

Decor Score: A tall order for the bathroom

by *Rose_Bennett_Gilbert*

Q: We are moving into what we hope will eventually be our retirement home.

So we're planning a few remodeling projects to make the house more comfortable. First on the list is the master bath: we're tall people (my husband is 6-foot-5 and I am 5-foot-11) and the fixtures we now have are

TALL ORDER INDEED - This master bath has been remodeled and resized, the better to fit the homeowners themselves. CNS Photo courtesy of Brynn Bruijn/Abbie Joan Enterprises. too short (tub) and too low. In fact, the bath feels too small, but there's no way to gain extra floor space. Can you suggest ideas for making it feel larger and more "fitting" for tall people?

A: Rest assured that bath manufacturers are not unaware of America's, ahem, growing trend, that we are undeniably taller - and heavier - than previous generations.

People may have tittered when a company introduced the Big John toilet seat during the National Kitchen & Bath Show a few years back. But it filled an increasingly obvious need. Higher by 2 inches than average and able to stand up to more than 1,200 pounds, the Big John toilet seat is ADA compliant, which means it also meets the requirements of the Americans With Disabilities Act, aka universal or accessible design.

And that means comfort and safety to more large - as well as aging - Americans. Passed by Congress in 1990, the ADA is meant to bring good design to every member of society, regardless of size, disabilities or age. As taller-than-average people who intend to "age in place," as the saying goes, you should seek out ADA-compliant fixtures for your remodeling project, including a tub with seating or a transfer platform, grab bars and vanities raised to a comfortable height. Ample lighting, a curbless shower and non-skid flooring are also smart.

The true beauty of universal design is that it doesn't show. You can have all these important features and good looks, too. Check out the handsome wood-warmed and stone-rich bath we show here. Designed by Abbie Sladick of Abbie Joan Enterprises, it was remodeled to meet the special needs of a middle-aged couple, who, like you, are tall of stature and planning to grow old in their home.

We borrowed this room from a new book all about "Universal Design for the Home," written by Wendy A. Jordan (Quarry Books) and filled with other ideas for graceful aging in place. For example, the window shade operates by remote control, and there's a recirculating heat pump embedded in the tub surround to keep the water at a constant, safe, comfortable temperature. True luxury, after all, is more than surface-deep.

WHO SAYS HOUSE WORK IS COOL?

Very few, these days. Observes a friend who majored in home economics awhile back: "No one seems to find pleasure in the domestic arts any more."

But here's the point - even the most drop-dead decorating job loses all appeal under a layer of dust. Grunge is not cool. Shine, sparkle and glow are. Never mind if your mother never taught you how to clean (thinking she was "liberating you for better things?") Woman's Day just filled the gap. Hot off the presses at Filipacchi Publishing, "Woman's Day Easy House-Hold Tips" takes the mystery out of household mastery, including cute ideas for inexpensive decorating.

Samples: Drape a table runner over a wood rod for a ready-made valance. Use a lint roller to dust lampshade. Set a timer when you clean: you'll work faster with a deadline.

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