Spring Home Improvement

YOUR GUIDE FOR THOSE SPRING HOME IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

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Hitting the Nail on the Head

by Sandra Lee Johnston
Chieftain Staff Reporter

An eye for detail and an eagerness for the job, coupled with his evident skill in the carpentry business should be all Stephen Bygott needs to succeed. His analytical mind which allows the figuring of spans and suspended loads, the calculating and the sheer enjoyment he garners from his labours, Stephen returned to the industry with renewed vigour six years ago, deciding a desk job was not his forte.

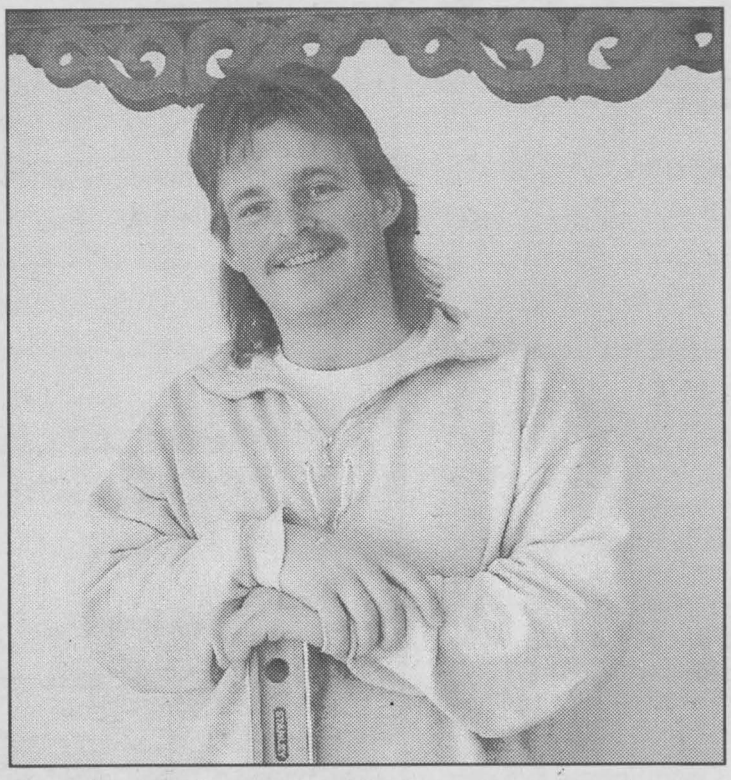
This young man is ambitious and loves working in the carpentry business. In a time when apprenticeships are not as popular as they once were, the 27-year old father and husband seems headed down the right plum line. When the majority of graduates want a university degree and are looking to high tech, Stephen seems to have his future well mapped out and that infectious grin he sports endears him to everyone he comes into contact with.

Finding his niche in an industry that saw thousands abandon the front lines a short six years ago, Stephen should have no trouble working wherever he pleases. Sales have rebounded in the construction industry and the spaces vacated by those who were unwilling to return after the downward swing of the business have not been filled. This leaves the door wide open for just such a young carpenter. The fact that he stood out in his eight weeks of classes won't hurt either.

In early May of this year, he will pit his ability and skill against a large number of his peers, some 1300 are anticipated to take part.

Stephen who resides on Maple Avenue in Iroquois will represent his school, Algonquin College (Woodroffe Avenue Campus) at the Ontario Division of the Skills Canada Competition. Being a participant in Kitchener where he along with the other competitors will showcase their carpentry skills, Stephen will take on practical projects as well as completing the written exam. Winners go on to the national challenge.

This amiable young man is, in his words, "Very excited" about the entire experience. Even though Algonquin has a golden reputation in the skills competition bringing home gold medals three of the six years it has sent a student and silver in the other two. "I'd like to do well, but I feel no pressure. I am basically going to have a good time. I am looking at it as a great experience, that is for sure! If I don't do well...oh well."



Stephen is level headed and on track.
Chieftain photo by S. L. Johnston

Explaining that the practical test will have the students building a set of stairs or constructing a roof with a specific time limit on the project, he seems confident in his own ability. The written portion will contain those difficult multiple choice questions, with emphasis on all three levels of the program: basic, intermediate and advanced...even though he is heading to Kitchener with one disadvantage, that being that he has completed only two of the three levels in the apprentice carpentry classes and every other competitor will have the final level to their credit. "There was no advanced class this past winter and since they do send someone every year, I was the chosen one as it were."

Stumbling into what would become a career, Stephen explains how he was working on a farm helping in the haying and when the call went out from local contractors for workers, he answered it...and perhaps thanks to the wisdom of Paul Kingston who taught Stephen the basics of cabinetmaking and the importance of patience, he now finds himself taking a "lot of pleasure in the carpentry business." Smiling across his sundrenched kitchen table he says, "I feel a great deal of satisfaction in the sense of accomplishment when I complete a job for someone." It should be noted that the summer he was sixteen he helped his

Please turn to page 11



Spring into home renovations

Spring is perhaps the most anticipated season of the year, but it has also traditionally marked the time for one thing - home renovations. Whether the work is to be handled by a contractor or as a do-it-yourself project, it can be an exciting but stressful time for any family.

If you're considering renovating your home, the experts at Home Hardware offer the following tips to help ensure your project goes smoothly:

People's experience and skill levels vary. Do-it-yourselfers must decide whether their particular skills are appropriate for the successful completion of the job. Be prepared to seek professional help and advice - your local hardware store or building centre is a great place to start.

In most jurisdictions, making changes to the structure, plumbing or electrical wiring of a home will require a permit before commencing work. Requirements and construction codes vary from region to region, so check with the local permit office before starting your project.

Be prepared that life will not go on as usual during the renovation period. It will be noisy and dusty, water and electricity may be shut off at inconvenient times, tradespeople may be anywhere in the house working on the project.

Whether working with a contractor or on your own, keep in mind that the final cost of the renovation can vary considerably. Set aside some additional budget to cover the little extras that come up along the way such as upgraded materials and other unexpected expenses.

Pay particular attention to children, seniors and pets during a renovation. They are most vulnerable to the dangers inherent on the work site: sharp tools, electrical wires, toxic chemicals and dust.

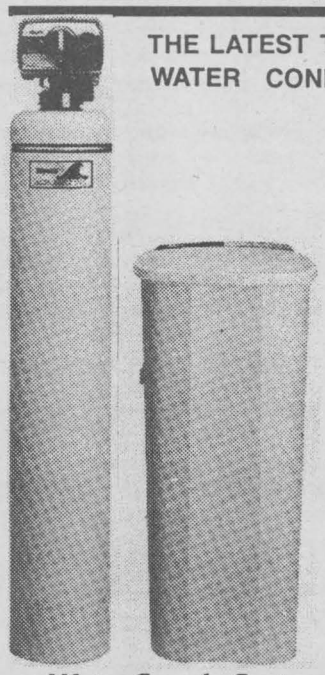
Always leave yourself some extra time to complete the renovation - it will often take longer than originally planned.

Although renovating your home can sometimes feel like a daunting task, in most cases, it can be a very worthwhile endeavour. Once the work is complete, the joys and pleasures of a new bathroom or kitchen, not to mention the increase in value to your home, will definitely outweigh any minor trials and tribulations endured along the way.

Visit your local Home Hardware and Home Building Centre stores for all your home renovating and repair needs.

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A few lawn tips to help you for early Spring

As that spring sun warms the soil, lawn grasses are among the first plants to green up and start to grow. Indulge that green thumb early in the season when it's a pleasure to be outside. Here are some tips for helping your lawn:

Raking - With a soft rake, remove any over-wintered leaves, undesirable brown vegetation, sticks, and other debris from within and on your lawn. This will allow the sun to begin warming the soil.

Test soil for pH - In many parts of Canada, this simple and inexpensive test is vital for successful lawn care. Where possible, bring a soil sample to a garden centre or soil lab. At a perfect pH of 6.5 to 7, your lawn has the ability to pick up all the essential elements. If it is lower or higher, many elements are unavailable to plant roots. In regions of eastern Canada, and B.C., the pH is as low as 4.5. Test results in this range would require the addition of limestone to increase the pH. In the Prairies and in parts of Ontario, the pH is often higher than 7.5 and as high as 8.5.

In these cases, the addition of elemental sulphur will be effective in balancing the pH.

Reseed - Lawn areas that are not covered with a uniform stand of grass should be reseeded. Scatter seed lightly and scratch it into the soil with a stiff rake.

Fertilize - To encourage both existing lawn grasses and new seedlings, apply a high quality turf fertilizer with high percentage of slow-release nitrogen. This lawn food will adequately replenish nutrients taken up by grass plants throughout the spring growing season. Fertilizer should be applied at least two to three times per growing season. Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations on the package.

Mow - As soon as the grass has grown above the normal height of cut - usually about 4 or 5 centimetres - start mowing. This will not only create a uniform surface appearance but also will help to thicken up the stand of lawn grass.

If you make some early investments in your lawn, it will pay back dividends later on.

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Homeowners & Taxes

by P.H.Nicol
Chieftain Staff Reporter

If you are a home owner in the Province of Ontario, you have been getting away with a free ride tax-wise for years: this according to Aynsley Wintrip, press secretary for Ontario Finance Minister Jim Flaherty.

However, if you own a business in the Province of Ontario, you have been paying too much taxes, she said.

All of this is about to change.

A revised property tax assessment, begun in the late 1990's will continue and this year properties will be assessed at their 1999 market value for taxation purposes. Generally speaking, these reassessments of residential property have meant a tax increase.

However, commercial, industrial and multi-residential properties will be held to a maximum increase of 5% under Bill 140, the Continued Protection for Property Taxpayers Act.

According to Ms. Wintrip, property value assessments for residential properties have been artificially low over the last number of years and business has had to pick up the taxation slack by paying too much for their taxes.

Under the old system, municipalities could pretty well set the tax rates wherever they wanted and tended to tax businesses at a much higher rate than homeowners. According to Ms. Wintrip, that system "created an imbalance. There was no rhyme or reason to how municipalities levied their taxes."

Now there is; Bill 140.

The provincial government has also mandated a new, standardized tax bill for the entire province. The costs of switching over computer programmes to generate the new tax bills will be borne by the individual municipalities.

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Do-it-yourself tips on the Internet for everyone

Put yourself on-line. That's what many home do-it-yourselfers are doing to find all the information they need to start and complete home projects.

The Internet is proving to be a valuable resource for do-it-yourselfers. Among the Web sites you may want to bookmark is www.ryobi.com, where Ryobi has logged plenty of helpful information about the company's wide range of power tools and lawn and garden products. Click on the Canadian button for information about Ryobi products available in Canada.

Power tools

In the power tools category, 'net surfers' will find the complete power tool catalog, and helpful project tips.

Lawn & garden

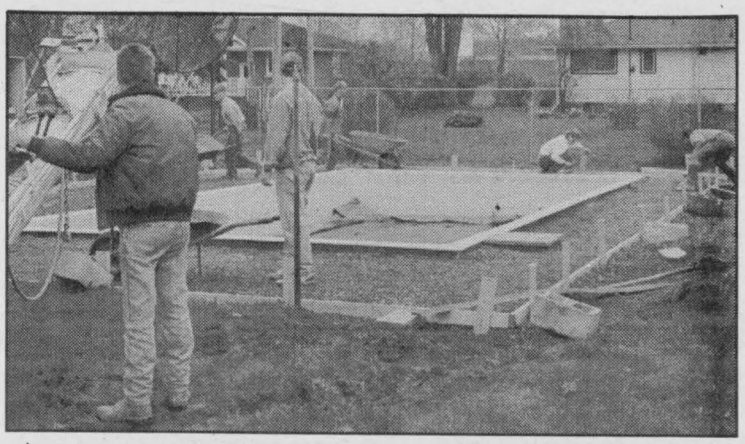
Lawn and garden enthusiasts can log on to find a complete catalog of lawn and garden tools, as well as lawn care tips. Wondering what the weekend weather will be like? Log on to find the forecast for any part of Canada.

Email

Both the power tool and lawn and garden Web sties offer direct e-mail to Ryobi Canada customer service representatives. Want to know which power tool is best for the job? Want to know where to find the new 4-cycle trimmer? Just ask Ryobi.

Much of the information you need to make your home your castle is right at your fingertips. To log on, type www.ryobi.com.

News Canada



A recreational project *Chieftain photo by S.L. Johnston*

Besides offering cool comfort from the raging heat of an Ontario summer, a pool can bring hours of fun and physical fitness. Coupled with these obvious benefits is the social plus of the pool party. Just think of how much you'll enjoy relaxing in the pool-- while you work at installing it.

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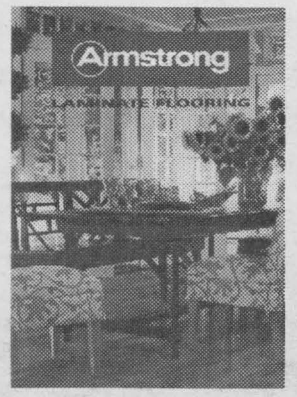
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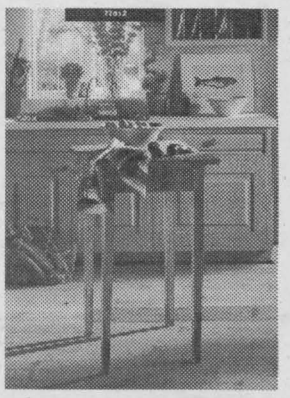
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Improving your homes energy efficiency while doing spring renovations will save you money all through the year

If you're planning renovations or home improvements this year, now is the perfect time to evaluate just how efficiently your house uses energy.

Energy efficiency upgrades are usually more cost-effective if they are done at the same time as renovations. In addition, they improve your home's comfort and safety, and can increase its resale value.

If you're unsure of where your biggest heating losses are occurring, or if you simply don't know where to begin, take advantage of a new program called EnerGuide for Houses, developed by the Office of Energy Efficiency (OEE) at Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) in consultation with the housing industry.

By calling the 1-800 number below, NRCan will provide you with the number of an unbiased EnerGuide for Houses evaluator in your area, who will visit your home and make a walk-through evaluation of your house.

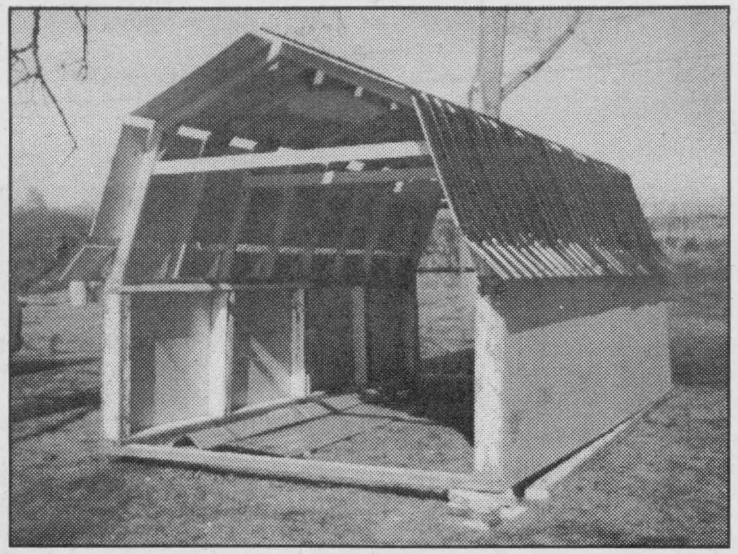
After checking insulation levels, heating, hot water and ventilation systems, and performing an air leakage test, the evaluator uses a computer simulation program to estimate your home's present and potentially improved energy usage. You'll also receive a written report that shows where your energy losses are occurring. The report will have specific recommendations on where best to start with energy-saving renovations.

The report gives you the 'big picture' so you can plan renovations ahead of time and decide which improvements you want to make and when. The EnerGuide for Houses label rates your home's energy efficiency and can be displayed on the electrical panel in your furnace room.

Although there is a fee for the evaluation, energy efficiency can be seen as a short- and long-term investment: improving your home's energy use will mean a warmer and more comfortable home now and lower fuel bills in the future.

For the name of an energy evaluator in your area, call 1-800-387-2000. For more information about the EnerGuide for Houses Program and how it can help with your home renovation plans. contact the OEE at NRCan, 580 Booth Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0E4, fax (613) 943-1590, or visit the OEE's web site at http://oee.nrcan.gc.ca.

News Canada



Add a Shed

Chieftain photo by S.L.Johnston

Often we find there is never enough space and so a new shed in the backyard can be the answer. Whether for the lawn care equipment, the snowmobile or the little things that seem to be dumped here and there when we are done with them, a shed is a great idea and with a kit, most anyone can construct their own, the framing can be completed in a weekend.

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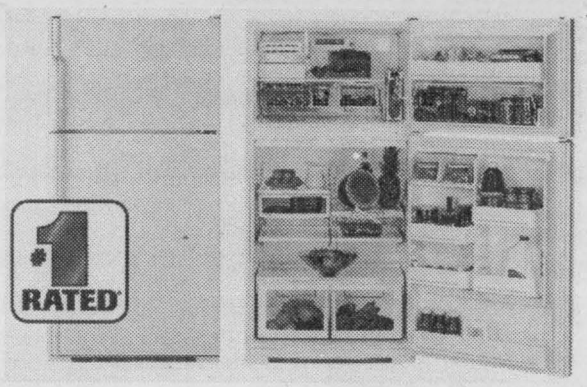
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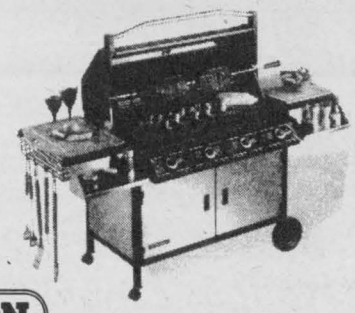
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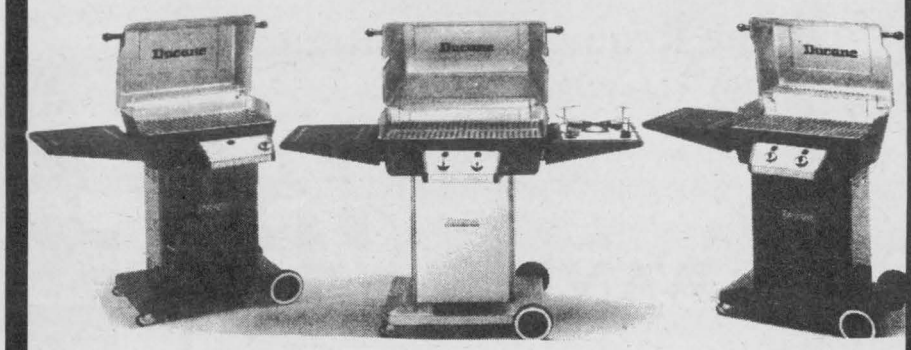
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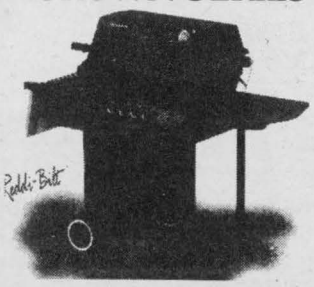
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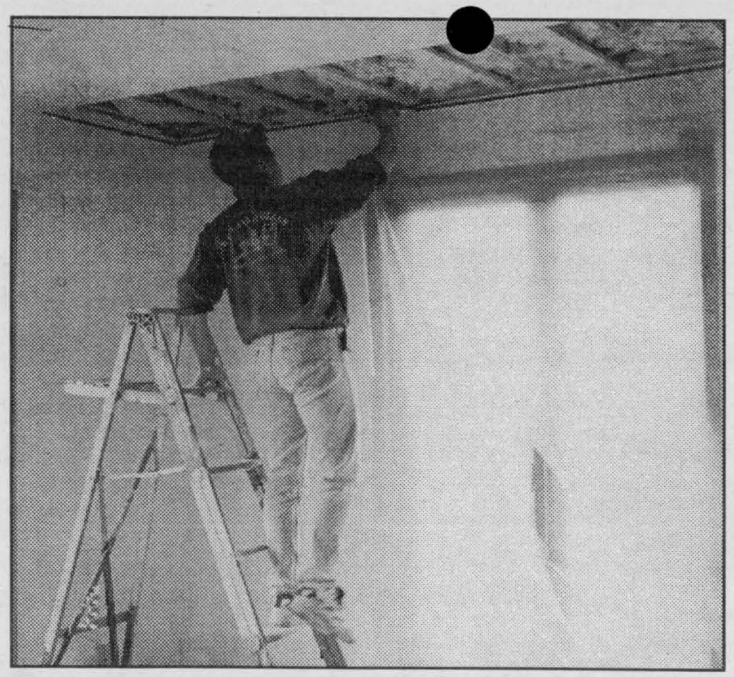
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Renovations explode

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Chieftain Photo by S.L.Johnston

Patch-up plan for your lawn

With the arrival of Spring, your lawn can present you with some unwelcome surprises. But before we look for trouble, let's consider the easiest way to avoid it. It's lawn watering, and it's the single most important thing you can do to promote healthy lawn growth.

However, there are a couple of important things to know about effective lawn watering. To begin with, it's important to remember that grass roots require different watering methods at different stages of their development. For example, because the shallow roots of new grass or sodded lawns dry out more quickly than established lawns, they need frequent watering to remain healthy.

That's why you should be sure to water in small amounts every day.

For an established lawn, you should thoroughly water once a week, applying a full inch of water. This will assure that its deep roots get the water they need, to protect your lawn from extended dry spell damage. (Here's a handy tip: set out an empty can to gauge your watering depth.)

Weeds and insects can be a major problem too - but that's a subject for another column. Let's assume that you've already got those problems under control, but you're left with unsightly bare patches that must be re-seeded. The first step is to apply a good quality seed. C-I-L Golfgreen Premium Grass Seed is an excellent choice. Seed patches should then be covered with an inch or so of specially formulated soil amendment, such as Hillview Top Dresser, to hold moisture and add valuable organic material to the soil. It's also important to remember that seed planted too early could well become an extra food supply for the local bird population.

A quality phosphate-based starter fertilizer, such as C-I-L Turf Starter, will assure that your newly germinated plants awaken to a healthy breakfast that will stimulate root growth and get the patch off to a strong start. When the newly seeded patch reaches the height of surrounding grass, it's time to treat it like an adult — with an application of a top quality slow-release nitrogen feeder product. C-I-L Liquid Golfgreen 20-3-4 or Golfgreen Plus provide needed nutrients for up to an 8-week period.

Whichever products you choose, be sure to follow package instructions carefully, to make your Spring Power And Patch-Up Plan a beautiful success.

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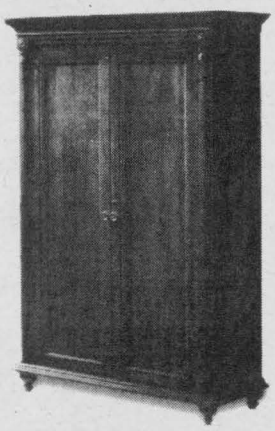
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SUNDAY 1 P.M.-4 P.M.

LOCATED 5 MILES NORTH OF THE 401 ON MAITLAND ROAD (EXIT 705)

926-2919

The New Woodburning... there's a revolution starting

When most people think of wood stoves, their memory conjures up images of rusting pot-bellied stoves or dusty black steel boxes on legs. These were the trusty, old wood burners that helped a lot of Canadian families through the energy crisis of 20 years ago when prices of other heating fuels went off the scale. But, step into the showroom of a wood stove and fireplace shop these days and you'll see instantly that things have changed

One obvious change is that many models on display burn gas or propane, not wood. These gas burners are for people who place a higher value on convenience than on a real wood fire. Still for those who want the real thing, not fake logs and engineered flames, there are plenty of wood burners to choose from, not a pot-belly or rusty box among them.

Every unit in the store is either decked out in a glossy enamel finish or sports glittering gold on the door and trim (Real gold plating). Here's shapely cast iron model in rich red enamel and over there is one in deep enamel that also has a gold door. And what's this? A stove painted in traditional matte black, but unlike the old "airtight" this one is a handsome pedestal model that would look right at home in any family room or cottage.

One thing all the stoves have in common is a big glass panel in the loading door. Actually it is not glass, but a crystal-clear ceramic material that can take heat and is almost unbreakable. The revolution in woodburning has yielded a technology called glass air wash that keeps the glass clear for days and for some models, weeks at a time. Joy at Harbers Flame Centre says, "In the showroom, customers are impressed with the look of the fire through the clear glass, but they are really amazed when they have one installed in their home and find it always looks that way!"

Although the new wood burners are transformed visually, the changes are more than superficial. In fact, the biggest changes are hidden inside where clever technologies cut smoke emissions by up to 90% and boost efficiency as much as one-third from a stove built only fifteen years ago. In the real world of day-to-day use these improvements mean no visible smoke from the chimney and the purchase, storage and handling of a lot less wood. And they're safer too, because the clear exhaust doesn't deposit sticky creosote that can lead to a damaging chimney fire.

Joy adds, "Twenty years ago wood stoves were practical and reliable, but homey. Today a wood stove is an attractive accent to the room's decor and with a fire on in the evening, it creates a cosy and inviting ambience. Plus it is superclean burning and as efficient as a gas furnace."

"This one may look like a wood burning stove, but it actually burns wood pellets by slowly feeding the tiny compressed sawdust cylinders into a combustion pot where they burn in a steady, controlled way. A control system inside the stove manages the fuel rate and flow of combustion with the convenience of bagged pellet fuel, make pellet stoves appealing to people who like the idea of heating with wood but want a more convenient system," continues Joy.

Part of the wood revolution is in new knowledge about how fuel use affects the environment. You've heard about global warming, caused by increased carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse" gasses in the atmosphere. Most greenhouse gases are released by burning fossil fuels like oil, natural gas, propane and coal.

But wood stoves and pellet stoves use fuel that is renewable.

Please turn to page 11

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All decked out!

Chieftain photo by S.L.Johnston

A deck makes a big difference to any home, in appearance and it also contributes to the life of the family who dwell therein. Providing a space for outdoor living, relaxing, eating or whatever, a deck is a vaulable asset to a house. This one overlooks the mighty St. Lawrence River providing a marvellous view. I can picture myself enjoying a tall, cool lemonade as I sit on this deck and I watch the ships go by...

Above-ground pools... Just add water & enjoy

The mercury's rising and the kids are pleading for a swimming pool, but someone has to be practical. I mean, a pool would be a real budget buster. And even if you could afford one, the yard is too small. If you could squeeze one in, summer would be over before the construction was done. Besides, you may be moving again in a year or two, so all that expense and effort would be wasted. There's just no way, right?

Wrong! There is a way and it's called an above-ground pool. Nearly four million families in North America already have discovered this practical and economical solution to their summertime woes and another 400,000 above-ground units are sold each year. According to the National Spa & Pool Institute of Canada, the industry's trade association, that's almost three times the number of inground pools sold each year. That makes above-grounds the fastest growing segment of the new pool market. The fact is, above-ground pools have earned their popularity the old-fashioned way by satisfying their buyer's desires for practicality, aesthetics and affordability.

Above-grounds can be installed quickly and easily for the least expensive packages while more elaborate models may take several days to complete, depending on the additional decking. They are just as easy to dismantle and remove should you wish to do so. Above-ground pools also come in a range of sizes, beginning with a 12 foot diameter round, and are designed to suit almost any size yard. Some are even expandable, a particularly useful feature for families that are growing. As for maintenance, an ongoing revolution in pool care technology is making it easier than ever to maintain the pool.

One of the most appealing features of above-ground pools is their adaptability. These pools can be installed in areas where construction of an in-ground pool may be difficult as in colder regions and in places where geological peculiarities make excavation impractical or impossible.

From an aesthetic standpoint, the inherent simplicity of above-ground pool designs makes it easy to integrate them into any landscaping plan. Modern materials and beautiful wall designs make the above-ground pool an excellent choice when designing a backyard.

Gone are the days when above-ground pools were looked down on and thought of as tin cans that hold water. The evolution of above-ground pools, from a backyard eyesore to a visually pleasing and much sought after product, certainly conveys the image that there is a swimming pool for every need and budget. Best of all, a family-sized pool, with all these advantages, can be had for between $2,500 and $7,000. It expands the opportunities for enjoying the activity of swimming.

The National Spa & Pool Institute of Canada has information available on the purchase of a swimming pool, spa or hot tub. You can reach them through their web site at www.nspi.ca or call toll free to 1-800-879-7066.

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CONTINUED

Nail

Continued from the Front

grandfather Bygott who was a carpenter in Toronto, "I just lugged lumber for him, but maybe that is where I was bitten by the bug, may be that is where my enthusiasm for wood and construction actually stemmed from."

Getting serious about carpentry, Stephen started his apprenticeship with a local firm, Swank Construction where he says he gained a lot of valuable experience building custom homes. "I like building custom homes, it is nice to deal with the customer and to build what he/she wants. When the customer looks back and says it is just the way I wanted it to be, it makes you feel good." Presently working with Andy VanderMeulen Construction building custom homes as well as doing renovations, Stephen is in his second year with Andy and seems happy with the work he is asked to do.

When speaking about his classes at Algonquin, he is adamant when he says he would definitely recommend them to anyone wanting to get into this area of work. "You get a lot of valuable knowledge." He continues telling how the classes teach the proper way to do things, from the excavation all the way up to the roof coverings, every aspect of house construction is dealt with. "We actually build things in class as shop projects are handed out to us. We do no concrete work though that is another field of endeavour. We do sub-floors and a lot of emphasis is placed on the roof, whether, gable (fits on a slope over a triangular wall), hip (barn style) or mansard (four sloping sides, each of which becomes steeper half way down). He has nothing but praise for his teachers at Algonquin, "They are so smart in their field, they work as well as teach and this helps them understand where we are coming from." He says that people can take the course "raw" with no experience, but must be employed by a licensed carpenter. "You start the process by applying to the Ministry of Education Apprenticeship Department who meet with you and hopefully approve your entry into the program. Prior to writing the provincial licensing exam, you have to have 7200 on-site hours working with a licensed contractor." While there were no females in the course Stephen just finished, he is aware of a female enrolled in the class behind his. "As long as she is physically able and does not worry about working outside all year round (Summer is worse than winter he confides, you can put on more to keep warm, but only so much can come off and you have to be careful not to dehydrate-drinking plenty of water is vital in summer."

He admits the daily drive from Iroquois to Nepean became boring over the eight-week period. Leaving before it was light and returning home after dark is not fun, but the weather (snow days) did not disrupt too many trips northward and he looks forward to going back next January to complete his course.

"I like how things are now, working for someone else; when I come home my time is my own." Some day he hopes to have a business of his own, but is in no hurry to make the change.

As his wee daughter Elizabeth ventures into the area. Just turning three, she likes to help her daddy, has her own tools and is a master hammer person, so we are told.

Good luck Stephen, we know you'll do just fine. Follow that dream and if gold is in your future in Kitchener, all the better.

Woodburning

Continued from page 9

meaning that as long as the forest is managed wisely, we can use it forever without using it up. More importantly, though, wood fuels recycle carbon dioxide because growing trees absorb it from the air. So burning wood for home heating does not contribute to global warming and that's a big environmental benefit.

Yes, the old wood stove has passed into history, but woodburning is alive and well. It is in fact far better for home heating and enjoyment than ever, thanks to the low maintenance, clean-burning, super efficient, attractive new stoves. With the way oil and gas prices have gone up this winter, a lot of people are giving wood heat a second look...and they like what they see.



Roof replacement *Chieftain Photo by S.L.Johnston*

When remodelling or renovating, the best place to start is the roof. If things are bad up there, the wood base may need to be replaced before the shingles can be put on.

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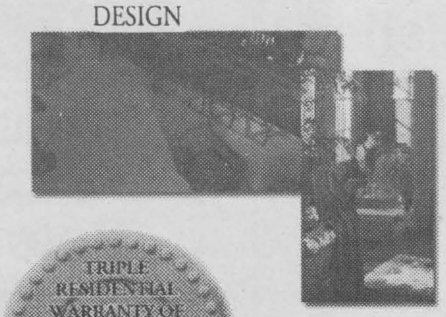
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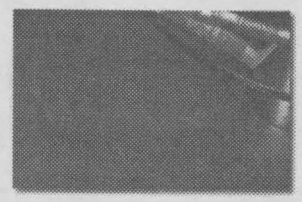


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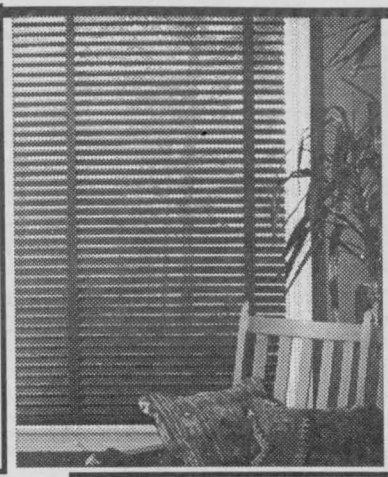
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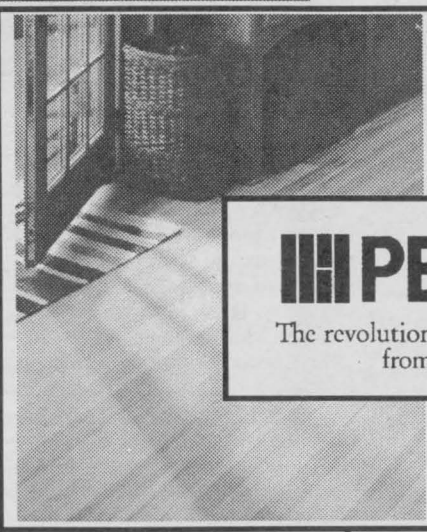
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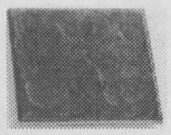
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