

Tricks Of The Trade

By George Porter

Over the years lots of installers have shown me some of the things they do to make their life easier in the installation and repair business. The best ones seem to be the simplest ones, and I would like to share a few with you.

Have you ever tried to line up the two halves of a multi-section home and have to move it back and forth several times to get a special doorway to line up? Well, here's a tip from a fellow in Wisconsin. All you have to do, after you have positioned one half where you want it, is to get the other half close to lining up and cut a 1 x 6 board the exact length of the width of the door opening. You lean the 1 x 6 x (32?) up against the bottom corner of the threshold and against the other side of the door opening. Because it is not lined up, the board will sit at an angle on the side of the opening and not go to the floor in the bottom of the doorway. Let the board rest in this position and move the home in the direction it needs to go and when the door opening is perfectly aligned, "plunk" the board drops in the opening and locks the home from moving. Obviously if you are using a six way hydraulic hitch this requires a little bit of a touch because the hitch has the power to crush the doorway, board and all, but if you have to use a come-a-long, this trick can save you some serious time on trim-out and setup.

Have you ever needed a *temporary* fix for a ceiling? Suppose you are on a sales lot and the home is not going to stay there that long, but you don't want the customers to keep looking at the crack or gouge in the ceiling. You know that if you fix it with some spackling and then try to paint it, it is going to be messed up again when you move the home. Now you will have two patches or more on it when the homeowner moves into the home. Most of the time after several "fixes" it will start to look like a plaster cast was placed there. The homeowner complains (and he should) and you have to replace some of the ceiling and the job seems to getting more complicated and expensive. It is much better to do these things right once but at the same time you want to the homes to look good on the sales lot. Here is what many of the guys that setup homes in factory show homes do. They use toothpaste! Obviously not the red or green stuff, some ordinary Colgate will do. It is the right color (no paint), works easily, and is very simply removed with a tooth brush when the time comes to fix it right. Water stains can be *temporarily* fixed on a sales lot with a piece of chalk. If you think you fixed the leak but you are not sure, you might want to use the chalk. Several coats of paint looks sloppy. If it doesn't leak any more then you can permanently fix it with the appropriate paint. If it does still leak then the chalk is easily cleaned off and you can try again. You will notice that I have underlined and italicized the word "*temporary*" in this section. These are NOT permanent fixes! They will however, make the permanent fix better, faster, and less costly under the right conditions.

Ever heard of racking bars? (No, it is not a place that serves medieval torture and booze). Many manufacturers are putting pictures in their manuals of some iron bars that you lag to the roof to pull the two halves into alignment at the roof. Well, a fellow named Woody Browning in North Carolina has gone one better. Woody built a racking "hook." It is heavy steel tubing that hooks over, but

doesn't touch the eaves and pushes on the sides of the house where the interior walls meet the roof. You can really put a big squeeze on a house with these rigs on each end and a chain hoist connecting the two. He says he has never seen one he can't straighten up. Woody does factory service for Summit Crest Homes in Lillington, NC and many times has to do things that other people can't handle. He invented this rig for the homes that would not jack into place in the normal way.

Ever wonder why the carpet seems to wear out prematurely at the marriage wall seam near the hall way? Maybe it's because it is thicker and a little taller there because of the seams? This problem can be fixed by seaming the carpet differently. There are really three seams in a carpeted marriage wall floor. One is the floor itself; one is the carpet pad; and the other is the carpet. You certainly can't move the seam in the wooden floor but you can separate the two other seams from it. You should make the seam for the pad about three inches to the left of the floor seam and put the carpet seam about the same distance to the right of the floor seam. There will then be six inches between the thickest seams and the carpet will look and hold up much better. Stacking all the seams on top of each other makes a ridge and causes the seams to break down prematurely.