front entry for a more welcoming exterior and re-configuring the master bathroom to make room for a walk-in closet.

The two smaller bedrooms featured built-in shelves and nice closet doors that the couple left mostly intact. In the kitchen, they installed new cherry wood cabinets, adding granite counters and tile backsplash. Throughout the home, the Hemphills replaced the white tile floors with bamboo flooring from Costco.

After repairing the rotted decking outside, Mike spent two weeks power-washing the pool and bringing it back to life. In the master suite, he installed bathroom upgrades including his-and-hers granite sinks plus a large shower with duel rainshower heads.

Of the coffee maker in the master bathroom, Carol said: “Why not have your coffee pot located where you start your day?”

Collectors of antiques and Catholic artifacts, the Hemphills shipped over many sentimental pieces, including stained-glass windows from the 1800s, an original Hoosier cabinet and an antique church pew from North Dakota.

They also brought their favorite vintage cars: Carol’s ’62 Volkswagen Ragtop and Mike’s ’55 two-door Ford Ranch Wagon with a 351 Windsor engine and vintage Edelbrock valve covers. A familiar sight at Lyman’s, Mike’s surf wagon includes a sticker on the back window proclaiming “No Bad Days.” ▶



Dating from the 1800s, antique stained-glass panels originated from a church on the East Coast, casting an illuminated glow in the master bedroom.

“I love the creative process. I love taking something old and fixing it up.” — Mike Hemphill



Photo by Karen Anderson

It took Mike months of work to renovate the pool area and lanai. “The pool deck was a shambles when we first moved in,” said Mike Hemphill. “We replaced the rotting boards, painted the decking and power-washed the pool to bring it back to life.”



Mike masterfully restored this 1955 two-door Ford Ranch Wagon, which had been rotting in a field in Washington and covered in mold. He did all the bodywork, paint job and mechanical repairs himself.

Dunn Gallery; 9.653 in; 5.25 in; Black plus three; 000044861r1

His current restoration project is a ’62 VW single cab truck.

Married since 1969, Mike and Carol sold their kennel business in 2005 and decided to move to Hawai‘i for health reasons and a warmer climate. After retiring from construction, Mike had become a successful bird dog trainer, working with German Wirehaired Pointers while riding horseback, specifically, Tennessee Walkers. Their move to Hawai‘i marks a new chapter in their lives, as well as for their family of three grown children and two grandchildren.

“We wanted a whole new life and we were willing to tackle anything,” said Mike. “It’s such a good feeling to take something run down or old and restore it. I have so much fun visualizing what the outcome will be and to give a home or car a whole new life.”

Carol agrees: “I like to ask myself, how could I make this place look great without spending a lot of money? It’s fun to figure out how.” **AH**