

Kennedy Kitchen gets national recognition

By **AMY DENNEY**

STAFF WRITER

George Kennedy has been designing kitchens and baths, advising homeowners on making the most of their spaces and keeping up on the latest trends and technology for nearly 34 years.

But it wasn't until five years ago that his work was nationally recognized. Since then, he's had six designs showcased in "Signature Kitchens & Baths," a high-end consumer magazine sold across the country at bookstores and newsstands.

"I was extremely excited," said Kennedy, owner of Kennedy Kitchen Distributors in Springfield. "It made my head swim."

The latest Kennedy kitchen highlighted in the publication is Diane and John Munkirs' kitchen, featured in this fall's edition. The rustic kitchen is the cornerstone of open living space in the Munkirs' inviting log cabin, tucked away in the woods north of Lake Sangchris.

"It was a job we had been working on for three years," Kennedy said. "The good jobs like this, you don't go and see what you have in stock. You try to take time and pick out the right design for the client."

Homes such as the Munkirs' require a lot of special attention, and that's exactly what they got from Kennedy Kitchen.

Munkirs checked out several kitchen designers before walking into Kennedy's showroom. His display of hickory cabinets caught Diane's eye. She was looking for wood that had natural character, knots and all.

Finding the right cabinets was the easy part. Kennedy faced challenges with the massive ceiling height – 20 feet at the peak – as well as creating a space that would accommodate large family gatherings.

The Munkirs' daughter, son-in-law and four grandchildren share the home with them on holidays and occasional weekends.

That's why Munkirs wanted a large island that would allow her to prepare meals while she visited with family. The

granite countertop is two-tiered, and the stools – covered in fabric that matches the window valance and pantry curtain – are wrapped in a special plastic that allows messes to easily be wiped from the surface.

The island, which contrasts the hickory cabinets with its distressed black cherry finish, has lots of other perks, including rolling platforms on the shelves.

"Everything comes to Diane instead of Diane going to the storage," Kennedy said.

To create the right height in the kitchen, Kennedy stacked cabinets and visually separated them with decorative moldings, but he staggered the height to create more dimension. He also added a valance above the window, and covered the exposed side of the refrigerator with

matching hickory panels.

Munkirs has discovered that the kitchen meets her needs, and she is almost as excited as Kennedy about it being featured in "Signature Kitchens & Baths."

"I think it's a pretty big honor to get in those," she said.

Kennedy said he has submitted two rooms that were rejected, but he plans to continue searching for projects that fit well with the publication's goal of showcasing custom kitchens and baths that meet a design challenge.

He was just as thrilled to be featured the fourth time as he was the first.

"I just couldn't wait to see it. It seemed to take so long for the copies to come," Kennedy said.



Charlene and George Kennedy of Kennedy Kitchen Distributors and Creative Bath & Brass.



Photos by Amy Denney

Every detail of the Munkirs' kitchen was carefully mapped out by George Kennedy. At right, the fabric curtain closing off the food pantry matches the window valance and barstools and blends with the distressed black cherry finish on the island.



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