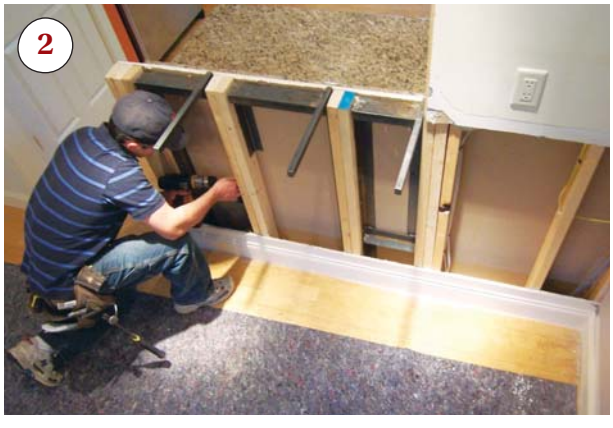
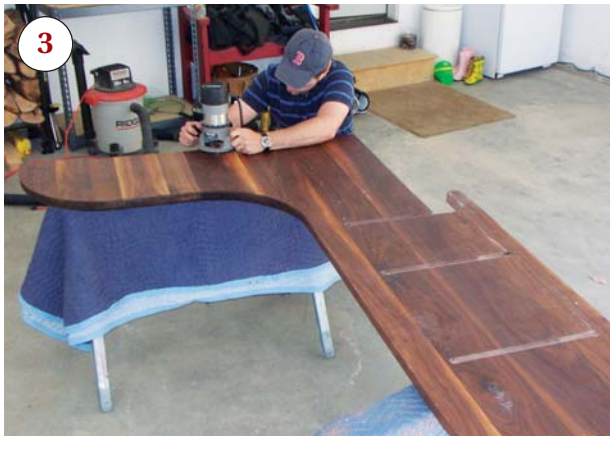
# On the Job

## Supporting an Overhanging Counter

by Brandon Archibald


On the remodeling project shown here (1), the clients wanted to create a gathering spot that would connect their kitchen to the adjacent dining and living areas. They came up with the idea of a dry bar in the corner, with a surface that would complement the stone counter in the kitchen. They found a maker of concrete and wood counters on the Web (J. Aaron, jaaroncaststone.com) and, after seeing a photo of a top made of distressed black walnut, declared, "This is it!"

We drew up a preliminary design and forwarded it to the company to get pricing. Once we had the owners' go-ahead, we finalized the drawings, refining the edge radius and requesting some handwork with rasps and files to give the piece a natural feel.

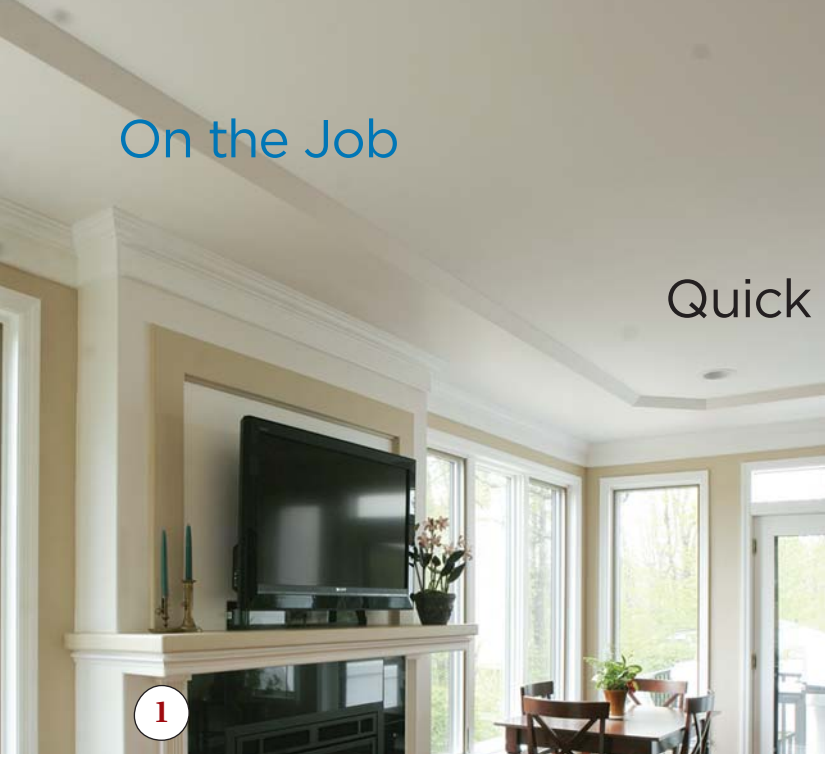
We decided to support the top with steel brackets (2) secured to the half-wall framing below. We ordered these from a local metalworker, who fabricated three brackets that fit perfectly in the stud bays. We installed them and tested them for strength, then waited for the counter to arrive.

The day the walnut top was delivered was exciting. It came via freight truck, packed in a 5-foot-by-7-foot wood box. Other than the photo on the Web site, how the top would look had remained a mystery. No one was disappointed.

We scribed the counter to fit against the wall, set it in place, and marked out the exact locations of the steel brackets from underneath. We then routed slots in the bottom (3) and installed the top, using silicone to seal the connection between the wood and steel. A few coated screws driven up through the steel hold it in place (4), where it seems to float above the floor.


***Brandon Archibald*** *owns Archibald Finish Carpentry in Andover, N.H.*

# Quick Tray Ceiling




A tray ceiling can add style to a room, but the prep, framing, and finishing can be complicated and costly. With vinyl EZ-Tray angled corner bead (800/874-2333, trim-tex.com), however, drywall contractor Myron Ferguson quickly and inexpensively converted this flat ceiling to one with eye-catching detail **(1)**. At a soffit depth of 2 inches, the change in plane is modest but effective, making the system a good choice for rooms of average ceiling height.

The installation begins with 2x2 furring strips screwed through the drywall into the framing, outlining the soffit areas **(2)**. Intermittent blocking provides added support for the soffit drywall. The job shown here is new construction, but the method would be no different in a remodeling situation. In fact, the border areas can conceal new wiring runs for retrofit lighting fixtures.

Ferguson applies 1/2-inch drywall over the furring **(3)** and then trims it flush with a zip tool **(4)**. Cleaning up raggedness and dangling paper with a rasp provides a crisp edge **(5)**. A block of 2x4 added on the fly **(6)** backs up










random butt joints, preventing movement and cracking **(7)** and allowing infill pieces to be quickly fitted without reference to a framing layout **(8)**.

Once the drywall is installed, the exposed edge of the furring is covered with the 3-inch-wide EZ-Tray corner bead **(9)**. Ferguson covers the long runs first, butting square-cut ends into the corners **(10)**. Next — although the instructions don't include this step — he applies adhesive caulk behind the top of the bead to help position and hold it against the ceiling drywall. The vinyl bead cuts easily with snips or a utility knife, and overlapping "mitered" corners are simple to make with a proprietary angle marker. Using spray adhesive, he then sticks the narrow installation flange to the drywall, staples it at 10-inch intervals, and covers it with compound **(11)**. The angled face serves as a finished surface and requires no compound.

After taping, finishing, and priming the drywall, Ferguson uses acrylic caulk to blend the miters and integrate the top edge into the ceiling. The caulk readily takes texture and paint and gets finished with the ceiling for a seamless appearance. He prices the average soffit at about $10 per linear foot, based on the room's perimeter dimensions. — *Dave Holbrook*

# An Upside-Down Beam

by Yves Vetter

Here's a technique we use on occasion to create an open floor plan in an existing ranch-style home, where the ceiling joists typically rest on a center bearing wall. Instead of installing temporary ceiling support and demolishing the bearing wall, we strip the wall of drywall and then move to the attic.


First, we spike together all the overlapping ceiling joists with plenty of 12-penny nails, then lay a 2x6 baseplate on the flat across the top of the ceiling joists, directly above the top plate of the bearing wall. We fasten the plate with #12 structural screws into the top of each joist, shimming as needed to ensure good contact with each joist. This helps to maintain the existing ceiling plane and prevent drywall screw pops.


Next, we make an opening in the gable end, then slide an engineered wood beam along the baseplate (1). (The beam shown here is a 6x16-inch Parallam, though the size changes depending on the spans involved.) By this time we've already installed posts or other continuous structural bearing for both ends of the beam, extending down to the foundation or a new footing.

Once the beam's in place, we lag-screw it to the baseplate from below, then use conventional rafter ties and perforated steel straps to secure the ceiling joists to the beam (2). At this point we can tear out the first-floor bearing wall; typically, all that's left is to patch the gap in the drywall left by the old plate.

The first time we used this method, we ran it by a structural engineer to make sure we were on the right track. Now, as long as we're dealing with the ordinary attic loads found in ranches, we size the engineered beam and metal connectors from the manufacturers' design guides.

***Yves Vetter*** *owns Evergreen Construction and Consulting in Seattle.*