Home Improvement

HE RAISED THE ROOF—LITERALLY

WHEN WE MOVED into our first house, in Westfield, New Jersey, in 1951, we wondered how we'd ever fill it.

When our second and third children came along, my husband, Bill, decided to expand the attic living space.

He had read an article in Mechanix Illustrated about expanding attic living space by lifting the roof using car-bumper jacks, instead of building a new roof and cutting out the old one.

This intrigued Bill, and he made plans to lift the roof in two sections. After several months of preparation, the time had come to put the plan in motion.

Using jacks, he slowly started to raise the roof, going from one to the other, bracing the roof with two-by-fours and repositioning the jacks as the roof went higher.

It worked like a charm!

We often wonder if the building inspector would have given us a permit if he'd known how we intended to do the roof raising.

—Doris H., Cape Coral, Florida

THE DEVIL'S IN THE DETAILS

MY TWIN SISTER and I decided to do our first wallpapering project 2 or 3 years after we were each married in a double ceremony, in 1949.

We picked out a nice floral wallpaper, and the job went pretty well until we sat down to admire our good work.

Either my sister or I screamed and started to laugh so hard it was difficult to tell what was the matter—the flowers were all upside down.

Working up close, we had not noticed there was a top and bottom to the design.

—Marcelyn R., Hutchinson, Minnesota

SWAT OR SWEAT?

MY PARENTS still lived on the old family farm, near Huntington, Utah, and the family decided to remodel the bathroom.

Being a plumber by trade, I was often faced with the dilemma of someone needing to use the bathroom as soon as it was out of working order.

Ironically, it was I who had a call to nature that time, so I headed to the house out back, which hadn't been used for some time.

Having finished, I started to unroll some toilet paper when the inside of the outhouse filled with hornets.

Should I try to make a run with my pants down and covered with hornets or sit quietly and wait for things to quiet down?

Common sense told me to sit and I did. But I sure had a lot of goose bumps as I waited to exit.

Luckily, I didn't get a single sting.

—Charles S., Pasco, Washington

CHEWY SOLUTION

BILL AND I moved into our first home, in West Haverstraw, New York, and decided a wall there needed a wood look.

Bill cut and nailed on slat boards. After the job was done, we went

to visit our neighbors in the adjoining townhouse.

On our first half-hourly check on our sleeping children, I discovered a waterfall pouring out of the wall. The water was already in the kitchen and living room from the punctured water pipe.

Bill and our neighbors, Bill and Maureen, came running. Maureen happened to be chewing bubble gum and took it out and pushed the wad into the tiny hole. Bill screwed a small metal screw into the gummy hole.

We lived in that house for 4 more years with that bubble-gum fixture and never had to call a plumber.
—Blanche M., Niskayuna, New York

SOLVED A KNOTTY PROBLEM

KNOTTY PINE boards were very fashionable, but quite expensive, in 1954, when my wife and I decided to add them as wainscoting to a room.

I started by carefully measuring and marking the first few boards before taking them outside to cut.

My 5-year-old son was watching with interest and pretending to help.

I took several of the measured and marked boards outside, double-checked the marks and then cut the first couple of boards.

I was surprised to find they were cut to the wrong length until I discovered that my son had been busy with the square and had imitated my marks so well I hadn't noticed.
—Charles W., Tavares, Florida

CHILD CARE TOOK DIFFERENT TACK

MY WIFE, FRANKIE, and I bought a lot, hired an architect and started to build our own home in 1955.

One evening, after we had finished the framing and roofing, I was cleaning up the area with my son Jeryl, who was a little over 3 years old.

To keep him occupied, I sat him on a sawhorse and gave him my hammer and a handful of roofing tacks.

As I went about picking up scraps of lumber, I could hear him happily driving tacks into the sawhorse.

When I had finished and was ready to go home, I put my tools away and started to pick up Jeryl.

He had driven several of the tacks through the seat of his pants, attaching himself firmly to the sawhorse.

Jeryl put his roofing-tack experience to good use by starting his own roofing business while he was in college. He's now an environmental scientist…and I still use my Blue Grass hammer after 51 years.

—John G., Lake Jackson, Texas

NO, DON'T!

THREE YEARS after our marriage, my wife and I bought an old farmhouse. She enjoyed doing house repairs and painting, so she decided to strip the loose wallpaper off and paint the interior walls.

I came in one evening as she was painting and decided to help. She had taken down the loose paper and was painting up a storm, using paint with sand mixed in to give texture to the surface. She had finished the ceiling and three of the walls.

I grabbed a brush but noticed a little loose piece of paper, saying, “Hey, look,” and started to pull it as she yelled a warning.

Too late. A piece of wallpaper full of wet, heavy paint came loose, ran up the wall that I was painting, across the ceiling and down the opposite wall, like a zipper, splitting the room in half.

I said, “Oops,” laid down my paintbrush and walked out.

We lived in that house for 26 years, and I never painted anything else.

—Dan M., Cobden, Illinois

FIX WAS MOSTLY EXCELLENT

BACK IN THE ’50s, there were five of us kids, and it was common practice to wash our hair in the bathroom sink. The hair would plug the drain, and this irritated Dad.

After watching him clear the drain a few times, I told my sisters I could fix it the next time it clogged.

When that time came, I got the needed tools, removed the gooseneck with no problem and was very careful not to spill any of the messy water I had collected.

Proud of my work, I stood up and poured the whole mess down the drain—splattering it all over the floor through the open pipe!

—Mary H., Yankton, South Dakota