LETTERS

Faster Framing

To the Editor:

My partner began subscribing to your journal recently and has told me many good things about it. I have just finished reading an issue and am likewise impressed.

The cover article (April 1991) was on framing. I was surprised by many of the comments and methods of the author. I do not recall mention of the use of pneumatic tools, the ultimate labor and time saving contraptions available to framers.

Our methods: We build our first-floor deck square, and level it after it is subfloored. Then plates are laid out, and studs are crowned, cut, and spread between the plates.

The walls are built with window rough-openings complete. The bottom plate is tacked on a chalk-line 3 1/2 or 5 1/2 inches to make the wall straight; it is then squared in and sheathed. And if we are ambitious the air infiltration barrier is affixed. When outside corners are nailed together they are already plumb; they better be or that deck was not square — and there is a lot of fixing to do.

Only bearing interior walls go up now. Next we line all exterior and interior walls, and not just by eye. We have some inexpensive tools that enable one guy to straighten all walls alone in an hour or less. Now the second floor joists, roof trusses, or ceiling joists are installed.

The author has a three-man crew; I will put three of mine against his for a better and faster job.

I did pick up one thing in the article: layout sticks. We have never heard of them; but they will be on our next job even if I have to make them myself.

Michael R. Guertin
Exeter, R.I.

Beware Spontaneous Combustion

To the Editor:

I would like to pass on a very moving experience our firm experienced on a recent job.

We had laid wide pine floors and had stained them with (Watco brand) floor finish. Some of the first two boards came out darker than we had wanted. Several days later our floor sander sanded them down to the new wood so we could start over. The drum sander and edger sat on another part of the same floor overnight. When our painter arrived at 7:00 the next morning, he smelled smoke, and after investigating discovered the floor to be smoldering where the sander bags had once been on the machines. He quickly doused the area with water to put out the cinders. The burns caused two holes of about 18 inches in diameter through the 3/4-inch pine floor, through a 3/4-inch pine plywood underlayment, and starting into another liner floor under this. Why this did not combust to the point of flame rather than just a slow smoldering burn is beyond me.

The crew had taken precautions to soak out stain rags and put them into a steel drum outside the building as was done periodically with the sander dust. For this situation to occur so quickly from a relatively small amount of sander dust mixed with the stain is very unnerving. We certainly had some greater power looking over our shoulder on this project.

Roger P. Trachier
Roger Trachier Builders, Inc.
Hartland, Vt.

Home Inspection Training

To the Editor:

Regarding the April 1991 edition of *JLC* in which Henry Spies discussed home inspection training, I feel that several other excellent sources were overlooked. On the university level we have both Northeastern University, 617/320-8000, as well as New York University, 212/998-7080, offering certificate programs in home inspections. In the private sector we have Home Inspection Institute of America, located in Connecticut, 203/284-2311. Organizations offering training include the National Association of Home Inspectors, 612/591-4555, and The Society of Professional Real Estate Inspectors, 617/334-4500. In addition, Mr. Spies listed only one book. The following book may also be of interest to your readers: *What's It Worth? A Home Inspection and Appraisal Manual.* This book can be purchased from Tab Books, 800/233-1128. I hope this information will be of some help to those persons looking for home inspection training.

Joe Scaduto
Society of Professional
Real Estate Inspectors
Lynnfield, Mass.

Soil Strength Unclear

To the Editor:

I enjoyed the article on wood beam foundations ("Case Study: A Wooden Grade Beam," 3/91) and was impressed by the author's load calculations. His explanation of the bearing capacity of the soil, however, is mysterious and vague. One value is to the nearest ton and the other to a pound. Please explain.

Fred Bachand
Troy, N.Y.

Paul Fisette Responds:

I apologize for providing a mysterious and vague explanation of soil-bearing capacity in my article on wood grade beams. Hopefully this reply will resolve the issue.

Soils are classified according to character, composition, and load-bearing capability. Building codes list the allowable bearing pressures for various types of soil. For example: The Commonwealth of Massachusetts State Building Code lists 11 material classes in Section 720.0 "Bearing Pressure On Foundation Materials." The load-bearing capacity of each soil classification is listed in ***tons per square foot.*** *The fact that design loads for the structural framework are listed in* ***pounds per square foot*** *should not be viewed as inconsistent, but rather in keeping with the terms used to classify soil-bearing capacity. After all, a ton is 2,000 pounds. The denominator of both expressions is also consistent (square feet). If the foundation was built on pudding, the load-bearing capacity of pudding might be expressed in terms of ounces per square foot — still consistent.*

I would like to point out that many building codes require a soils report to be included as part of the building permit application. The Massachusetts State Code requires that a registered engineer or architect prepare such a report to establish allowable bearing pressure. Your local building official may waive this requirement for outbuildings or garages built on piers, but I consider the $100 or $150 it costs to have an engineer visually classify your soil as money well spent.

Paul Fisette is a wood technologist and director of the Building Materials Technology and Management program at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Mass.

But Is It Art?

To the Editor:

This picture represents "Contractor Art." Arriving on the job the next day we found this…

Paul Andreassen
Andreassen Builders, Inc.
Malden, N.Y.

Clarification

In "Simple Ventilation for Tight Houses" (May 1991), ASHRAE's residential ventilation standard should have read as follows:

> Houses require *at least* 15 cubic feet per minute of fresh air per person *but not less than .35 air changes per hour overall.*

The author, however, recommends using the simple rule of thumb of 100 cfm for a two-bedroom house, 150 cfm for three bedrooms, and 200 cfm for four or five bedrooms, as stated in the article.

Keep'em coming…We welcome letters, but they must be signed and include the writer's address. *The Journal of Light Construction* reserves the right to edit for grammar, length, and clarity. Mail letters to *JLC*, RR#2, Box 146, Richmond, VT 05477.