

The K.I.S.S. Principle

By George Porter

A long time ago, in another life I think, I went into the US Army to learn to be a helicopter pilot. These were complicated contraptions that were constantly trying to go their own way, at least during the first part of my flight training. At that time the Army had many civilian flight instructors and mine was a guy named B. D. Gallion. I never understood how come all the instructors there were overweight, grumpy, smoked a lot, and seemed to be recovering from some sort of malady until about noon. When I became an instructor pilot a few years later I figured it out, it's because the crazy students are always trying to kill you.

At any rate ol' B.D. was one of the crustier ones and he was always yelling (sometimes screaming) for me to pay attention to what was going on. He introduced me to the KISS principle; it stands for "Keep It Simple Stupid!" Whenever I allowed my enthusiasm and ambition to overload my brain and get me mentally lost he would slap me as hard as he could on top of my helmet with his clipboard and yell into the intercom "Remember the KISS principle you X#*~!!" This was definitely not the new modern Army. Small wonder this managed to stay with me for the last 35 years. It applies to almost everything I have been involved in and especially the set-up of homes.

There are some simple basic principles that will never change and they apply to our housing the same as any other type home. Here are a few:

#1. Water will not run uphill by itself.

This applies to plumbing and site preparation most of all. If the septic tank is higher than the home then the sewer won't work. If the Department of Sewage, or whoever says that the tank goes there then you are going to have raise the home. Recently I heard of an installer who said that he didn't have enough blocks on the truck to do that and besides that, no one was paying him to do the extra work, so he set it too low to drain. Guess who is involved with some lawyers. Wouldn't it have been simpler to just go get some blocks and do it right. You can argue about the \$ 20 for blocks without the lawyers later. (You should have talked before you took the job)

Site preparation has been covered enough in this column lately so that we don't have to go into details. No piece of paper, no politician, the lack of money, shifting of blame, or wishful thinking will ever make water run up hill. Boiled down to its simplest form, somebody has to do it right or everyone's got a problem. Deal with it, ignoring the problem is not "keeping it simple"

#2 Gravity will cause things to sag if they not supported.

I guess this applies to people as well as homes. If the guys that designed the home say you must block it in a certain place then you have to do it. It doesn't matter if the last one you did didn't need blocking in the sane place, or if the footings are not in the right place, or if you don't have the blocks, or you don't feel like it. You have to or there will surely be problems and that is not keeping it simple. Want a simple rule? Support both sides of any opening 4 foot or wider, where

the studs do not go all the way to the rafters, anywhere on the perimeter of a chassis. This includes the marriage wall, windows, recessed entries and doors.

#3 Wind causes things to blow away.

Every home in the U.S. is supposed to have a certain number of anchors and all this necessary information is listed in the factory manual that comes with the home.

Some parts of the nation don't have any regulations about this or they have some sort of "compromise legislation" that says you only need a few anchors here and there. To the best of my knowledge no one ever got into trouble by using too many anchors, but there have been some huge multi-million dollar lawsuits about using too few. Keep it simple, use at least the factory recommended number, even if it might be more than the local ordinance calls for. There have been hundreds of people who wish they had.

#4 If we don't take care of our customers someone else will.

That someone might be your competition in the next town or it might be the modular housing industry as a whole. When that happens you can KISS your business goodbye.

If you can't see how this could happen, then I know an old Army flight instructor in Texas who can put it in a way you will surely understand.