

Building a Fold-Down Bed

A simple two-part bed hides away to maximize space in a small room

BY PATRICK CAMUS



Lynnette and I don't have that many houseguests, but the few that we do have tend to stay for long periods of time. We also don't have that much room: Our town house is narrow, and space is always a big concern. Our only spare room is just big enough for a bed, but we thought it would be nice to use the room as a dressing room when it wasn't occupied by the odd cousin or in-law. A Murphy-style bed seemed like just the thing.

After some research, I quickly became disillusioned with everything premanufactured, which seemed bulky and lacking in finesse. I wanted something that could truly blend into and even enhance the room, something that off-the-shelf choices never do.

Because the room measures only 9 ft. by 9½ ft., it was important that the bed be as slim as possible when folded away. I also wanted the bed's underside to be flat and smooth so that it would look like the other three walls (drawing facing page). I found a lumberyard that stocked 5-ft. by 10-ft. sheets of medium-density fiberboard (MDF), which made a perfectly sized mattress platform. Flanking the bed with shelving units kept the massing down while forming a perfect niche for the bed. The bed could then be locked into an upright position using sliding bolts buried in the shelves.

The support for the foot of the bed was the final item to tie together the design. Fold-down legs wouldn't maintain the flat surface of the platform, so instead, we opted for a roll-out footboard. This roll-out footboard is actually a box, big enough to store a comforter; the two flanking cupboards below the bookcases hold the pillows.

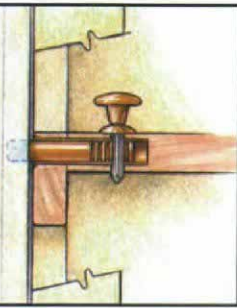
Disguised as wainscoting when the bed is stored in the wall (bottom photo), the footboard conceals the ledger and hardware. Although the MDF makes the bed feel heavy when it's descending, we've had only compliments about the bed's comfort. And when the bed is closed up, we're left with extra floor space that we can always use in a house that's 10 ft. wide. □

Patrick Camus, an architect in Alexandria, Virginia, spends most of his free time with his wife remodeling their house. Photos by Charles Bickford.

Down for the night. Tucked away, the bed masquerades as a wall (photo top left); the wainscoting details align with the adjacent cabinet doors. To transform the bed, the author pulls the roll-out footboard from the wall (photo top center), unlocks the hinged platform from its place between the bookcases and lowers it onto the footboard (photo top right). The applied molding at the bed's foot fits into notches in the support.

Locking it up

Sliding bolts (Ives; 800-766-1966) mortised into the flanking bookshelves keep the bed in its upright position.

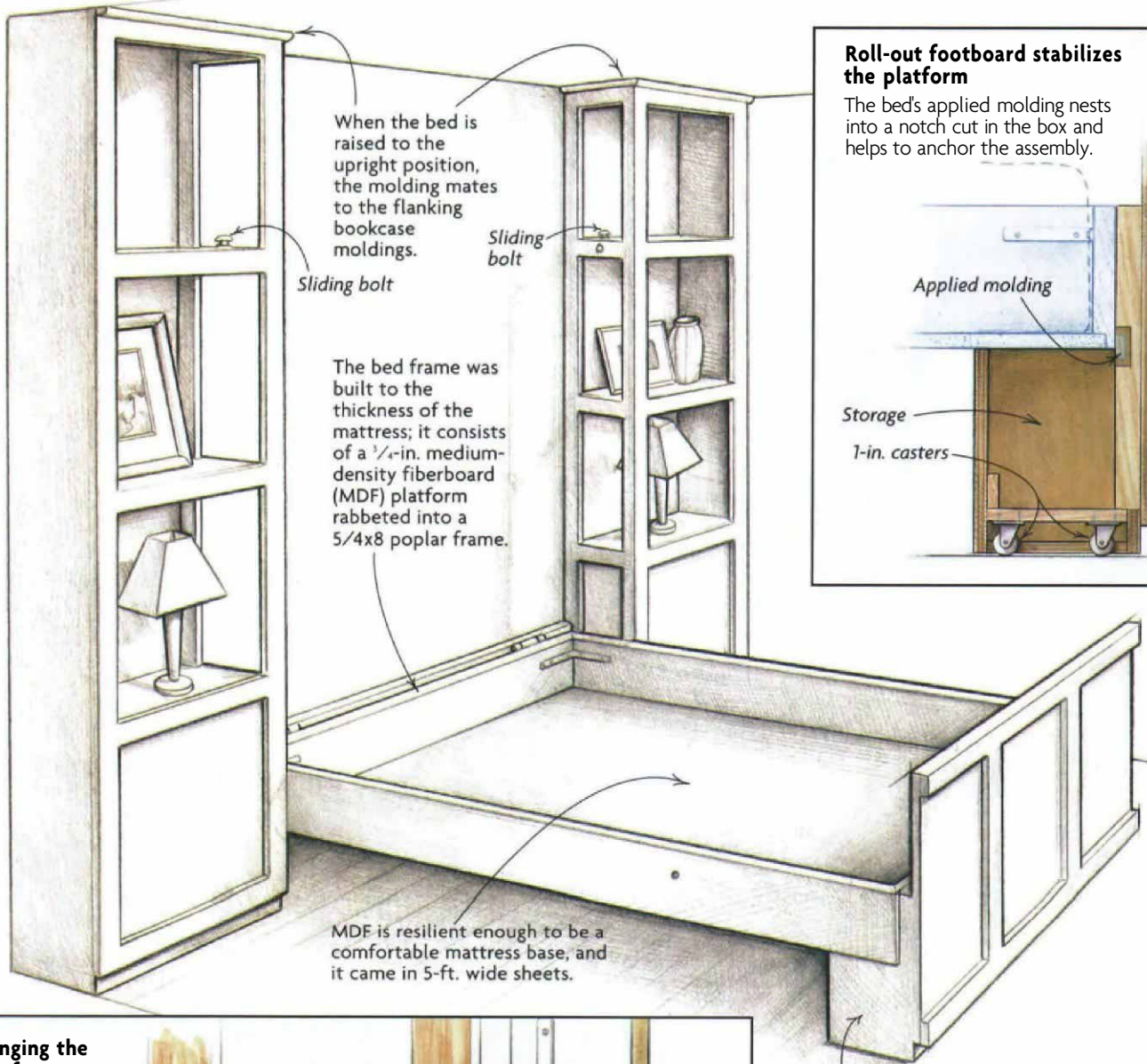
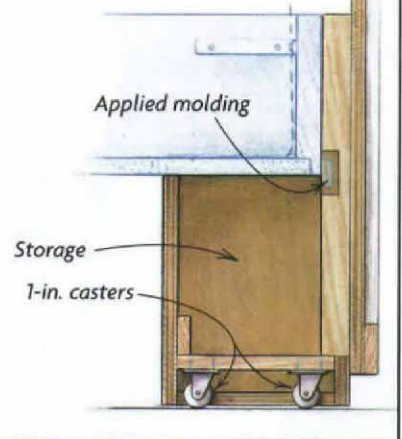


THE MECHANICS OF A DISAPPEARING BED

This Murphy-style bed was added to an existing room and depends on the flanking bookshelves for locking support and camouflage. The tongue-and-groove detailing of the roll-out footboard mimics the lines of the adjacent cabinet doors.

Roll-out footboard stabilizes the platform

The bed's applied molding nests into a notch cut in the box and helps to anchor the assembly.



When the bed is raised to the upright position, the molding mates to the flanking bookcase moldings.

Sliding bolt

Sliding bolt

The bed frame was built to the thickness of the mattress; it consists of a 3/4-in. medium-density fiberboard (MDF) platform rabbeted into a 5/4x8 poplar frame.

MDF is resilient enough to be a comfortable mattress base, and it came in 5-ft. wide sheets.

Rolling footboard

Hanging the platform

Glued and screwed together, the base was strong enough to be hinged directly to a 2x8 wall ledger that was lag-bolted to the framing.

