

Cindy is a master designer

"People get a real education when they plan their kitchens. It is a land of choices now."

-Cindy Fahrenbruch,
Certified Kitchen Designer

by Kay Lavene

Cindy Fahrenbruch of Loomis is a master at designing kitchens. Her track record is one that is hard to beat. She loves her work, and designing kitchens today is even more fun for her than it used to be because the kitchen has come back to being the center hub for all family activity. The kitchen is where everyone wants to be.

When Cindy Fahrenbruch of Kearney left to attend the University of Nebraska, she really wanted to study to become an architect. But instead, she decided to major in interior design and supported her profession with architectural classes.

Cindy said she had always liked interior design and after designing kitchens determined that is where her true God given gift lay.

Cindy came by her enthusiasm for working in the building industry from her parents, Joyce and Ardis, who owned the original Anderson Brothers Plumbing and Heating in Kearney.

Right after graduating in May of 1978 from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Cindy began working as a kitchen designer for her brother, Ken Anderson, who at that time owned Anderson Kitchens in Kearney. Looking back, Cindy shakes her head when she remembers that at the age of 22 and right out of school, she traveled around the state by herself with her German shepherd dog calling on building contractors cold turkey. Anderson Kitchens worked with both home owners and contractors.

"I traveled as far west as Ogallala, McCook and Gothenburg, as far east as Grand Island, south to Beaver City, and north to Broken Bow.

On October 11, 1980 she married Jim Fahrenbruch of Loomis.

Cindy continued working for her brother designing kitchens until 1982, when the couple knew they were expecting the birth of their child, Chris. They decided it would be good for her not to work full time, that she needed instead to stay home to raise their son.

In 1985 Cindy said she decided she needed something more to do to keep herself 'busy,' so she opened a framing business in her home called the Artistic Image Frame Shop. There she matted and framed all kinds of pictures but mostly women's cross stitch pieces that were very popular at the time. It wasn't long until she was also making wooden frames for Betsy's Bobbins (from 1986 to 1989), a company located north of Loomis that made and sold decorative items for the home.

Cindy decided that what she really wanted to do was to get back into the kitchen design business. So in March of 1995, she changed the name of her business from Artistic Image to Artistic Cabinetry and sought out Crystal Cabinetry to become a dealer for the custom cabinet company.

"I was familiar with Crystal cabinets back in 1978-1982."

During the first couple of years while back selling cabinetry, Cindy was also studying to become a Certified Kitchen Designer (CKD) through the National Kitchen and Bath Association. To earn the certification, Cindy not only had to have so many years of experience behind her, but she also had to pass written and drawing exams which included knowledge of all aspects of building, construction, mechanical and electrical systems. It required the ability to write specifications and draw plans that plumbers, electricians and cabinet installers can interpret. It means being familiar with local building codes, safety and environmental regulations, not to mention all those new products-everything from high-tech appliances to cabinet finishes and custom door knobs.

Cindy said that people who have passed the CKD exam must continue to pounn their professional skills by participating in ongoing profession development programs in order to maintain their certification. They also must keep up with changing technologies and products. She said CKDs must also adhere to a code of Professional Conduct, which assures the public of the integrity and service of certified members of the NKBA.

Cindy credits her bother, Ken, for teaching her about designing kitchens. She said he was inducted into the NKBA Hall of Fame last year. She said Ken no longer sells cabinets, but now owns "Task Lighting" in Kearney.

In April 2001 Cindy began working for Steve Atwood who owns Designer Craft Woodworking in Kearney which is the residential part of his business. He also has his commercial company at the Lexington location. Shortly after arriving, Cindy began managing the residential part of the business. "I usually had two women working under me," said Cindy.

In January of 2010, Cindy asked to step down from her management position but continued to sell for Steve.

In July Cindy decided to leave Designer Craft Woodworking and to 'go it' on her own.

"I went back to having a dealer-



Cindy Fahrenbruch of Loomis stands in the kitchen belonging to Heidi and Phil High of Bertrand. Cindy designed the kitchen for the Highs. (Photo by Kay Lavene)

ship with Crystal Cabinets," said Cindy. "I had clients who had purchased them from me in the 90's, and who were very pleased with them.

Now Cindy seeks out her own clients.

She will be the first to admit that working with clients is an art in itself.

Cindy said that when first beginning to work with new clients, she listens carefully to them while sitting and visiting with them to assess their needs. Listening carefully-- is a tremendous asset. "In fact, learning to listen, was one of the first skills I learned," commented Cindy.

"I ask my clients if the main cook is right or left handed. I ask them if their kitchen is a one cook or two cook kitchen. I ask them if groceries are purchased in bulk. I ask them their height, if there are children in the family, the ages of the family members, etc.

"Then I show the client pictures of kitchens I have designed, and they show me pictures of things that have caught their eye as this helps me get a feel for their certain style.

"Today when people design their kitchens, it is literally a land of choices. There are so many," said Cindy. "There are wood glazes, many different types of counter tops, floorings, and so many accessories that will add to the convenience but also the expense of a kitchen such as roll-out shelves, cutting boards, bake centers, tilt out sink fronts and concealed pull out waste baskets. A client has the choice of 'Blum' hardware that gives full extension to drawer boxes, along with soft closure on drawers and doors.

It can take from a couple weeks to six weeks or more for a kitchen to be designed by the homeowner and kitchen designer. The layout as well as the cost of the choices made is done on a computer (design program).

Cindy said that having her clients pick out their appliances (refrigerator, stove, microwave, dishwasher, wine coolers, warming drawers, etc.) before she begins designing is important. She said they need to fit in what is called the 'work triangle.'

She then begins designing the layout of the kitchen.

"When I look at a rectangular shaped piece of paper, I see only angles," said Cindy. "My mind is continually trying to put angles on this rectangular shape. Angles can give an ordinary kitchen some uniqueness and pizzazz."

People then need to pick out the types of cabinets they want. They not only need to choose the style of the cabinets but the kind of wood to be used as well. Cindy says that the most popular woods being used in kitchens now for cabinets are cherry, alder and

mahogany (all hard woods.)

The client needs to make a decision as to the type of wood or woods that will be used for the cabinets in the kitchen as well as the type of countertops desired.

She said the types of woods can also be varied within the workspace-the island can be made from a different wood or a different type and/or color of countertop. A current trend is two different colors of stain, and or woods being used in the same kitchen. For instance, an island might be a black alder wood while the perimeter of the kitchen would be a stained cherry wood with a black glaze. Counter tops will vary also as a granite might be used on the island and a solid

weeks. They are made (in Princeton, Minnesota) and shipped directly to Cindy's client.

The choice of the type of counter tops is also determined by the client. Cindy said that the trend now is to have a couple of different materials or colors within the work space. She also said that there is a wide range of materials to choose from. There are quartz products that are a man made granite and polymer compressed stone. Ground quartz crystals are mixed with pigments and bonds, heated and formed under pressure into slabs. It does not require sealing unlike the granite countertop. While the quartz products are very durable, caution needs to be observed when placing hot items on them.

Also very popular are counter-tops made of granite. Cindy said granite is a porous product and requires sealing every so often, depending upon the color of the granite. "Customers today, enjoying having granite which has a lot of what we call movement, which is different colors in wild patterns instead of a solid color. Hot items can be set on granite.

There are also solid surface counter-tops made of a 100 percent acrylic polymer. It is a one-half inch solid surface, so it is repairable if scratched or stained. (Corian is one brand).

Concrete is also being used. There is also the old standby-the laminate top.

"In my experience, quartz counter-tops are usually a little more expensive than the granite counter-tops, but that really depends upon the color of the granite that you choose. The more movement a piece of granite has, the more expensive it is. The solid surface counter top will follow close in price to the granite. The laminate will be considerably less than all of the above." Floor covering must also be considered. Cindy said wood floors are still very popular as are heated tile floors. Cork flooring is also being used.

As for the amount of time it will take to remodel a kitchen, "There really isn't a norm for the time span of a kitchen remodel," commented Cindy. "It depends upon the contractor, the subcontractors, which would include the electrician, the plumber, and sometimes the sheet-rocker. It also depends also upon the extensiveness of the project-- if walls are being torn out and / or if cabinets are just being replaced.

About her work, Cindy said, "I have been blessed to have family who supports me. I feel strongly that whatever talent I might seem to have, is God given. I just try to use the gifts I've been given, to do the work I'm being led to do. When you do that, work is fun and easy."



Cindy Fahrenbruch, 54

- Graduate of Kearney High School
- Graduate of University of Nebraska Lincoln, Interior Design, 1978
- Married James Fahrenbruch, 1980
- Son, Chris, married to Stephanie

surface product might be used around the perimeter.

"Glazing is something that has become very popular," said Cindy. "It consists of applying a colored stain, usually black or brown, to the already stained door and then wiping it off but allowing it to hang up in the detail of the door. This is an artistic approach to staining of cabinetry, and the customer must be made aware that no two doors will look exactly alike."

The layout of the kitchen and the designs used for the cupboards is then determined by the cook's needs and desires.

"Whatever designs I can create, can be made for me by Crystal Designs," said Cindy. "This really allows me to be very creative. The use of custom cabinets is very important to me, because it allows me to create the type of cabinet that best is suited for the customer's needs in that particular kitchen or situation.

The lead time for custom cabinetry is usually six to seven