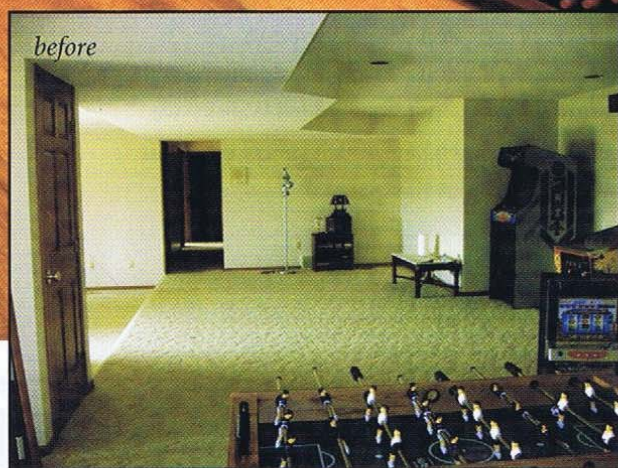




This lower level was remodeled using an Old World English pub as inspiration.



before

after

# Remodelers Corner

BY JENNIFER M. GANGLOFF

At first blush, Mike Smith and his fiancée Cindy Walker seemed to have an enviable lower level in their 1988 Oronoco walk-out ranch, boasting 2,600 square feet, a fireplace and views onto a wooded lot.

But a closer look revealed the unfulfilled potential that rendered the lower level dull and nonfunctional, Smith said. It was one large space, with no defined areas, no real identity and dim lighting. "I knew when I moved into the house in October 2000 that I'd have to do something at some point," Smith said. "We really couldn't take advantage of the space."

That all finally changed last year when Smith and Walker enlisted the aid of Karen Blissenbach, ASID, design principal with Design Studio B. With inspiration from an Old World English pub, Smith's model train collection and theater memorabilia, a new entertainment space emerged that is at once cozy, warm, bright and multi-functional.

Today, a full-scale bar on one side includes custom alder display cabinets, refrigerated drawers, an ice maker, a dishwasher and two televisions (just in case the Vikings and Smith's hometown Detroit Lions are on at the same time). Adjacent to the bar is a wine bar, featuring a small gas fireplace with stone surround that lends ambience, along with a separate wine refrigerator and a custom wine tasting table with a clear cylindrical pedestal for wine corks. "The idea is to sign and date a cork when you're finished with a bottle of wine and drop it in," said Blissenbach, calling it one of her favorite features of the remodel.

## Subcontractors & Suppliers:

Radcliffe Homes & Remodeling  
 Bob Gander Plumbing & Heating  
 Carpet One  
 Home Design Studio  
 Perry Paint Contracting Inc.  
 afm Countertops  
 Hicks Electric  
 Energy Products and Design Inc.  
 KC Tile  
 Stevens Heating Inc.

## Contractor:

DESIGN STUDIO B

## Homeowner:

MIKE SMITH & CINDY WALKER

## Project:

LOWER LEVEL REMODEL

**A personal touch: the corks in this table are all signed and dated.**

The lower level now also includes a media room with art panels, a billiards area and a poker area. A curved soffit and butternut wood ceiling help define the areas, as does the new flooring, which includes cork, of course, in the wine bar and poker area and rustic hand-scraped laminate in the bar and billiards areas. Little touches throughout, such as drink ledges by the pool table, add convenience and sophisticated design elements.

“We went through a lot of iterations,” Smith acknowledged. “But now,” added Walker, “we can seat 25 down here, watch sports, entertain and simply enjoy the space.” ❖

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*Jennifer M. Gangloff is a health writer for the Mayo Clinic and a freelance writer and editor.*

