

## **"THE MORLAND BASEMENT"**

*Howard Morland*

By far the cheapest way to add floor space to an Arlington Forest home is to finish the basement. There are about 500 square feet in the basement, and we have used 3/4 of it for a family room, a full bath, and two closets. I did all the carpentry work myself during a nine month period and the total cost was about \$8000, including a thousand dollars for the rug.

Three features make our basement different from the dozen or so I saw before beginning the project:

1. the floor plan
2. the use of sheet rock throughout so that it resembles the upstairs rooms as much as possible
3. special protection against water in the basement

Many people have declared that our design is the best they have seen. Its main difference from the usual plan is that the bathroom is in the corner of the basement directly under the dining room, rather than under the kitchen. To describe the floor plan, I will refer to areas in terms of the first floor rooms directly above them. The front of the basement is the wall closest to the front yard.

The family room is the entire half of the basement below the living room. Its interior wall runs along the steel "I" beam that holds up the house. A door through the rear (back yard direction) part of that wall leads to the unfinished quarter of the basement under the kitchen which serves as furnace room, laundry, and utility space. To avoid having two doors in the same wall, we access the bathroom through a hallway 31" wide and 5' long which is parallel to the front wall of the basement. The hallway runs from the front part of the family room through the central interior wall to a bathroom door.

The entrance to the hallway is a narrower version of the passageway from the living room to the dining room which is just above it. On each side of this hallway to the bathroom is a closet with folding louvered doors: a small closet 2' deep along the front wall of the basement and a larger closet on the other side of the hallway extending back toward the furnace room. The use of folding closet doors and having the bathroom door open into the bathroom prevent three doors from banging into each other in the small hallway.

The bathroom is an "L" shaped room built around a fully tiled shower in the front corner of the house. Next to the shower on the front wall is a vanity. The commode is in the opposite part of the "L" under the side window of the basement. For privacy, this window is not in the bathroom. The side wall of the bathroom is displaced inward from the basement wall about three feet, and an interior window in the bathroom wall admits outdoor light from the exterior window just behind it. The space between the two walls also allows light from the exterior window to illuminate the furnace room which is just to the rear of the bathroom.

Plumbing for the bathroom was contracted to professionals who dug through the concrete floor to find the main sewer pipe. As expected, the pipe ran straight forward toward the street from the rear of the basement where the vertical plumbing stack is visible behind the furnace.

A seamless white sheet rock ceiling in the family room gives the illusion of the ceiling being much higher than its actual seven feet because there is nothing to focus the eye on. Recessed bookshelves in the interior wall, between the furnace room door and the hallway to the bathroom, help make the 13x 20-foot family room seem larger.

The banister for the stairs is a close copy of the one upstairs. The molding around the doors and windows is "upstairs quality." The floor is covered with wall-to-wall carpet on a thick foam pad. The exterior walls are fully insulated and a forced-air heater duct discharges warm air near the basement floor. The general impression is that the finished part of the basement is simply another floor of the house.

Dampness has never been a problem but we did have leaking walls once or twice a year, after several days of heavy rain. Most of the problems were solved by landscaping to take surface water and roof water away from the house. As insurance against future leaks, an inch-wide channel sloping toward the basement drain was left behind the studs, and no nails were driven into the concrete. Free-standing 2x4 studs were nailed into pressure-treated 2x4's that were glued to the floor with roofing cement.

Approximate costs were:

- \$2600 Plumbing contractor
- 600 Vanity and commode
- 500 Shower tiles installed
- 200 Electrical contracting
- 1000 Unattached wall-to-wall carpet and pad
- 3100 Lumber and other supplies
- 0! Carpentry labor

**Total cost: \$8000.**