

## BATTEN DOWN THE HATCHES!

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*The architect's home: Framing fast to beat the bad weather.*

This is Part 3 in the continuing saga of being my own general contractor on my house addition. If you have ever ripped the entire roof off your house in order to put an addition on, you will know that it is a situation you want rectify sooner rather than later. As an architect who has watched this done a number of times before, I realize a lot of the problems that can occur.

For example, torrential rain. Water gets through (no matter how many tarps you have) and leaks into the finished house below. Or perhaps the guys working overhead accidentally step through the drywall ceiling below or drop a 16-foot-long 2×12 through the ceiling, which then punches like a javelin through the first floor wall below. Fun. Suddenly drywall ceilings and walls on the first floor need to be added to the to-do list.

Given that we were starting at the beginning of October instead of the beginning of September, I asked the framers to be extra speedy. We waited until after the Hurricane Joaquin scare the first weekend, but we knew more would come. I had a busy office to run, so the routine was that I would meet the framers in the morning, we would go over the game plan for the day, they would work, and I would come home after 5 p.m. and check it out. Unfortunately, it was usually dark and there was a giant tarp over the house when I got home, so it was very hard to see what was happening.

The framers worked fast, which was fantastic, but on day ten or so of the framing I realized that something had gone wrong. Basically they had framed the major shed dormer across the front of the house two feet taller than I had intended. This, to me, was one of the key aesthetic elements of the house. It was all a misunderstanding. The drawings showed what I wanted, but we had conversations that they took to mean otherwise. Whose fault was it? We were descending into finger pointing and ill will, and I did not want that.



Also, another hurricane-like storm was on its way. We had already experienced all of the drywall wrecking mishaps listed above and we were living in the house below. It is scary to sleep with only a tarp and one layer of drywall over your head. We wanted the actual roof on the house ASAP! If I wanted them to change the error it would have meant about a three-day time delay, plus a few thousand dollars (even if we split the cost). It also would have meant that roofers we had lined up to start the next day would be put off a week.

I took a survey of everyone I could possibly grab and asked them if they could see the aesthetic problem with the roof error. Most people said they would not be able to tell the difference. I don't know if they were appeasing me or if architects are just over-trained in visual nuances for their own good, but I decided to let it go. One of the most important design features of my house addition would forever remain "wrong" in my mind. We got the roof on and four days later had a major wind and rain event. My family was pretty thrilled that we dodged the bullet, but I knew things would never be the same. I could not believe it, my design was ruined!

Lesson of the week: Let it go. One of the major things about house renovation projects is that many things will not go your way. From the initial design, when you learn that you cannot fit what you want, to bidding, in which you learn that you cannot afford what you want, to construction, where things are so complex and so keyed into money and schedule that you may not even get what you want when you can afford it, it can be a disappointing process. You can be a perfectionist and demand that everything goes precisely your way, but you just have to realize that it will cost you a lot of money and time. To avoid major frustration, anger and — if you are acting as your own GC — guilt, you may do best with a Zen-like approach to acceptance of all things. After all, it is just your house. Wink wink.

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