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Jo and Mike Flanders purchased this house and property along the Crow River in Roseville Township in 1975 and have improved the house with a series of projects over the years. They hired an architect in the 1980s to develop the overall design of the house, which they upgraded in stages, adding the two south-facing gables. In the last year, they did two projects: residing and reshingling last summer and redoing their kitchen this winter.

Roseville couple remodels farm house over 32 years

By Michael Jacobson

Home is where the heart is.

Mike Flanders loved the acreage along the Crow River, a couple miles west of wife Jo have taken the property, the old house, and over the past 32 years remod-She's got her gardens and flowers. I have the barn and the horses."

Mike's history with the property starts brother purchased it as an investment,

reselling it a few years later. Mike, how- grandfather. His great-grandfather bought ever, always liked the place. "I liked the and sold many parcels of land before setriver. I liked the location. I liked the barn. I wanted to have horses," he said.

"I kind of regretted it right away," said Paynesville, since the 1960s. He and his Mike of selling the house. "I figured I'd never be back here."

Five years later, after marrying Jo and eled it to become home. "It gets to be part returning to Paynesville, Mike heard that of you," said Mike of their river ranch. the house might be back on the market. To reacquire it. "All I had to do was give them a huge profit," he quipped.

before Jo's. In 1969 Mike, his dad, and his their abstract, was first purchased in the 1860s by Smith Flanders, Mike's great-horse," said Jo. "That was his #1 priority."

tling on a farm in Union Grove Township.

The original house burned down, and around 1960 a house from town, the old Lutheran parsonage, was moved onto the property, situated on the south side of the telling her – "It's got a really nice barn" – Crow River and on the north side of the repeatedly when she asked about the old Great Northern railroad tracks.

Jo, originally from St. Martin, and Mike married in May 1974, moved back to Ironically, the property, according to chased the house in April 1975. "He always niture." looked for a house where he could keep his

erty was for sale and had it purchased before showing it to Jo. When he told Jo about the place, he kept talking about the barn and didn't want to talk about the state of the house. Jo remembers him house.

Mike, "The walls were bad. The windows barn had been torn down at some point, Paynesville in November 1974, and pur- were bad. It looked worse without the fur-

Jo said she spent nearly a full year cleaning and painting the house. They used gal-

Sure enough, Mike heard that the proplons and gallons of paint to spruce the place up. "We worked on it all the time," said Jo.

"When we first moved here, we just painted it," explained Mike. "We couldn't really address the real problems."

They also rebuilt the fence, with help from Mike's family. After that, Mike's dad, tired of the work of the horses, moved five "The house was really bad," recalled of them to their new place. The original and a cement block barn erected in its place, possibly using some of the lumber from the original barn for the roof. "The

FLANDERS - see page 2C



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FLANDERS – from page 1C

inside of the barn was designed for horses, so it was perfect," said Mike. They now have over a dozen horses and run a family riding stable at their river ranch.

They decided to fix up the house, rather than build new, and this was just the start of 32 years of fixing up.

The first big project they did on the house was digging out the small cellar and creating a large basement around 1980. This involved lifting the house, digging out a basement, and putting in concrete blocks for the basement and foundation.

One of their smarter decisions, they agree, was hiring an architect back in the early 1980s before they started making additions to the upstairs of the house. Knowing they would remodel and add on in steps, they wanted the architect to create an overall vision that they could work towards

Though his expertise cost money, it was necessary since they were ready to add permanent additions. They wanted to know their end vision to insure the remodeling they were doing in stages would fit together. "We wanted it to look like it was all one house," said Jo.

"We said give us something that will be really cool when it's done, and he did," said Mike of the architect, whose vision reshaped their box-like farmhouse.

The adding of the basement was just the first of many remodelings and projects. In 1985, they added a bedroom upstairs and half of the wraparound porch. In 1988, they did a major project, adding a threestory addition. They finished the basement in the late 1990s and added a 40' by 72' shed. They built a new shop/warehouse in 2004. They originally purchased 17 acres but added property to reach 35 acres now.

FLANDERS - see page 4C



Mike's great-grandfather first purchased this property in the 1860s, and Mike, his dad, and his brother purchased it in the late 1960s. After Mike and Jo got married and moved back to town in 1974, they purchased the property again. Originally, they painted the house and barn to make it look better, before embarking on a series of improvement proj-



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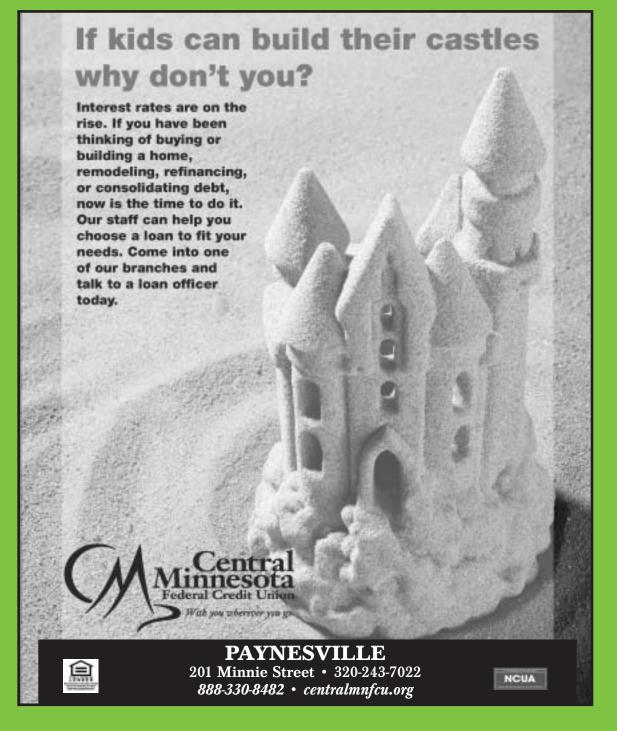
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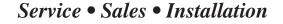
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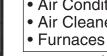
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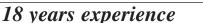


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Their latest project, over the winter, was remodeling their kitchen, installing golden oak cabinets, a center island with granite countertops, and stainless steel appliances. The project involved removing a wall and enlarging the kitchen, leveling the floor and installing new ceramic tile flooring, and repairing and raising the ceiling.

FLANDERS from page 2C

"Every time we had a child, we made an addition," joked Jo.

1988, they agree, was the biggest house project. Jo was pregnant with Dugan, the youngest of their four children and the only one still at home. Their three oldest kids (Shannon, Camille, and Travis) would follow the carpenters around all summer.

Contractors added a screen porch, an addition to the main-floor living room, a bedroom upstairs, a main-floor bathroom, a main-floor sewing room, and a basement under these main-floor additions. "That was the biggest," said Jo.

Living amid the work was challenging, they said. But the real problem was that the contractors kept finding more things to fix. "With an older house," said Jo, "they kept running into new problems.'

"That was daily," added Mike. "Every day I'd come home and say, 'Uh, oh.' The project continually got bigger."

During these remodelings, they always wanted to do it right by using the best materials, they said. This seemed especially important when the Flanders were remodeling interior portions of the old house, which might be difficult to reach again. "Do it so it lasts," said Mike

"Let's do it. Do it right. And it'll be done," added Jo.

By this time, "we had enough into it to stay here for awhile," said Mike.

This year, the Flanders did two projects: one to the exterior of the house and the other redoing the kitchen. Last summer, they replaced their siding with tan steel siding, replaced their trim, wrapped the posts on their porch with metal, and put 40-year shingles on the roof.

Actually, one of the driving factors for this project was the barn. The lean-to on

FLANDERS - see page 6C



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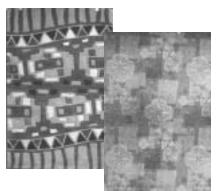
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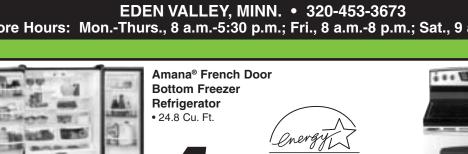




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FLANDERS - from page 4C

their barn needed repair, so they fixed that headroom during the remodeling. and sided the front and back of the barn and put on new doors, as well.

They did the work on the house, too, not because the 20-year-old siding was bad. It was fine, but they were tired of painting it.

The outdoor project was the genesis for their kitchen project this winter. When they put in new windows in the kitchen and entryway while siding last summer, it made sense to redo the kitchen before finishing their interiors.

When they moved into the house in 1975, Jo said that Mike promised they would redo the kitchen in five years. It took 32 years. "I never break a promise completely," joked Mike.

A bad dip in the floor was another impetus for the kitchen project. The kitchen was so sloped, said Jo, that she would have to rotate cakes halfway through baking or they would lean.

They had a plan for the kitchen project, but, like with their other remodelings, it changed to the realities of the house. They were thinking about a hardwood floor, but to level the floor, a thin layer of cement was poured in the kitchen and dining room. Since nails for the hardwood floor couldn't be pounded into the cement very easily, tile was much more practical.

They chose a ceramic tile, with the color throughout so small cuts and scrapes of the tile don't show. "I'm really already thrilled that we have tile," said Jo. "You can wipe it up. You can sweep it up. It's really easy to clean and maintain.'

They also put a heat cable in tile for warmth. "It's nice," said Mike. "You can walk around and it's nice and warm.'

The project also addressed the sagging beams in the kitchen ceiling, and they later found there were four layers of ceilings above the kitchen and that it was sagging at least four inches. They gained

One of the biggest changes during construction, though, was that the wall between the entryway and the kitchen turned out to be rotten and was not a support wall. So they could take it out and use more space for the kitchen. This caused their remodeling plans, including the kitchen cabinets, to be redrawn.

"What happened to the plan?" Mike remembered asking after they took out the wall and made the kitchen larger. "That's just paper. We threw it away," he was told.

One tradeoff to the larger kitchen was that they originally planned to turn the entryway into a pantry. The entryway was never used, though Jo had temporary storage in it due to the lack of space in the kitchen. By enlarging the kitchen, they were left with only a small corner pantry instead.

But Jo still has more storage in the new kitchen than her old one. Enlarging the kitchen allowed them to add an island in the center of it. The addition of the island, she noted, included more cabinets under the counter.

They also like the island as a natural gathering place for family and friends. They had a peninsula island in their old kitchen, and "we always hung out there," said Jo.

Mike got to pick the wood for the new kitchen, golden oak. "She said everybody picks oak, and I said that I wanted it anyway," he said. He also suggested looking at granite instead of laminate, and Jo liked it so much that they have black granite on the island and countertops.

Their oldest daughter had stainless steel appliances in her new home, and Jo liked them and picked them for her new kitchen. Their upgraded appliances include a convection oven and a microwave that can be used as a convection oven, too.

They still have a few things they want to do, such as buying a dining room table and adding some bookshelves in the dining room, which also has the new tile floor and a new china cabinet. And they want to add sloped concrete aprons underneath their eaves for flowers.

And they have lots of future ideas, since there's really no limit to what you can do with a house. Theirs may be a lifetime project. "We've got some ideas, but we're kind of sick of projects right now," said

He would still like to work on the upstairs bedrooms. Jo's idea is more grand. She would like a hexagonal addition to the south side of the house. A librarian, she said, should have a library at home, and she figures the second hexagonal story would be perfect.

Theirs is not necessarily the smart way to remodel a home, said Mike, though one benefit to doing projects in staging was saving on interest expense. "It's just what we did," said Mike. "It's not right or wrong." Plus, he said, "If we'd have built in 1975, this kitchen would have been 32 years old. The siding would be old. We'd be doing this again anyway."

Mike, who intends to retire in three or four years from his job as a mail carrier for the post office, wants to have all the major house projects done before retirement. "So we won't be able to retire because we still have projects," joked Jo.

In all seriousness, their house is their home, and their home is more than the house. "I'd live in anything to be here," Mike said. "The house just kind of came

"For us," added Jo, "we always made it work. We didn't need a fancy house to have fun with your family."



After a half dozen improvement projects over 32 years, the Flanders still aren't finished. Except for your budget, there's really no limit to what can be done, they said.



A peninsula bar was a natural gathering place in their old kitchen, so they were pleased when they were able to enlarge their new kitchen and add a center island.

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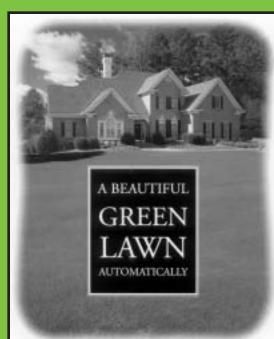
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