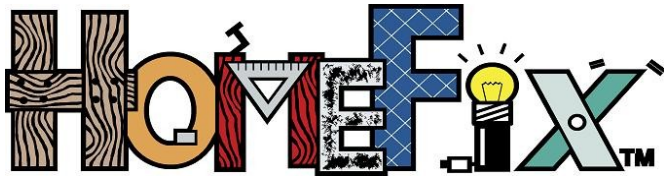


The



Club

Issue #13
January
2011

An Elite Club Open To Anyone Interested In Making Their Homes Better And Having More Fun Doing It

THE INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER Column

By Joe Prin



It became such a problem for me that one of the guys that I worked with, actually drilled a hole in one, put a string on it, and tied it to my belt. I am talking about Pencils.

I have an issue with loosing pencils. Carpenter pencils in particular. For those not knowing that there are special pencils for us special people, there is. They are flat on two sides, rather than round (So they don't roll away I suppose), and they sharpen easy with your pocket knife.

However, they also turn invisible 2 minutes after use if I set them down somewhere. Poof! Gone. I must build them into walls, drop them in holes, or toss them out with the sweepings. All I know is, they disappear on me all too often.

They aren't really that expensive. In fact, you can mooch them off of your favorite lumber salesman from time to time. That's not the point. It is the frustration of having to stop and look around for it, pat down all my pockets, check behind my ear, and then give up and get another one out of my truck. I never do find the missing ones either.

I am actually proud of myself when I can save a pencil until it whittled down to just a stub. When this rare occurrence occurs, I duct tape the butt ends together and I have a dual tip pencil that I can now loose.

So imagine my surprise and delight when I saw a device called "The Pencil Pull" hanging on a hook at the store. It was as if there was a radiant beam of light coming in from the Heavens pointing me to The Answer.

Remember those key rings on your belt that you pull out, reach out, and unlock something and then the key retracts to your side? I think they were part of the dress code for my school Custodians. Picture a lighter duty version of one of those, square plastic, about the size of a large postage stamp, and with a really tough string on it with a rubber cone tip that you shove your pencil

in. Ta Da!

These nifty little devices are about \$3. Not bad medication for my illness. I have been wearing one of these on my belt for the past month or so, and it has performed really well. It is better with ½ length pencils rather than full length. Jump in your truck with a full pencil on it and you will see what I mean.

I was impressed with this little wonder so I contacted the inventor and president of the company. It's a bit odd, but I do that sometimes. Told him what I thought, and got his story. He was a victim of corporate downsizing at HP, had this idea, pursued it, had them manufactured, and is selling the heck out of them.

Why am I telling you all this? Two reasons. I got Evans Building Center in Eagle to stock them and I want to help them sell a few. And second, they make great gifts for people like me that can't hold on to pencils and just like little widgets. They work on Sharpies and regular pencils and pens too. If you know someone afflicted with Pencillitis, this might be the cure.

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The Return Of

GARAGE GUY!

Originally aired on The HomeFix
Show September 25, 2010

Are You a Garage Guy? Or Gal?
Here are some signs that you might
enjoy your garage just a little too
much. In this case too much of a
good thing... is a good thing!

Garage Guy has tennis or golf balls hanging from strings on the ceiling of the garage to try and get people to park their cars in exactly the right spot. If they are off by an inch or two, it drives Garage Guy crazy.

Garage Guy looks at the empty jars, tubs, and containers from the kitchen as potential storage devices. He calls it recycling. He also insists that certain food products continue to be purchased so as to get more of the exact same containers.

For Garage Guy, everything has to have a place. And sometimes, you just have to rearrange those places so that you can make more space and places for other things. This is viewed as a challenge and not a chore.

Garage Guy has his workbench laid out and planned better than the home kitchen. He keeps the bench top spotless although it shows the scars of past projects like Medals of Honor.

Garage Guy has pegboard. Lots of it. And he likes to rearrange the tools on it for "better space management". Seriously infected Garage Guy outlines the tools with a Sharpie marker. When a tool is missing, it is like the body outline at a crime scene.

The Philosophy of Garage Guy is "You never know when you might need one of those".

Garage Guy has his favorite stool or 2' ladder to sit on while serving his bench time. He sometimes just sits there and watches the ball game on the TV in the garage. It might look uncomfortable to others, but it is not. Actually, Garage Guy is quite happy here.

NEW LISTING: Garage Guy eats at least one meal a week while at his workbench.

Garage Guy takes responsibility for the discarded family textiles. They could be rags. It does not get tossed until it has been checked for suitability in the "Rag bag". Garage Guy insists the family wear Cotton.

Garage Guy has his on separate shop trash can that only gets dumped when he says so. It is actually more of a chronological memory repository for past projects.

Garage Guy does not care about energy savings. His garage has lighting. Lots of it. Safety is the prime concern, but you can never be too safe, right. Or have enough light to work by.

Garage Guy likes to hose out the garage on a regular schedule. Whether it needs it or not. A clean floor is a happy floor.

Garage guy gets the withdrawal jitters if he does not clock at least 6 hours a week in the garage. This makes vacations a problem.

Garage Guy likes garage sales because he gets to go through every bin and box looking for something to get rid of. It can take weeks! Usually he comes up with only a shoe box of stuff, but it was a necessary sacrifice for the effort.

Garage Guy has a large clock on the wall to remind him that there is the rest of the world out there, and that he does need to spend some time in it. This is even better if it is one of those saw blade clocks. Bonus points if he made the clock himself.

Garage Guy gets really excited and calls family members out to see his latest shelf, cabinet, bin or box he has incorporated into the space. However, said family member usually can not tell what is different. And lets him know it.

Garage Guy considers sweeping the garage and driveway as his contribution to the housekeeping.

For Garage Guy, owners manuals are kept in a file folder... in a file drawer... next to the file of plans he will someday build.

Garage Guy goes to the mega discount tool store just to cruise the isles and see if there is anything that he does not have. Or better yet, if he has something that they don't.

Garage guy is sent into turmoil when a lost wrench is replaced and it does not fit into the line ups on his pegboard. Time to replace the full set!

Garage guy uses a label maker, that he bought for inside the house (justification), for every bin and drawer in the garage. As if he did not know exactly what and where everything was. He does this "For Others" in case that they have to find something, although he never allows anybody to actually get anything out of the garage.

NEW LISTING: Garage Guy sometimes will re-sharpen all the chisels and knives just because they have not been done in a while.

Garage Guy like it when something breaks because he now has a reason to set up the tools in the shop and fit it. Problem is that he usually gets distracted and fixes some other things that may not need fixing right now.

G. G. will spend two hours making a bracket or latch that anybody can find at a hardware store for \$2.

Garage doors are purposefully left open to show off to the neighbors just how great the garage is.

Garage Guy has two of most things, just in case one breaks.

GARAGE GUY!

Then there is the **Wanna Be Garage Guy**. This person has all the look in the garage, but never uses any of the stuff. Some of it is still in the boxes and packages, with intentions, but no execution. All looks, No Cooks.

For Garage Guy, it is easier to buy a house than it is to pick out the paint for the garage floor. He actually uses the term "decorates" when he hangs something on the wall of the garage.

Garage Guy has several "Old Guys Rule" t-shirts saved for special occasions.

The Kids give Garage Guy wooden signs that say "Grandpa's Garage" or "Dad's Shop" that they made out of a scrap of plywood that he has to hang on the wall. He doesn't really want to though, because they are not built in the style that fits his décor. But he does it anyway.

Garage Guy sorts out jars of miscellaneous screws, nuts and bolts into a numerical cascade of sizes and shapes. These are then transferred to pull out bin racks, fully labeled with size and type. Of course. Secretly he has a fantasy of actually having the hardware isle from the Ace Hardware store on one wall of his garage.

When with the Psychologist, Garage Guy never has trouble "going to his Happy Place". Just let him get back to the garage.

Garage Guy has wired his garage with a door bell and phone lines because rarely while home, is he actually in the house.

And finally, Garage Guy has made listening to The HomeFix Show not only part of his Saturday routine, but actually gets the jitters if he has to miss a show. Now he needs a computer and internet connection at the bench so he can download specifications, look up products and listen to past HomeFix shows!

THINGS YOUR BURGLAR WON'T TELL YOU

Forwarded by Paula C.
HomeFix Club Member

1. Of course I look familiar. I was here just last week cleaning your carpets, painting your shutters, or delivering your new refrigerator.
2. Hey, thanks for letting me use the bathroom when I was working in your yard last week. While I was in there, I unlatched the back window to make my return a little easier.
3. Love those flowers. That tells me you have taste... and taste means there are nice things inside. Those yard toys your kids leave out always make me wonder what type of gaming system they have.
4. Yes, I really do look for newspapers piled up on the driveway. And I might leave a pizza flyer in your front door to see how long it takes you to remove it..
5. If it snows while you're out of town, get a neighbor to create car and foot tracks into the house. Virgin drifts in the driveway are a dead giveaway.
6. If decorative glass is part of your front entrance, don't let your alarm company install the control pad where I can see if it's set. That makes it too easy.
7. A good security company alarms the window over the sink. And the windows on the second floor, which often access the master bedroom - and your jewelry.. It's not a bad idea to put motion detectors up there too.
8. It's raining, you're fumbling with your umbrella, and you forget to lock your door - understandable. But understand this: I don't take a day off because of bad weather
9. I always knock first. If you answer, I'll ask for directions somewhere or offer to clean your gutters.
10. Do you really think I won't look in your sock drawer? I always check dresser drawers, the bedside table, and the medicine cabinet.
11. Here's a helpful hint: I almost never go into kids' rooms.
12. You're right: I won't have enough time to break into that safe where you keep your valuables. But if it's not bolted down, I'll take it with me.
13. A loud TV or radio can be a better deterrent than the best alarm system . If you're reluctant to leave your TV on while you're out of town, you can buy a \$35 device that works on a timer and simulates the flickering glow of a real television. <http://www.faketv.com>
14. Sometimes, I carry a clipboard. Sometimes, I dress like a lawn guy and carry a rake. I do my best to never, ever look like a crook.
15. The two things I hate most: loud dogs and nosy neighbors.
- 16 . To you, leaving that window open just a crack during the day is a way to let in a little fresh air. To me, it's an invitation.
17. If you don't answer when I knock, I try the door. Occasionally, I hit the jackpot and walk right in.

Sources: Convicted burglars in North Carolina, Oregon, California, and Kentucky; security consultant Chris McGoey, who runs www.crimedoctor.com and Richard T. Wright, a criminology professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, who interviewed 105 burglars for his book *Burglars on the Job*



A LITTLE ADVICE TO MAKE IT EASIER ON THE NEXT PERSON THAT OWNS YOUR HOME

BY JOE PRIN

I have become a big believer in mapping. As one who has taken over a previously owned house where the owners didn't keep track of too much, I can say that who ever gets this house after I am long gone better appreciate the work I have done, not with tools, but with a camera and a pencil.

The photo above is of me at the bottom of another hole. I hate to dig holes. And once I have dug a hole, I never want to dig the same hole again.

What you see is my little septic tank excavation search and locate day. When we bought this house, I asked the previous owners when the last time they had the septic pumped out. They hadn't. 20+ years. Now this is either really good, or really bad. I had to find out.

There was a little postage size stamp map on a copy of a copy of a copy from the original tank and drain field install. The measurements were impossible to read. So using a bit of logic, I guessed where the tank should be. I wanted to have it pumped and in order to do so, I needed to know where the lid was so the Septic Sucker could do his thing.

I started driving a metal rod around in the back yard till I hit something solid. The top of the tank. I marked the positive strikes with spray paint on the grass. A pattern started showing up and I was able to find the edges of the tank. 4 x 8. If it is 5' deep, this would be the 1000 gallon tank on

the paperwork. The lid should be on the end facing the house, so I started digging. Hard, tough digging confirmed the time since the last dig. Probably never since it was installed in the mid 70's. I was worried.

The lid was actually two lids. One about 12" round inside another one about 24" round. I dug a 36" hole.

Blessings of all blessings, the tank and the baffles checked out great with no problems visible. Oh happy freakin' day!

Did I mention I never wanted to dig this hole again? So, off to Idaho Culvert and \$70 later I had a 32" diameter piece of heavy culvert to rest on top of the tank that cam within 8" of grass level. A 1/2" chunk of aluminum sheet as a cap and some back filling and the hole was filled, and easily opened up in the future.

If someone need to find this when I am not around, I now have photos with measurements from landmarks so they can find the direct center of the lid. Plus they will know what is under it.

I have also photographed the underground water lines I ran to my barn, the electrical lines, stuff in the attic, stuff under the house, and stuff inside the walls as I have been remodeling. This record of where and what things are should be very valuable to the next guy. I would encourage you as you go through your house remodels and improvements to make and keep these records. Mainly because I might be the next guy!



Did anybody think to see what size nails were in the gun as the pickets were being installed? I guess not. Bet the neighbors love this one!

DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU SEE ON TV....

Commentary
by Joe Prin

I get a kick out of these TV home improvement shows that make over a house in 24 hours. Or the kitchen that gets redone on a weekend. Or the house that is increased in value by multiple thousands of dollars by spending pennies... in just two days. Really? Do we believe everything else we see on TV? I am a bit skeptical.

Now I know that it CAN be done, but how often does it need to, or should be done this way. Please, don't misunderstand what I am getting at here. There is some amazing creativity, quality, and craftsmanship that takes place on TV How-To shows. However it doesn't often happen as quick as you might think it does, or not nearly for what you think it should cost.

I hear from other Contractors that unrealistic expectations created by TV shows have caused problems for their businesses. I have experienced this myself. It actually happens all the time where a home owner wants to get their bathroom done over the weekend while they are out of town. Or the addition to the house started and completed over Spring Break so the kids can help. When the reality of how long these projects really take is communicated and explained, there is true disappointment for the owner. They were not expecting the bathroom to take 3+ weeks. Or the addition to take two months.

It all goes back to the illustration of "Good, Fast, or Cheap. Pick Two". I am not sure where this set of words came from, but they, as a general rule, ring very true in the construction world. For example the work may be good, and it may be cheap, but most likely your project will be the filler in the schedule and it may take a while with down time in-between events. Or it may be fast and the work good, but expect to pay a premium price for this. The worst is fast and cheap because the quality usually suffers.

A slow construction and remodeling market changes the dynamics of the above. With a willing and eager labor force, responsiveness to available jobs is quicker than in "Busy" times. However, smaller consumer spending usually accompanies these market conditions.

What projects do you have planned for your home in 2011? Will these be things you do yourself or will you be hiring professionals to either help, or take over the work in total? If contractors are going to be involved, take a good look at those three magical elements that will make up the flow of the job. Good- What are your expectations for quality? What is acceptable and what is not. Communicate this to your contractor. Fast- What is the desired schedule to complete this job? Communicate. And Cheap. What are your budget amounts and limitations? Communicate. Then ask if these are realistic expectations and if not, what or who has to be changed for the job to get done.



**BEING UPDATED!
REMODELING
IN PROGRESS**

**HARDBACK
EDITION
(NOVEL SIZE)
AVAILABLE
SOON!**

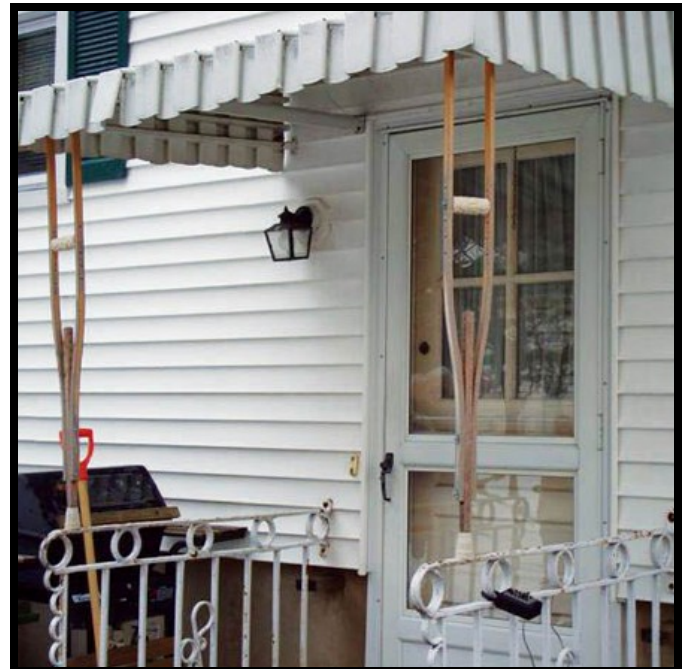
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After 45 years of marriage, 3 children, and now retirement, something is missing. My wife and I are not getting along very well. I think it's called the [doldrums] .

When things are looking bad for you, you should always look to someone else who is in worst shape than yourself. Well; I got to thinking about helping others. The devastation in Haiti came to my mind. So; a contract with Habitat for humanities for a period of 2 years was signed. I think a 2 year separation would work out good for us.

The plane tickets are in hand, the bags are packed and she leaves in the morning.

———From Club Member Jim F.



I think I might find a different material for these porch posts. With construction habits like this, You might need these more for what they are intended!
Name withheld to protect the Stupid.

Quick Tips...

A tremendous amount of damage can happen to our homes in the Winter and we don't even know it till much later. Most of this is caused by Ice. As water freezes into ice, it expands and has an amazing force. Enough to move driveways, crack foundations and lift roofing materials. So, knowing this, anything you can do to prevent moisture from getting in places where damage could occur will ultimately lead to fewer repairs later. Some things that come to mind are...

Keep gutters clean and free flowing. Use a GUTTER rated heat tape if needed in some locations.

Add downspout extensions to drop elbows so as to divert water away from your foundations and slabs.

Make sure that drain holes in vinyl window frames are open and functional so water can get out of the channels.

Hoses unhooked from the outside faucets? Please say yes!

NO SALT on sidewalks and driveways. It will kill your grass and damage concrete. Never use any ice melter on asphalt. Try sand or cat litter.

It's not fun, but go in your crawl space and attic in the Winter and do a review inspection to make sure all is as it should be. Water in either place is not a good thing.

Check to make sure your foundation vents are now closed. You can open them up in the Summer when you turn on the air conditioner.



SOMETHING TO CHECK OUT

The calls have been coming in about frozen pipes and what to do. I caution you to be very careful trying to thaw them out. Every year we hear about someone who burnt down their house trying to thaw a frozen pipe. Don't let this be you!

NEVER use a torch to try and thaw the pipes. See above.

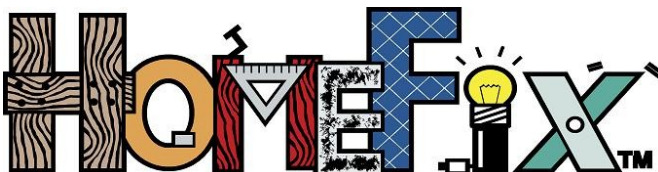
Hot air is slow, but the safest. If you can warm up the area where the frozen pipe is, it should thaw out under control. Watch for leaks as it does.

Heat tapes keep pipes from freezing but do not work very well to thaw one that is already frozen.

Best Bet? Call a plumber. They will evaluate the best way to fix and solve the problem.

Also, be aware that once a pipe freezes, a lot of inner debris is loosened and scraped off the inside of the pipe. This can clog faucets and toilet valves pretty quickly. Remove aerators from faucets and flush out the lines. Shower heads too. Bathtubs have large enough opening this is not a problem here. Also, check the filter washers on the back of the washing machine. They plug pretty easy.

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