

# Local expert advises clients on what flooring works best for them



## By J. Anderson for Crown Floor Covering

Complaints about contractors usually are inevitable, but not with Bill and Fred, who have been selling and installing flooring in Orange County for so long he jokes the last time he had a blood test, doctors found it was partially hardwood, carpet and tile. "I have a letter from my insurance company that there's never been a complaint against me or my license, which in the life of a contractor is rare," said Bill, owner of Crown Floor Covering. He has been part of the local flooring industry since 1968 and a licensed contractor since 1975. "I'm not saying we haven't had problems. We have, but we've always taken care of them," he said. Throughout the decades, Bill has seen flooring trends change profoundly. Carpet was so popular in the late 1960s and early 1970s that he covered hardwood floors with wall-to-wall carpeting in hundreds of houses. In those days, carpet and linoleum dominated the market; hardwood and tile were rarely preferred.

Bill has seen the market gradually shift to the opposite – today, demand is for hardwood and porcelain tile. Ironically, he often is called to homes to remove carpet he installed years ago, and he's delighted to restore the wood floors to their original glory. Sometimes, the homeowners are second- or third-generation customers of the family-owned Crown Floor Covering. One reason Bill has earned the long-term trust of so many locals is that he's way past the fear of telling customers things they might not want to hear about various flooring materials. "I tell them the good and the bad, and I never push them to make decisions quickly," he said. "This is not like buying groceries – if you end up not liking what you buy, you're still going to have to live with it for a long time."

For example, Bill will advise that porcelain tile is sturdy and classically beautiful, but that other things about it should be considered. It stays chilly in the winter, its grout is subject to staining, and it can be surprisingly hard on the legs when used for kitchen floors, where people tend to be on their feet for long periods of time. He often recommends porcelain tile as the optimum choice for bathrooms and washrooms because it is impervious to steam and has great longevity.

He is likely to suggest hardwood – yes, hardwood – instead of tile for kitchen floors. He's had hardwood in his own kitchen for the past 18 years. "Wood flooring in the kitchen used to be a pain because of old wax finishes that needed frequent care," he said. "But the urethane finishes on today's hardwood floors are unbelievably tough." Many times, Bill has refinished such floors after a decade or more of use, to discover that only the first two or three layers of up to 10 coats of urethane have been worn, the wood completely untouched. Bill demands strong warranties in each product he sells, be it carpet, tile, and hardwood.

He strives to keep prices low, and toward that end, gives customers many options for keeping costs down on a project. "My job as I see it is to give them all they need to make the best decisions for themselves," he said.



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