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## Hallmark Renovations' Success Rooted in Details

Hallmark Renovations and Custom Homes | Houston, Texas





# Hallmark Renovations' Success Rooted in Details

by **Kathy Bowen Stolz**

One thing that Hank White understands is details. And the many clients his Hallmark Renovations & Custom Homes are glad he does!

For White, who has a degree in business administration and marketing from North Texas University, dotting Is and crossing Ts come naturally. He admits to being “very good with budgets and numbers,” which is an essential skill for the “guy who does it all” as the sole Hallmark employee.

“It’s just me. I like to be the guy who makes the decisions. And nobody cares about clients’ needs and wants more than me. I’m very accessible by phone. If I don’t know an answer, I can get the answer.”

But this Houston native is also a “people person” who also focuses on making sure his clients get what they want. “We’re a very custom company, aspiring to make our clients’ dreams become reality. We want them to know that our ability to create what they want is not restricted,” he said.

Most of Hallmark Renovations’ projects are remodels,

ranging from “jewel box”-type kitchens and baths to include whole-home renovations from the West Houston to Inner-Loop neighborhoods, such as West University, Rice and Southampton. White usually runs about 4-5 projects at a time, completing 8-10 whole home renovations annually in addition to constructing one or two new homes.

Hank’s willing to tackle anything except swimming pools, which he readily leaves to others in the construction field. But painting? Check! Skylights? Check! Outdoor kitchens? Check!

A specialty area for Hallmark Renovations & Custom Homes is cabinetry, thanks to the knowledge Hank gained from his three years of owning Hallmark Kitchens, a design/build cabinet shop, between 2004 and 2007.

Although he didn’t have a background in cabinetry or woodworking before buying that business from a family friend who was retiring, he was tired of traveling around the world as a consultant in finance and telecommunications after college. He and his wife Amy wanted to settle into a lifestyle that was conducive to





raising their daughter (who is now 19). He didn't want to miss his daughter's growing up during his 12-week travel stints. (The Whites now have three teenagers.)

After three years, he sold the high-end cabinet showroom to a national cabinet manufacturer that wanted a Houston presence, although he didn't know what he was going to do as his next venture. Telling Hank they didn't trust anyone else to handle their whole-home renovations, two of his cabinet clients set him on his next path, he said.

From that start, he's built Hallmark Renovations & Custom Homes by relying on word-of-mouth referrals, primarily from previous clients and residential architects with whom he's worked. He's even received referrals from commercial builders! In fact, he counts several among his clientele, but he's not intimidated by them. "They're no more challenging than anyone else," he stated.

These days Hallmark is known for its cabinetry in kitchens, bathrooms and libraries, according to Hank, who co-owns the business with his wife Amy, who works outside the business as a teacher. Cabinets are an expensive part of most of Hallmark's remodeling projects, so Hank's expertise in cabinet design pays off. "Our design focus is on function and beauty while using only the highest quality products."

Unlike many builders who prefer new construction, Hank White claimed, "I'm more of the remodel guy. And I use architects who do more remodeling projects." He gravitates

to remodeling because he likes working with people and building their homes. He especially likes the variety that comes with remodeling projects.

Remodeling can also provide surprises and challenges. "We discover hodge-podge and illegal work in homes that have been previously remodeled. We don't hide it or ignore it; we bring it to the client's attention." He mentioned that it's not unusual to find as many as three types of trim in a home. He lets the homeowners decide whether to replace all the trim for consistency.

He uses a cost-plus business model and doesn't penalize clients for changes other than those costs that arise as part of the changes. "We follow plans to a T, but at the same time, it's the client's home. If they want to deviate from the plan, we allow that to happen.

"We are always upfront with our clients on costs and time-frames to help them build the home of their dreams while staying within their budgets."

Clients may also stay in their houses during the remodeling project when possible. One client, whose house was damaged by Hurricane Harvey, continued to live in the upstairs of their house while Hallmark's crews worked in the downstairs.

To avoid inconveniencing his clients and to use his tradespeople most effectively, Hank will postpone starting projects when he's busy. He said a whole-home renovation typically takes 6-9 months, while a kitchen or bath projects





lasts about 9-12 weeks.

White uses only trades who are “very, very courteous and conscientious. My guys seem to care more [than other tradespeople] because they work with folks in their homes. In new homes they don’t see the clients.” He uses a small team of tradespeople, many of whom have known him since he began Hallmark Renovations.

Noting that the majority of his clients are women, he finds that listening carefully to their wants and needs is a key to success. “Women are more emotionally involved than men. By listening, I can gauge what’s really important to them on a project.” For example, if a client talks in detail about her preferred oven hood, he knows that creating the hood she envisions is essential to the client’s happiness.

Client happiness comes in many forms. One couple was so pleased with their kitchen remodeling that the husband is now cooking for the first time!

“It’s a great feeling of accomplishment to see people enjoy their homes. I love seeing the progress toward the finished product,” Hank noted.

*To contact Hallmark Renovations & Custom Homes,  
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