

Letters

Cloister to Chaos

With condescension dripping off each word, Peter Jessop eloquently defends as a “good business decision” the speaking of Spanish by employees (*Letters*, 3/06).

Apparently the cloistered environs of New England have yet to devolve into the unmitigated chaos that now defines south Texas and other border areas. Wage scales have been in regression for years, safety stats are in the toilet, insurance and tax rates (for those who bother with them) are confiscatory, and substandard workmanship is the norm on many, if not most, projects.

To ignore the common thread binding this mess — unrestricted immigration — is to show a haughty disregard for the work ethic and patriotism of countless hard-working, tax-paying Americans forced out of once-well-paying jobs so that short-sighted profiteers can increase their sacrosanct bottom line.

“Offended” doesn’t come close to what I feel as I struggle to keep a legitimate business viable during the wholesale sellout of an industry by arrogant opportunists coddling uninvited “friends and neighbors” who threaten our social, economic, legal, political, and cultural order.

Hire who you wish, Peter. That chicken will flap home soon enough. Meanwhile, don’t insult my intelligence by euphemizing avarice as the “reality of the marketplace.”

Mike Shannahan
La Porte, Texas

Cost of Day Laborers

I agree with Mr. Rose (*Letters*, 4/06) about day laborers. The biased press won’t tell the whole story of illegal immigration.

Here in Arizona, where the federal government is determined to place the gateway for unhindered illegal immigration and its associated flood of drugs and crime, we

are invaded by hundreds of thousands of illegals each year. The courts and politicians have forced us to spend hundreds of millions of dollars annually to provide them with education, hospitalization, and even work centers.

Our communities struggle with crime committed by illegals. We have the highest auto theft in the nation; stolen cars are taken into Mexico to be resold or used in drug smuggling.

Nationally, illegal aliens add to federal prison populations. Violent gangs from Mexico and South America have taken over whole sections of cities and suburbs. There is money and power in illegal immigration; it has corrupted our politics and our politicians.

Many profit from low wages; others pay for it dearly. Is cheap labor really cheap? What are the real costs?

Richard Heidinger
Queen Valley, Ariz.

Achilles Heel

The article “Detailing Rain-Screen Siding” (3/06) certainly shows how to provide great protection for the vertical face of the house sheathing.

But what about the bottom edge? The destructive capillary action the authors describe would be a factor here, especially in the situation shown, with its “low clearance to grade.” Primer and paint will provide only temporary protection. I would think — and in fact have experienced — that this is the Achilles heel of an otherwise well-thought-out plan.

Raymond Bishop
Old Orchard Beach, Maine

Guardrail Codes Vary

In the article “Making Guardrails Look Good,” (*Design*, 5/06) the author refers to a contemporary cable rail.

I’ve tried to use this type of horizontal design several times, both as shown in the article and in a welded spiral staircase. Building inspectors have always frowned upon it because of the “ladder” it creates, making it too easy for young children to climb up and fall over the railing.

Tim Brown
Bedford, Mass.

KEEP 'EM COMING!

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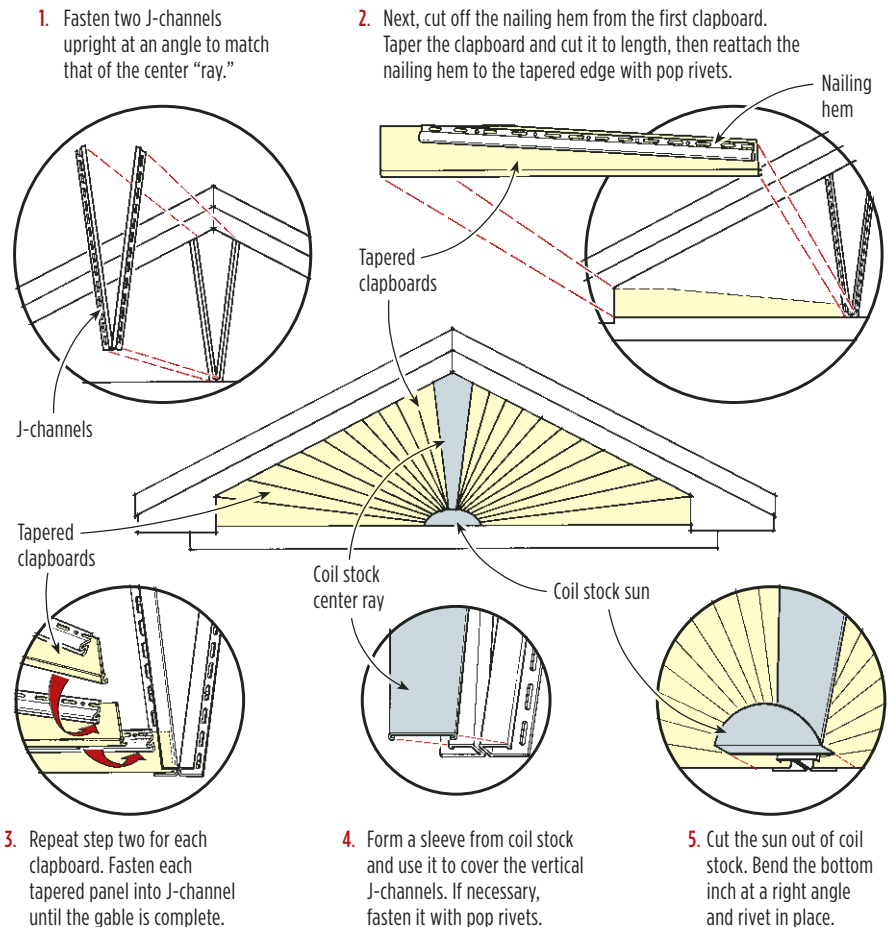
Vinyl Sunburst

A while ago I built a wood-siding sunburst over a front entry door; recently I was asked to add one to my latest remodel, a vinyl-sided home.

Is it possible to do a sunburst in vinyl? Are there any plans?

Raoul Piche
Shirley, Mass.

The editors respond: Here is a method that uses ordinary vinyl trim and coil stock. It was published in 1992 in a supplement to JLC.



Editor Don Jackson responds: The 2000 International Residential Code states that "guards shall not be constructed with horizontal rails or other ornamental pattern that results in a ladder effect" (R316.2).

This phrase has been dropped from the 2003 and 2006 IRC, which opens the way for use of cable railings (as well as other traditional railings that might be interpreted by the code official to create a "ladder") in jurisdictions that have adopted these newer editions of the IRC.

In Massachusetts, however, the state building code, as posted at www.mass.gov/bbrs/code.htm, still contains a phrase

forbidding "an ornamental pattern that would provide a ladder effect" in a guard-rail (780 CMR 1021.3).

Theft an Increasing Problem

Like other builders, I'm interested in protecting my job sites from theft. Lumber has walked off the job for years, as have windows, doors, appliances, and hvac units.

But only recently have I heard of contractors losing copper wiring and plumbing after it has been roughed in.

High material prices have given felons

even more incentive to target job sites. Property insurance is high enough, and most people I know usually don't file a claim unless it is catastrophic.

Police aren't interested, either, because they have bigger fish to fry or just can't help due to the limited evidence from a crime.

An article on job-site cameras designed to deter theft — especially during rough-in stages when there is no permanent power — would be beneficial to all of us.

Jason Classen
Kansas City, Mo.