

Ask Mr. Fix-It!

by Con Chapman

Got a home repair question? Ask Mr. Fix-It! He usually knows the answer, and if not, your problem isn't worth fixing. Here are some questions received from do-it-yourselfers this week.

"Hmm—the hammer has no effect on the water level."

Dear Mr. Fix-It:

Our roof leaks and we had a man come out and look at it. I say "man" even though my husband is a man, just not a very handy man. He works downtown and I can barely get him up off the couch on weekends.

Anyway, the man gets up on the roof, looks around for awhile, comes back down, says we need a new roof, a soffit vent (whatever that is), our tappets are too tight and it's going to cost us \$45,000. Plus he will have to buy a left-handed monkey wrench and a sky hook to do the job, which he will keep when he's done.

That sounds kind of high. Any thoughts?

Mrs. Mildred Friel, Downer's Grove, Illinois



Dear Mrs. Friel:

Many isolated suburban housewives like yourself fall prey to home improvement scams when their husbands are not up to the sometimes difficult task of maintaining a house in good repair.

There are several “tip-offs” in the estimate you received. There is no such thing as a tappet, a left-handed monkey wrench or a sky hook. These imaginary articles are often used to trick new hires on recreational vehicle assembly lines as in “Go to the tool room and ask the guy if he's got a left-handed monkey wrench.” I would suggest you get a new estimate or a new husband, whichever is more feasible.



Mr. Fix-It:

I have squirrels in my attic.

Earleen Kroeger, Osage Beach, MO

Ms. Kroeger:

Literally or figuratively?



Dear Mr. Fix-It:

My new girlfriend “Denise” invited me over for a romantic candlelight dinner in front of her fireplace. After a few glasses of wine we got a little frisky and I knocked a candlestick over, causing wax to spill on her limestone hearth. She got all mad and said you idiot, how am I ever going to get that up? I said I was sorry and scraped off as much as I could, but there's still a stain. Please help

me out on this, as she now thinks I'm worthless klutz, and I have yet to tell her about my hairpiece.

Steve Alaimo, Newport Beach, CA



Dear Steve:

Take a piece of a brown paper bag, lay it on top of the stain and run a hot iron over it—the wax will stick to the bag. Once you have removed as much of the wax as you can by this method, apply paint thinner to the remaining wax to dissolve it, and sprinkle lots of baking soda on the spot to absorb it. Sweep up the paint thinner-baking soda mixture after a few minutes and throw it away. If there are any remaining traces, sand them out with fine sandpaper. I would recommend an industrial-strength adhesive for your hairpiece if you are going to indulge in the sort of Greco-Roman love wrestling that led to this accident.



Mr. Fix-It:

Literally.

Earleen Kroeger.

Ms. Kroeger:

Thank you. I didn't know if you were referring to a mental condition, in which case I would have referred you to the "Ask Dr. Strothers, Eminent Psychologist" column. To keep rodents and small animals out of your attic, try an ounce of prevention first. Seal

up all apertures through which squirrels, raccoons, etc. can enter your house, using mortar, lumber or other sturdy material. Then call a licensed, professional exterminator to trap or kill whatever animals have already gained access to your premises. Exterminators are exposed to toxic chemicals on a daily basis, so wash your hands after touching them.



Dear Mr. Fix-It:

Recently my husband Ray was out of town and our central air conditioning system went on the fritz. I called my neighbor, who I will refer to as "Jim" because that is his name, and asked for his help. To get to the problem we had to go into the attic crawl space. I was wearing my black toreador pants, which are very flattering on me if I do say so myself, and I do. Jim was able to fix the problem just by flipping a shut-off switch—I felt so stupid! As we were crawling back to the attic stairs that my husband installed a year ago (Note to self: Remind Ray he needs to finish spackling and touch-up paint), Jim put his hand on my butt, sending a shiver up my spine. Mr. Fix-It, I am a happily married woman, and I turned to Jim and said "What do you think you are doing?" "Just letting you know you can pay the handyman in trade," he said.

Toreador pants

I mulled it over for several seconds before I agreed to have sex with Jim, telling him in no uncertain terms that this was a once-in-a-lifetime deal and that I would call the air conditioning company if I needed any further service. We fell asleep afterwards and by the time we woke up it was night time, no lights on in the house and the flashlight I brought with me didn't work, so I had to crawl back to the attic stairs, go get two new AA batteries, go back up and help Jim find his way out.

Mr. Fix-It, my question is, do you think I should tell my husband when he gets home or, given my very adamant position with Jim that I would never do anything like that again, should I remain silent in the hope of preserving my marriage?

Mrs. Sarah Ann Armstrong, Tarkio, Mo.

Dear Mrs. Armstrong:

I believe that honesty is the best policy in a marriage. You should not conceal facts from your husband that are so important to your vows. The failure to report an electrical problem with a central air conditioning unit is a serious breach of trust that could void a warranty or extended service policy you may have purchased together when your relationship was stronger. Run to him, and hope that he can find enough love in his heart to forgive you. Also, be sure to dispose of those batteries properly.

