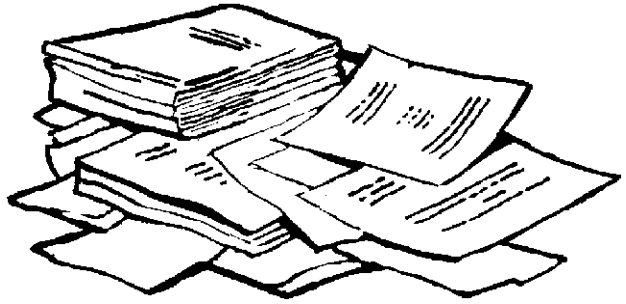


Letters



Free-Enterprise Builders Unfairly Blamed

To the Editor:

As a free-enterprise builder in Southwest Ohio, I read your December "Miscellany" article with some apprehension about the true purpose of Operation Sly Fox. Frankly, it sounds like a concerted union effort to discredit and antagonize builders who prefer not to align themselves with trade unions. It is my observation that irresponsible builders exist on all levels, but the underlying blame there in Illinois seems to fall totally on the "non-union" builders, which of course cannot be true. Are you so union-dominated over there in New England that it colored your perspective?

By the way, I would suggest you use "free-enterprise builder" rather than "non-union builder," which is derogatory and infers that we somehow are not in step with the standard, which is also not true.

Jon K. Gilbert
Wood Bridge Homes
Miamisburg, Ohio

New England Builder endorses good quality construction and is not concerned whether a contractor uses union or non-union labor. The point of the story was to show how one group (it happened to be a union) organized a program aimed at promoting quality control and credibility with the community. Given the low esteem in which builders and remodelers are often held by consumers, that kind of professionalism can only help.

If, as you suggest, one of the program's aims is also to discredit "free-enterprise" builders, that is unfortunate and certainly not an interest we share. And no, the unions did not color our perspective. In fact union involvement in private residential projects is a rare occurrence around here. —Ed.

More CAD for the Mac

To the Editor:

I found Bill Smith's article in the July 1987 issue most interesting. I too am a Macintosh fan in the process of looking for a CAD program. His "Low Cost CAD" article was very helpful. There is one program that was not mentioned that I saw reviewed in a Macintosh publication that appeared recently called VERSACAD. I know very little about this program except that it was originally written for the IBM and that the cost is around \$1,900. Any information that Mr. Smith has available on this program would be most helpful.

Nels English
Southbury, Conn.

Author Bill Smith replies:

Since the "Low Cost CAD" article was published in July of 1987, the Macintosh CAD arena has exploded with activity. Much of this can be attributed the introduction of the Macintosh II—what Apple should have built in the first place—a large screen, fast, powerful, color workstation.

The first well known MS-DOS computer-aided design package to enter the fray is "VersaCAD" (VersaCad Corporation, 7372 Prince Drive, Huntington Beach, CA 92647). As of this writing (early December) it will be released on January 15th, 1988. Although the company is new to the Macintosh operating system, preliminary indications is that it is a solid program. A review will follow in the near future. The cost will be \$1,995, and it will require at least a Megabyte of memory.

Other promising programs include "Pegasus," purported to be a powerful import from the mainframe CAD environment, (IGC Technologies, 305 Lennon Lane, Walnut Creek, CA 94598), "Snap," (Databasics, P.O. Box 32, Sunset, SC 29685), "Space Edit," a 3D modeling program, (ABVENT 9903 Santa Monica Blvd, Suite 268, Beverly Hills, CA 90212) and "Planit," a specialized British 3D kitchen designing system. (CompServCo 800 Freedom Lane, Slidell, LA 70458.)

Although the makers of "AutoCAD"—the popular CAD program for MS-DOS machines—have not made an announcement about the Macintosh, persistent rumors indicate that something is in the works.

Special mention should be made to a non-CAD program: the "AEC Information Manager." (AEC Management System Inc., 20524 Amethyst Lane, Germantown, MD 20874). It appears to be the first really competent project management system for the Macintosh. Particularly well suited for construction management, it can organize and track: Correspondence, Suppliers, Subcontractors, Clients, Submittals, Shop Drawings, Equipment, Revisions, Proposals, Change Orders, Expenses, Purchase Orders, Punch Lists, and Project Scheduling.

These programs, (and others reviewed in the July article) installed on the Macintosh II, finally provide a truly powerful CAD platform, easily able to outshine the abilities of similarly-priced systems in the IBM world.

Plaster Tip

To the Editor:

Regarding your two-part series on patching plaster [Restoration Primer, 10 & 11/87]: In my experience, plaster of paris gives a very satisfactory finished surface, particularly if wiped with a damp sponge when it's nearly dry. For deep, large holes, drywall

mud or dash patch are fine for a scratch coat, although I agree completely that dry wall mud cannot match a plaster surface satisfactorily.

Jeff Kalmar
Ridgewood, N.J.

I maintain, however, that the best resource available is trustworthy, competent professionals. Cultivate them.

Spiralling Costs

To the Editor:

I read with interest the article in the October issue of *New England Builder* by Peter Domenicali on circular stairs, but could not help to wonder about the cost of the stair itself. The labor to locate, mill, dry the material, then build a scale model and engineer this beautiful staircase must have been considerable. Any further information you may have on the cost of the stairs would be appreciated.

Robert G. Wiedenmann, Jr.
Building Contractor
Wallingford, Conn.

Richard H. Freel
Builder
Clinton, Mass.

Not Just Another Pretty Magazine

To the Editor:

I have now received a number of *NEB* issues and have read each one cover to cover. I have found answers to questions, both in your articles and regular departments. Please do not allow your fine monthly to become another publication which pushes only vinyl siding, replacement windows, and flashy kitchens and baths.

Richard H. Freel
Builder
Clinton, Mass.

Electrical Info Wanted

To the Editor:

I read with interest your article in *New England Builder* called "How to Remodel Around Electrical Systems" [9/87]. I found it very informative and interesting. Can I find out more information?

Michael D. Conley
Straight Construction Co.
Anna Maria, Fla.

Author David Shapiro replies:

In the June 1987 issue of *Electrical Contractor*, I have an article called "Private Safety Inspections," which addresses related concerns. The National Electrical Code and related sources such as the American Electrician's Handbook discuss something of what you may need to know on the job. For instance, when adding an outbuilding, in some jurisdictions you would end up putting in a Ufer ground, without the electrical inspector seeing it before you pour the foundation. Also, items such as what wiring systems may and may not be concealed by permanent parts of the structure, can be found clearly described in Chapter 3 of the Code; definitions are clearly set forth in Chapter 1.

Another resource more in your line is BOCA and local codes. These will tell you, for instance, to bond metal siding to ground, and how to do so. This is not strictly a matter of working around the electrical system, but it is a part of keeping people from being shocked, and avoiding electrical fires.

Finally, the last print resource I can suggest is material listings. These range from maximum wattage restrictions on light fixtures (are the drop lights you work with overlamped?) to the information found in *UL's orange and green directories*.

A call to Peter Domenicali turned up the following figures: Cost of designing, building, and installing the stair (including all upper-level balusters and railings) was \$8,500. The job took 330 hours of Domenicali's time, which included tracking down the wood, and overseeing the drying and milling. Added to this were \$160 for model building (8 hours), and \$500 to the consulting engineer.

The cost of building another stair could very well be less, says the woodworker—depending on the location, type of wood, scope of railings, and other particulars. For more info, you can write Domenicali at P.O. Box 94, Montpelier, VT. 05602 —Ed.

Torch to Remove Glazing

After reading Walter Jower's informative article "reglazing Wood Windows" [12/87] I'd like to offer that a propane torch with a fire flame point does the quickest and most thorough job of removing glazing. It also cuts down on bubbling of paint and cracks in adjacent panes that occur with the heat gun.

The majority of New England homes have triple-track or similar storms making it tricky to reglaze, let alone replace broken lites in place. We remove them to the bench and retrofit with airtlock channels while blowing the weight cavities full with cellulose.

Chris Dazet
Lakes Region Contractors
Newfield, Me.



Keep 'em coming...We welcome letters, but they must be addressed and include the writer's address. *New England Builder* reserves the right to edit for grammar, length, and clarity. Mail letters to *NEB*, P.O. Box 5059, Burlington, VT 05402.