



from *Renovation: A Love Story* by Ron Tanner

21: Why Renovation Takes So Long



We thought it'd be easy

to install our stove



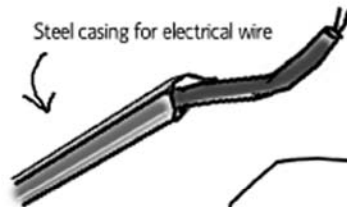
in the kitchen hearth. It would be a perfect fit. All we needed was a gas line and some electricity. I let a pro install the gas.

After the plumber did his bit, I thought I'd have the rest done in a couple of hours.

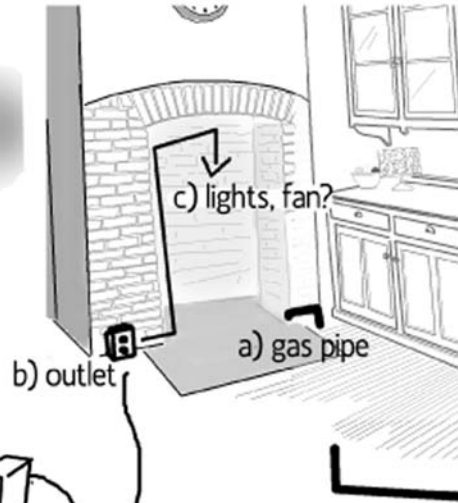
But, once I got the electricity up to the hearth, I realized I would need lights over the stove. And a fan. So I drove to the nearest do-it-yourself store and bought lights and a fan.



While I was there, I bought some metal casing for the electrical wire because you can't run wire naked on a wall. See? I was on top of things.



Steel casing for electrical wire

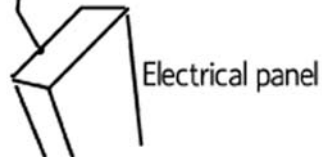


b) outlet

a) gas pipe

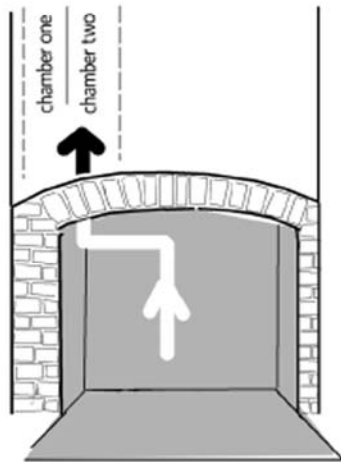
c) lights, fan?

junction box



Electrical panel

I realized that, in order to vent the fan, I'd have to clear out the flue. I found two flue chambers. One was supposed to be connected to the water heater just below the floor. But it wasn't connected. Because--I remembered--there was this long pipe that fell out of the flue when we first cleaned out the hearth. I thought it was an old stove pipe. So I threw it out. Now I saw that it was the vent pipe for the water heater. There was no vent pipe in the other chamber. So I'd have to get one for that side too.

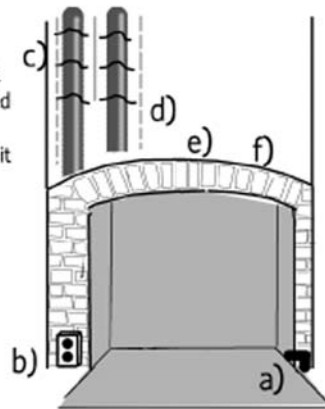


I returned to the store.



It was really dirty inside the chimney. 100 years of soot. I cleaned it out as best I could. This took hours. There were also loose bricks in there--a real hazard. So I mortared those in. Then I installed the vent pipes. The pipes were eight feet tall and seven inches in diameter. I cut straps out of scrap sheet metal, then used these to attached the pipes to the masonry with masonry screws. This took a long time. It was dark and cramped inside the chimney. I bumped my head and elbows many times. When I was done, I was not a happy man. Jill said I looked like I had been working in a coal mine all day. I went to bed.

When I returned to the hearth on the third day, I thought I was almost done because only (e) the lights and (f) the fan were left. But I couldn't figure out how to hang the lights. They would have to be recessed out of sight. I decided I would need to build a frame to which I could attach a plywood canopy that would hold the lights. I'd cover the plywood with aluminum sheeting to make it look like stainless steel--it'd be easy to clean too.

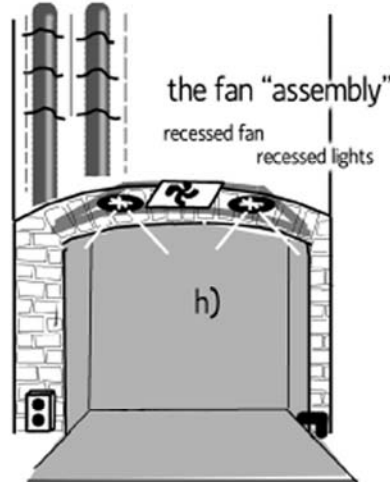


I didn't have any aluminum sheeting. I had also run out of masonry screws.

I returned to the store.



I created a "fan assembly" of plywood covered with sheet aluminum. It held both the lights and the fan itself. But I was so excited about getting it together, I



miss-cut the plywood twice. Then, after I fit the assembly into place and screwed it in tight, I realized I didn't have the fan attached to the vent pipe. So I took it out and attached it (g)--with one of those accordion type ducts made of aluminum.



Now I was ready to run the electricity up to the fan assembly. But then I noticed that (h) all of the brick inside the hearth needed cleaning, new mortar and then priming and painting--Jill and I had decided to paint the hearth glossy white. But I had run out of glossy white paint.

I returned to the store.



It took two days for the new mortar between the bricks to dry. Then, at last, I primed and painted inside the hearth. The next day, I was able to run the electricity up to the fan assembly. This included (i) the installation of a light switch.

So there it was: done at last! It took only one full week to put the stove into the hearth. At that pace, I figured, I'd have the house done by the time I was eighty.

