

WHAT SECRET POWER DID THIS MAN POSSESS?



Benjamin Franklin
(A Rosicrucian)

WHY was this man great? How does anyone—man or woman—achieve greatness? Is it not by mastery of the powers within ourselves?

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Why, then, should a kitchen be cursed with inconvenient, under-the-counter cupboards?

Why, for that matter, cupboards above the counter? Their projecting edges were no problem if you were making a peanut butter sandwich, but ours, at least, always got in my way when I was using one of the taller appliances, such as a food blender or the mixer with the meat grinding attachment.

Looking for new ideas through innumerable model homes, scores of magazines, and a paperback book of the 100 best kitchens of the year. Most of the kitchens were beautiful, some even spectacular. But except in minor details, all of them were essentially 1938 models. By that I mean while tremendous strides had been made in beautifying kitchens over the past 20 years, the engineering of kitchens had progressed very little, to my way of thinking.

Use-and-Beauty

It was apparent that most people were attracted more to a beautiful kitchen than a functional one.

This is understandable. With the accent on "family living" these days, many new homes attempt to bring the kitchen area into the living area, and an eye-pleasing kitchen is therefore of prime importance. But were beauty and functionality mutually exclusive?

About this time, a basic functional design was beginning to take shape in my mind, suggested by the elimination of cupboards above and below work surfaces.

Why not use one entire wall for a floor-to-ceiling storage cabinet, with full-length doors, so that all shelves were instantly visible?

That would leave the adjoining wall for an unimpeded, straight-line work-flow surface that would include the sink and extend to the stove. By unimpeded, I meant nothing above it and nothing on it, such as canisters, breadboxes, gadgets and the like.

Into the storage wall would go—all kitchen—china, mixing bowls, salad bowls, utensils, all canned goods, and all dry, or "cupboard" foods.

Appliance Center

There was one other feature that I deemed essential to a genuinely efficient kitchen; an appliance center where the most frequently used mechanical aids always stood ready to plug in and use. Why should they be brought out from some hidden nook each time they were needed, and then have to be put away again?

By casual shopping, I found a kitchen designer I knew I could work with, and explained what I had in mind. The designer, Philip Robinson, was not only a cook himself, but a man with imagination and vision.

Over many lunches, we tossed ideas back and forth. The shelves in the storage wall, for instance, would have to be adjustable, and of varying depths, so as to minimize the storing of things behind things. The under-the-counter area could be utilized by pull-out bins for flour and sugar, pull-out stainless baskets for apples, potatoes and onions, and a lined breadbox drawer. All of these are standard cabinet-supplied, many life-time finishes.

Work-Flow Line

The storage wall would end at the counter, and in this corner would go the appliance center, with a shelf above for the little used appliances, and a shelf above that could be used for cookbooks.

The work-flow line was now shaping up so that the cook, standing at the juncture of the storage wall and the counter, would have within reach, without moving a step, all major appliances, all non-refrigerated foods, and all utensils except skillets. (These would go in the wide, deep drawer of the electric range.)

We next took up the all-important problems of materials. There were some wonderful new ones since 1938 in the plastics and vinyl fields, and they all deserved a careful appraisal.

For the two surfaces which offered the widest range of choice—the storage wall doors and the work-top—we chose one new material and one old one.

Working Surfaces

I do not happen to like plastic for working surfaces. Plastic is fine for table tops, serving areas and so forth, but not for chopping vegetables, trimming meat or even shaping hamburger patties. Edge-grain maple, to my mind, is more versatile, therefore more functional. But it, too, has its limitations. It is not an ideal surface for receiving hot pans and skillets. Since our counter top was to be one continuous slab of laminated maple, this problem was solved by installing a sheet of stainless steel at the stove end. The maple counter, incidentally, eliminates the need for two accessories: the chopping block and the breadboard.

For the storage wall doors, we chose fibre-glass panels set in gold-anodized aluminum frames (to match the gold-toned maple leaves embedded in the plastic). Sliding on nylon rollers, these were lightweight, maintenance-free, and visually attractive. Robb added a nice touch by lighting them from within, so that a soft glow diffuses this wall of the room at night.

About the time our plans were complete, Robb went to Pittsburgh to attend a two-week seminar on kitchen design sponsored by Westinghouse. He threw the plan into the discus-



The author, with Carrie, in his "kitchen with a heart." Besides cooking, he and his wife publish the weekly Kettering-Oakwood Times for the south of Dayton area.

sion hopper. The result was enthusiastic approval, and the prediction that this would be the trend of future kitchen engineering.

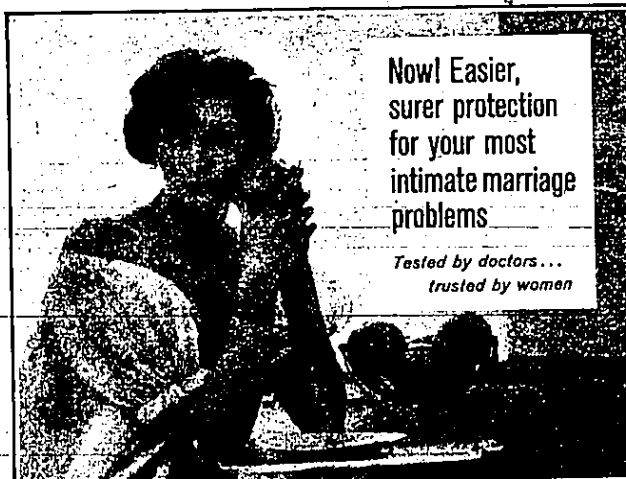
A couple of weeks after it was finished and in operation I asked Carrie what she thought of the "Carrie-proof" kitchen.

"It's the best kitchen I ever

worked in," she said in an awed voice.

"It isn't the perfect kitchen, and it is not spectacularly beautiful, as kitchens are measured these days. But it works!"

And there, anything wrong with a kitchen looking like what it honestly is, a place to prepare food?



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