Home Energy & Improvement

YOUR GUIDE TO THOSE FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

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Some renovations can be done by homeowner

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Local couple decides to construct addition themselves to save money

by Sean McKibbon
Chieftain Staff Reporter

When a building contractor told Paul and Susan Henderson that an addition to their farm house would cost more than $50,000 they decided to "contract in".

"Andrew and I did most of the work ourselves. We started in May and worked on it when we could for most of the summer," says Paul who notes building the addition with his son Andrew was an experience that brought them closer together.

"He enjoyed it. He's told us he wants to build his own home by himself when the time comes," says Paul.

Doing it themselves the Hendersons saved $30,000 and got them the addition they wanted. The result of their work was a beautiful, two-story, 18x19' addition that replaced an aging greenhouse added on in the early '80's.

"We never used it (the green house) as much as we thought we would. Mostly we used it in the spring when we were getting ready to transplant," says Susan. But over the years the greenhouse aged badly with most of the windows losing their seals.

"You used to be able to see the farm through the greenhouse, but it was so foggy it got so you couldn't. It got to be a real eyesore."

Two years ago the Hendersons were expecting to host an exchange student. They were told by the exchange agency it would be better if the student could have her own room. That decided it; they would build more space. The new addition would include a living room area on the first floor with a new master bedroom on the second. A bathroom and a walk-in closet would adjoin the master bedroom and windows would line three sides of the addition on both floors.

"We priced it and the cost was going to be astronomical. So then Paul started saying 'Well, maybe I could do it myself,'" says Susan.

Confessing only to taking carpentry in high school and helping contractors who worked on their home previously, Paul says his experience working on the barns and machine sheds on the family farm lent him the confidence to approach the project.

"It's the same principle with the barns, just you have to be a little more square and a little more fine," he says with a laugh.

Raising walls took help from neighbors and contractors did the addition's aluminum siding, stairs and heat. The rest-- drywall, oak flooring, wiring, windows and moulding-- Paul and Andrew did on their own.

"You should start with a fairly definite plan on paper, but be prepared to change as you go along," advises Paul. Susan designed the addition herself, but soon realized as it took shape that changes were needed.

"I wanted it to look uniform on the inside and out. I wanted the windows to line up on both floors so we had to make the bathroom a little bit smaller."

Once the addition was finished-- exactly one day before their exchange student arrived-- it was left to Susan to choose the interior decor.

"I know what I like and I'm very critical now since my first experience decorating the house," says Sue Henderson.

Her first time out she chose a variety of different colors for rooms without considering how they would look together.

"In one room I chose blue carpet and another gold. There was brown, green, blue, gold. It wasn't until it was all down in the house that I realized that nothing matched. So then I had to wait for about ten years before we replaced the carpets." When they did replace the carpet Susan took a radically different tack, choosing red wallpaper, white trim and brick with maple flooring for her kitchen and blue, white and maple for her dining room.

"I wanted the colors to flow from room to room," she says.

The new addition which connects to the kitchen, compliments the red nicely with warm, off-white walls, forest green molding and red accents. Susan chose the paint with a mind to the kitchen as well as the furniture (green or red only) which she would place in the addition. She even took a pillow from her chesterfield to the paint store to make sure everything matched.

The Hendersons say they have no regrets in building the addition themselves and expect to use it for years to come.

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SPECIAL PULL-OUT SECTION

Renovations need not be tough for homeowners

by Sandra Lee Johnston
Chieftain Staff Reporter

Everyone knows horror stories concerning the do-it-yourself renovations. You know, stories of hammer whacked thumbs, ulcers created when budgets were left by the way side, egos bruised when it had to be admitted that the job was a little more than should have been attempted. They can scare even the stoutest among us from trying any home improvement project, no matter how easy it appears at first.

Too bad, no one should be discouraged or turned from at least trying a renovation. The fact that it is your first time need not deter you either. Limited experience can be a boon to a task. One of the greatest rewards of owning a home is the satisfaction one can feel after completing a renovation job with your own hands.

With the cost of labour being high today, who could blame any of us from wanting to save a little where we can?

The most economical way of renovating is to get down and dirty and do it yourself. Keep in mind though, it will cost you double if after you renovate a contractor still has to be hired to repair your errors.

Some homeowners are more than capable of accomplishing any and all tasks themselves, some need help with the bigger jobs, but the majority are in between and can do some while professionals are best left to the biggies. (Wiring, masonry repair and roofing).

Who cannot strip woodwork, wallpaper, insulate, weatherstrip, patch walls, hang storm windows, hang drywall or shutters? Well,

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Furnace inspection should be Fall priority

Fall is home fixit season. At the top of your list of household projects should be the inspection and repair of your household heating system by a registered professional, say fuels safety experts at Ontario's Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

The ministry's Fuels Safety Program says it's vital for safety to have the entire home heating system, including the chimney and furnace, thoroughly checked by a qualified inspector at least once a year.

A simple problem such as a squirrel's nest blocking a chimney could cause fumes to back up into the house, producing a deadly build-up of carbon monoxide gas.

Deterioration of brick and mortar in the chimney is another common cause of blockage that can result in carbon monoxide being forced into the house.

Carbon monoxide is a colourless and odourless gas and it is highly toxic. It can cause nausea, headaches, unconsciousness and, under extreme conditions, death.

Carbon monoxide is considered to be more dangerous than many other toxic gases because you can't see or smell it. People who have been overcome by carbon monoxide usually say they didn't know what was causing their symptoms and thought they had the flu.

As well as blockage, the build-up of a tar-like deposit called creosote can be a problem, especially in fireplace and wood stove chimneys.

Creosote deposits can cause serious chimney fires.

Also, creosote tends to develop more quickly if green wood or paper are burned, leading the ministry to advise consumers to burn nothing but thoroughly dried wood in fireplaces.

If you use your fireplace or woodstove on a regular basis, the chimney may need cleaning more than once a year; ask your home heating specialist for advice.

Chimneys that vent fumes from natural gas furnaces may be subject to corrosion and blockage sooner than those connected to oil furnaces.

The fumes from gas furnaces are cooler than those produced by the latter, and are more likely to condense while still in the chimney.

If you see dampness at the base of the chimney, debris inside the clean-out door at the base, or a white powdery deposit or water stains on the outside near the roof, they may be warning signs that these acidic deposits have caused damage. Call your home-heating contractor at once, to arrange an inspection.

In some cases a metal chimney liner may be needed to prevent further damage.

Even if your chimney is in perfect condition, your heating system can still be dangerous. If your home is very well sealed your appliances may use up so much air inside the house that some is drawn back down the chimney, bringing carbon monoxide with it. A registered home heating expert can help resolve the problem. If you suspect this situation has developed, for safety's sake, open a couple of windows **at once** and keep them open until the contractor arrives.

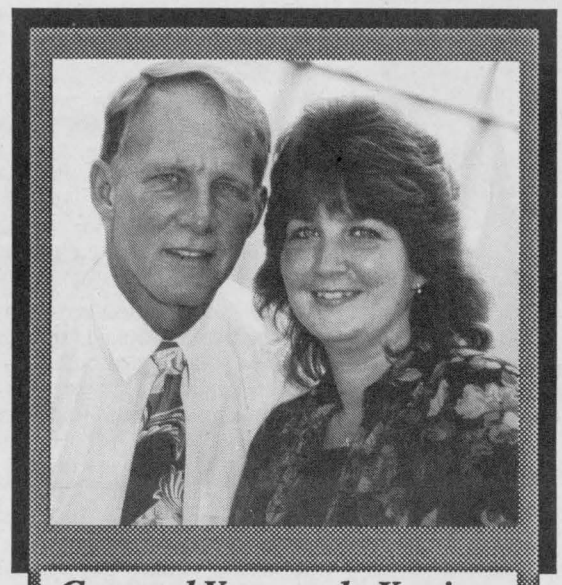
The other major dangers in home heating systems start in the furnace. In furnaces fuelled by oil or natural gas, heat is produced by combining fuel with the oxygen in the air, then igniting it in the furnace's combustion chamber.

When your heating system is running properly, the exhaust fumes rise up the chimney and present no danger. But if your furnace isn't burning cleanly, or the system leaks, large amounts of carbon monoxide can escape into the house.

Because safety is at stake, the Fuels Safety Program advises consumers to deal with a qualified home heating contractor. An untrained person who doesn't do the work properly could put lives and property at risk.

Many consumers deal with the same reputable contractor year after year. But if you're hiring a

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Gus and Yvonne de Koning

New owners take over FM WINDOWS DOORS & SIDING

FM Windows, Doors and Siding is considered one of the best 50 managed private firms by the Financial Post.

Gus and Yvonne de Koning have taken over FM Windows, Doors and Siding in the Winchester/Brockville area, promising to better serve the community and build up the business.

Gus comes to the territory with a good knowledge of what FM Windows, Doors and Siding is all about.

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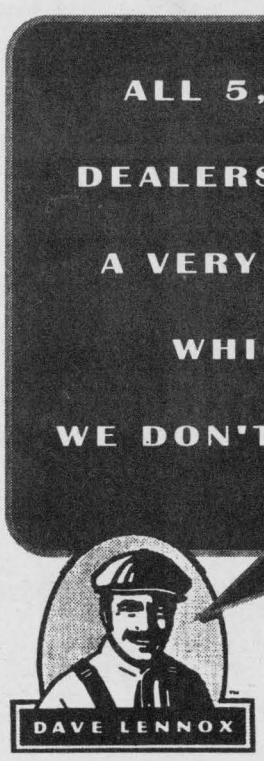
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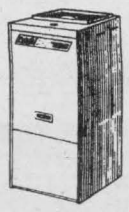
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Landscaping useful tool

Landscaping is often ignored until all else is accomplished. Too bad. True it can be the finishing touch to a renovation but can often be all that is needed for a renovation. Changing the style or effect created by the lawns can be the crowning touch to a home. Here a new layer of deep, dark top soil is being raked into shape ready for seeding. *Chieftain photo by S.L.Johnston*

Fall planting creates spring colour

by Sandra Lee Johnston
Chieftain Staff Reporter

Landscaping can give everyone a lift. One of the purposes of seeding a new lawn, planting shrubs or initiating a new flower bed is to revitalize the outdoor area around your home. It can be as simple as a new mound of ground with a shrub and some flowers or as elaborate as a complete new look for the entire space.

Adding a gazebo or a trellis, a stone walkway or a pond, the decision is yours. It need not cost in the extreme, and most of the actual work can be done by yourself. There are loads of experts out there who are more than willing to share their knowledge.

One of the simplest renovations that can be done outside the home is the fall planting of bulbs. Some unusual bulbs will provide a delightful surprise in the spring and allow you to cheer things after a dreary winter without any effort necessary at the time.

Tulips are common bulbs planted each fall that bring a splash of colour to numerous flower beds as they wake in the spring. Parrot Tulips have feather-like, fringed flowers and add a certain something special to areas they are in. Long lilylike petals on the Lily-Flowered Tulip coupled with their strong stems make this one a great cut flower. Narrower leaves than most of their cousins allow these to be put in vases and are most pleasing to the viewer.

Daffodils and Hyacinths are popular and who can resist those cute little croci when they peek their tiny blooms above the ground to welcome spring? All it takes is a bit of advance planning and some effort now when the air is crisp and the sunshine beckons everyone outdoors.

Fall is the time to transplant, to split those monstrous creatures which have over the summer literally taken over the flower bed. Shrubs can be placed in strategic locations to add that green touch and if a tree is in your design, it too can go into the ground now.

Sprucing up the yard is a renovation most can afford and everyone will enjoy.

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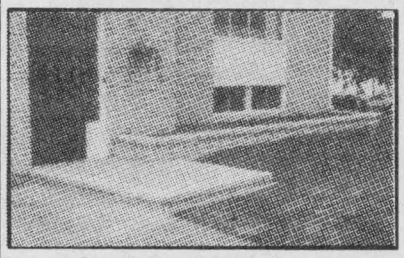
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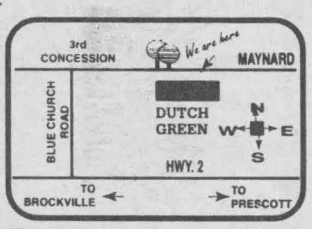
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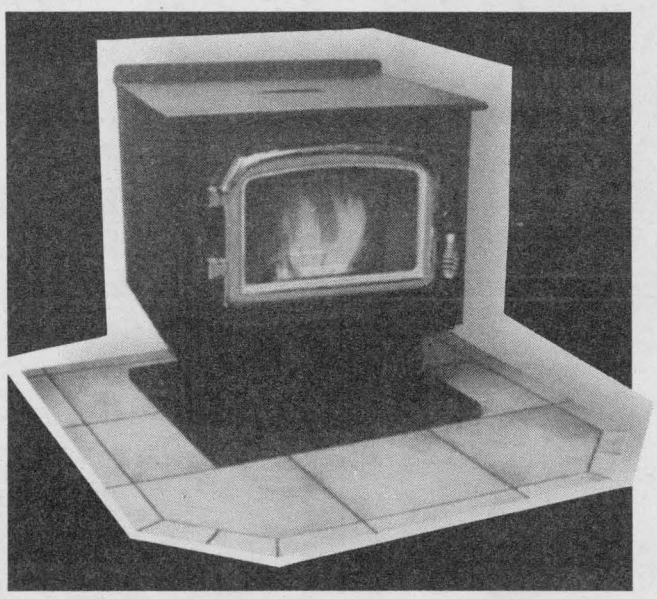
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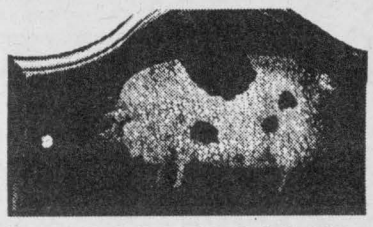
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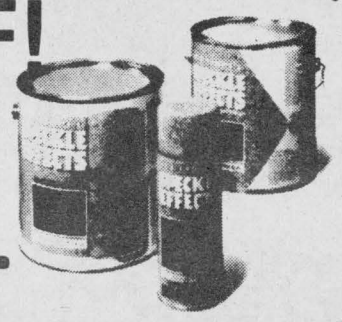
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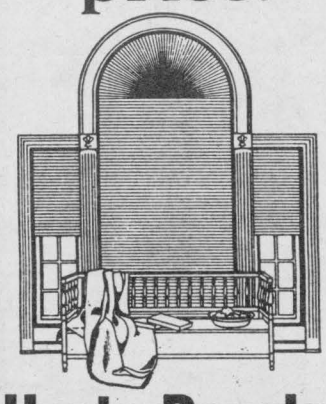
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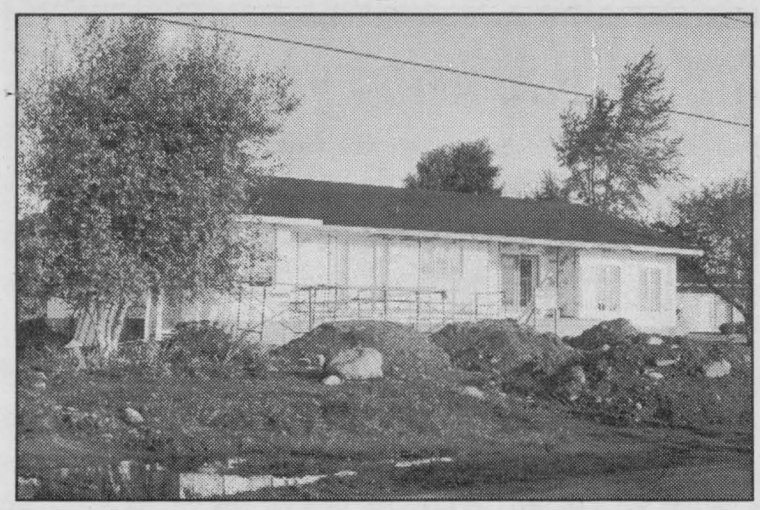
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Chieftain photo by M.C. Bailey.

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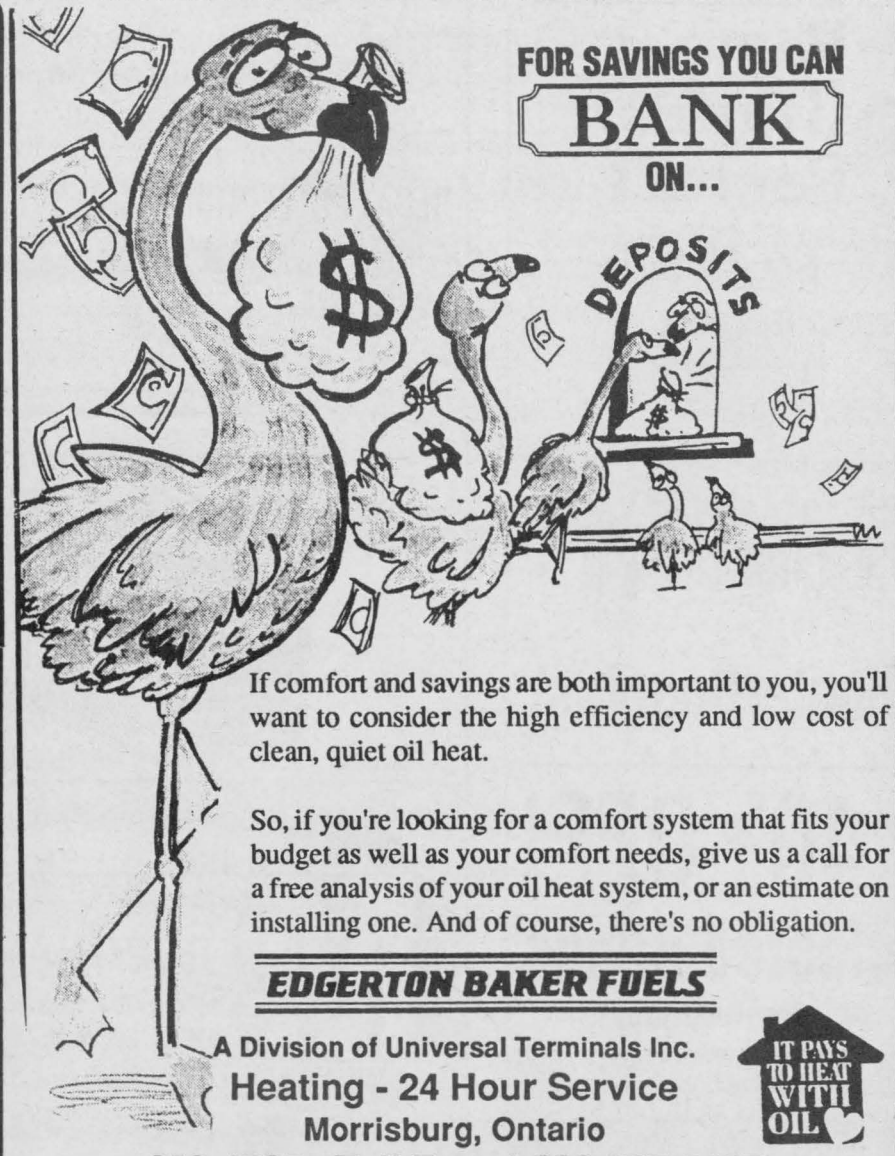
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CONTINUED

Renovations

Continued from page 2

most can do these things with some degree of success. Major items like duct work, trim and siding, floor refinishing, framing, plastering, plumbing, electrical wiring, installing cabinets and roofing are perhaps best left to those who know.

As the homeowner it falls to you to decide what work will be done, who you will hire, obtain the necessary permits and make sure the contract describes the job accurately so there can be no trouble along the way. Any mistakes or changes have to be reported to the contractor as soon as possible. When the job is complete, you must be satisfied and then the agreed upon price must be paid.

Before tackling a job on your own, be sure that you are prepared. Never be afraid to ask for assistance or ideas from others who have been through similar situations. Do not attempt something you know you are not capable of. Be familiar with the tools you will use. Ascertain if you indeed have the time required to get the job done right. Will you be happy with the end product of your effort? Are the skills needed those you possess or are you just hoping? Are you willing to give the project the time and effort it will demand? There are other items to consider as well.

Renovations can leave your life in a shambles. Living in a state of disarray for a prolonged period can cause problems in any house. Is this something you really need or want?

Plans are best checked and double checked before the first nail is hammered or the first piece of demolition takes you beyond the point of return...just look at Tim "the toolman " Taylor on the telly, he certainly gets into some messes. Remember the entire family will suffer in the long run.

Furnaces

Continued from page 3

new contractor this year, the ministry suggests you be wary of anyone who offers special deals over the telephone or at your door.

Make sure the contractor is registered with the ministry **before** you sign a contract. If you're not sure, call the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations' Fuels Safety Program for confirm- ation, at (416) 325-2000.



Look up..way up!

Drivers and pedestrians alike were craning their necks to check out the roofing job on Beach Street last week. A renovation which is often necessary should not be left until the rain comes inside every time a storm sweeps through. Dan and Jim were lucky as far as weather was concerned, they stripped the old shingles and were able to replace them under sunny skies. *Chieftain Photo by S.L.Johnston*

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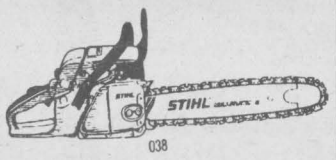
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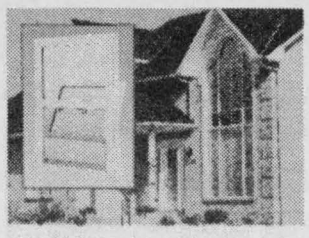


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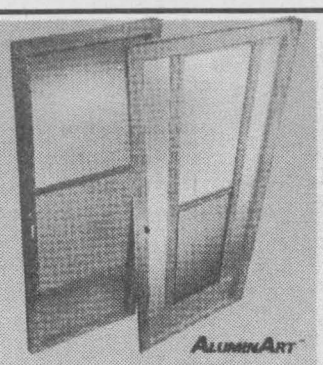
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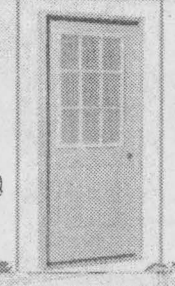
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Tip - SOLID LUMBER PANELLING

- Position first plank in a corner, tongue edge facing right. Place carpenter's level against tongue to check for plumb.
- Drive panel nail diagonally through tongue's base and into furring strip. • Drive next groove onto tongue of installed plank with a mallet and a piece of scrap plank. Lightly tap the scrap until the planks fit snugly. Nail to furring Strips as described