



All in the Family A couple remodel an inherited house to suit their needs while staying true to their relative's feelings for the place.

By Maggie Theodora · Photography by David Agnello

The founding music director of the Grand Teton Music Festival, Ling Tung, had several properties in the valley during his many decades here. But it was a quirky two-bedroom log cabin on five acres of land south of Wilson that was his favorite. When Tung unexpectedly passed away at age seventy-eight in 2011, his will left this house to his nephew, Ted Wong, and wife JoAnn. "Immediately we thought of how we could fix it according to Ling's wishes," Ted Wong says.

"Ling loved what was here," Wong says. Tung made some major changes after buying the cabin in the 1970s from the trapper who had built it himself, using logs cut from the property, in the 1950s. "He got help from the architect that designed Walk Festival Hall in Teton Village," Wong says. "For Ling this was a special retreat, a little hideaway."

Above left: Ling Tung in this home's distinctive "octagon" room

Opposite: What started as a remodel of the guest bathroom became a complete remodel after numerous problems were discovered in the foundation, floors, and ceilings of the home. An addition doubled the home's size.





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[TED WONG, HOMEOWNER]

When architect Chris Moulder first visited the home, "little" was among the words that first came to mind. "I'm six foot six and had to duck to get in the front door," he says. "I think all of the ceilings were seven feet." These proportions didn't bother the Wongs, but there was one thing that did: "From all of our time staying in the house visiting Ling, JoAnn and I always had a problem with the guest bathroom," Wong says. "To use it from the guest bedroom you had to walk through the kitchen." The couple wanted to be able to get from one room to the other without passing through the kitchen. Moulder encouraged the Wongs to think bigger, but they stood firm on "making only a few enhancements to what was

there already," Moulder says. As soon as construction started, though, "The rubber hit the road," Moulder says. "The roof lines appeared to be straight, the walls appeared to be straight, and things appeared structurally sound, but we quickly discovered looks were deceiving."

There was a rodent infestation, and mold. Water that leaked into the roof had made it all the way to the basement. The kitchen ceiling needed to be reinforced. The home's foundation was crumbling. "We always wondered why the kitchen floor had a crown in the middle," Wong says, "but thought maybe the floor had just warped."

Still, demolishing the house and starting with a clean slate wasn't an option for the Wongs. "Because of the memories of being in this house with my uncle, we wanted to maintain as much of the structure as we could," Wong says. After sixteen months of demolition and construction, "I think we were able to save about one-tenth of it," he says. "The guest bedroom is almost original, but we raised its ceiling two feet."

Left: A stairway with hickory treads and Douglas fir newels helps give the house a flow and openness it did not have before.

Right: The settee in the entryway was passed on to the couple from Ted Wong's uncle, Ling Tung. It is one piece and made from a single tree root.

Opposite: The Wongs did not want the remodeled house to be "over-the-top decorated." They wanted simple and comfortable, and for the interiors to speak to the area's western character.





The Wongs had started out adamant that the home's footprint remain the same. "Once we learned the foundation had failed and we needed to do a new one, Chris [Moulder] suggested, 'Let's make it bigger,'" Wong says. "Once we knew we couldn't keep the original foundation, we were open to bigger changes." So the couple decided to add a garage, with a new bedroom over it. Since the kitchen ceiling had to be reinforced, it might as well be raised to eight feet from the original seven. Redoing this affected the master bedroom above; the Wongs took that opportunity to raise those ceilings as well and ditch the room's gambrel roof, which had JoAnn bending over every time she made the bed. Moulder pointed out that the master suite should be the nicest bedroom in the house. Even with the higher ceilings, the original master wasn't as nice as the new bedroom over the garage, so the Wongs made that room the new master.

"If we had been told at the beginning what the final price tag was, we wouldn't have started the job, but now that it's done, we've certainly ended up with something that was worthy of the effort," Wong says. "It would have been much easier to start from scratch, but even saving the little we could was worth it to us, and now we've got this crazy house that no one will ever duplicate because doing what we did wouldn't make sense to anyone else. To us it's perfect, though—it has the memories and feeling of my uncle while being substantial enough in size so we can share it with family and friends." ▴

This page: Architect Chris Moulder placed the windows in the master suite, one of the areas that was added to the existing home, to capture views and allow for furniture.

Opposite: This field-built, Douglas fir door is the home's original front door. After the remodel, it was too short to meet Teton County's building code. The Wongs wanted to use it somewhere else in the house, though. The brands on it are from Jackson Hole ranches.

