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They are still planning to build a deck off their bedroom, with a hot tub eventually, too, one of several projects on their to-do list.

For the main section of their house, they started work last summer, demolishing the existing structure, except for the fireplace. They did most of the demo the week before and then, with the help of friends and family, they started tearing off the roof on a mid-summer Friday. By Saturday evening, they had the new roof up and the house waterproofed again. "We didn't know what the weather was going to do, so we had to work quickly," explained Nick.

"From there, it was nights and weekends," he added.

They did not have an exact plan for the rebuild when they started. It was fun, said Nick, as they tore the house apart, to imagine how it had been constructed originally. "We didn't really have a blue print. We just tore it apart and went from there," said Nick, adding that they had general ideas but had to make them workable during the remodeling.

A large part of their working process was Maggie having an idea, and Nick, knowing it would be more work for him, initially saying "no." Sometimes his "no" held, but other times it did not. For instance, when Maggie wanted to save the brick from the old chimney, she eventually convinced Nick to do so (after half of the brick was in the dumpster). Then they used the brick to decorate a wall at the far end of the kitchen.

A few things motivated the rebuild: the spotty insulation in the old house, the age of the roof, and the low ceilings (7' 6"). "I was so tired of the low ceiling because it felt like you were in a cave," said Nick.

They added only an eight-foot by eight-foot corner to the front of the house, enlarging what is now the new dining room, but by eliminating an unused closet and consolidating two doors into one main exterior door off the patio they gained "twice as much space." "It's big enough," said Maggie, who is the director of annual giving at St. Benedict's College in St. Joseph, her alma mater. "We don't need more space because it's so open."

They removed the walls (and doorways) on both ends of the kitchen to open that room to the living room and dining room. They raised the ceiling, including a new vault running from the kitchen thru the new entry to the dining room. For the vault, Maggie wanted some old beams,

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In just a weekend, leaving the fireplace having an idea, the Utsches tore off the old roof and built new walls and a new roof.

Submitted Photo



Their remodeled house includes an eight-foot by eight-foot addition, all new windows, and a new gable over the front door.

Photo by Michael Jacobson



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