LETTERS

Architectural Freak

To the Editor:

Bow House manufactures a reproduction of an old bowed-roof cape. With the present codes, our decisions are made with design as the prime consideration. According to your article, "Codes Okay Wider Doors, Longer Stairs" (Eight-Penny News, 1/92), the Building Officials and Code Administrators are proposing that states adopt a 7-11 rule for stairs. This will work a hardship on us. Our stairs barely fit under the present codes. The change will push the stairs about three feet beyond the centerline of the house. This doesn't sound like much, but everything around the stairs will have to change.

The 7-11 rule will create an architectural freak in what is trying to be a New England Colonial reproduction.

What is most aggravating about this is that the idea was formed by a small group of people deciding that "they know" what is best for the public even though the present tread/rise ratios have been around since the dawn of civilization.

The same circumstances, i.e. a small group deciding that "they know," produced the Susan B. Anthony coin. Six people liked it, two hundred and fifty million people said, "Stuff it!"

If code changes are made without consideration to design appearance then eventually all construction will take on a neo-fascist look, of which Mussolini would be very proud.

John J. Rogers
Bow House Inc.
Bolton, Mass

Which Machine Part Is Worth $106.61?

To the Editor:

Periodically, I get depressed while thinking about U.S. enterprise, or the lack thereof. We have all the talent, resources, and means to be the most productive and competitive country in the world; and we could probably reclaim this position in an environmentally benign fashion. I believe we only lack the vision and will, especially in those offices where use of money and its increase are decided. As it is, all I hear are complaints about unfair trade practices.

Item in point: I recently found a stripped elevating gear (on right in photo) in my Powermatic planer. I ordered a replacement from a local equipment dealer without asking the price; I anticipated a $16 to $30 charge.

The new part arrived at a cost of $106.61. I was astounded. I asked, "Why such a high cost?"

My dealer replied, "I too was surprised by the cost. I was told by Powermatic that their costs had risen four-fold in the last year. I barely marked the part up."

It is incredible to me that I should pay approximately one third the cost of an imported portable ten-inch planer for a tiny part for a domestic 12-inch stationary planer. Short of going to a machine shop and having the part made (with no guarantee of lower cost) I had no choice.

Somewhere here there's food for thought.

M. Felix Marti
Marti Construction
Ridgway, Colo.

Waterproofing Works

To the Editor:

Koch Materials Company is the manufacturer/supplier of an exterior foundation insulation and waterproofing system that has been on the market for over eight years. I would like to take this opportunity to correct a few of Mr. Tully's assumptions (Building With Style, 1/92) and shed some light on the positive aspects of good basement insulation and waterproofing techniques.

There are several practical methods to cover above-grade exterior foundation insulation, particularly rigid fiberglass board. One method that provides a strong finish for large exposed areas above grade uses metal stucco lath nailed to the sill plate and nailed through the insulating board to the foundation wall above grade. Then a stucco coating is applied to the lath, resulting in a gap-free cementitious coating, with the wire lath providing any support that might be needed over any joints in the insulating board.

Another method that can be used where very little insulation is exposed above grade is to attach an L-shaped metal flashing to the top of the foundation to lip over the insulation at the top of the wall. The remaining exposed insulation is then coated with a flexible acrylic-modified cementitious coating using reinforcing mesh to bridge the joints between the insulating boards. The metal L-shaped flashing serves two purposes: It keeps the insulating boards tight against the foundation and it protects the board from damage by subsequent workers on the site.

There are also two ways to easily incorporate exterior insulation into the rest of the house. The first is to extend either the floor joists or move the sill plate and the floor joists out to the edge of the foundation so that the siding can be extended down over the top few inches of the coated exterior insulation. The second method simply uses a shaped wooden drip edge, which is attached to the bottom of the foundation, to cover the top edge of the insulation.

As for basement wall waterproofing, most builders, unfortunately, agree with Mr. Tully and make the same incorrect assumption that dampproofing is adequate. One only has to look in the Yellow Pages under waterproofing contractors to see how many companies are in the wet basement repair business to appreciate the error of this myth.

By definition, dampproofing is meant to retard the passage of water, not stop it. Waterproofing by definition prevents the passage of water. Within a single year, dampproofing, which is usually an extremely thin, brushed, sprayed, or rolled-on asphalt cutback or emulsion, becomes hard and brittle and deteriorates rapidly due to acids, bases, and salts that naturally occur in the soil. Dampproofing, even in its original unexposed state, cannot bridge a crack; and we all know it is inevitable that concrete will crack. Once moisture reaches block masonry or cracks, tie rod holes, or cold pour joints in poured-in-place concrete, you will have a leak.

Robert B. Coover
Koch Materials Co.
Chicago, Ill.

Oops

To the Editor:

Regarding your article, "Builder's Guide to Common Code Violations" (12/91), I would like to point out that the section on "Bedroom Window Requirements" is rather misleading. Mr. Stevens claims that a window with net openable width and height dimensions of 20 inches wide by 24 inches high will meet the code requirements for an escape or rescue window. What Mr. Stevens fails to mention is that it also has to have a net clear openable area of 5.7 square feet. The window illustrated in the article has a net clear openable area of 3.3 square feet. While the minimum width and height requirements in the article are correct, they cannot be used together, obviously. We found this out the hard way. I ran a copy of the article and illustration off for our foreman, and he followed it to the letter. The inspector was not impressed.

Randy Hageman
New Age Construction
Oakland, Calif.

You're correct. Using the two minimum numbers results in an undersized opening. The article should have stated clearly that a minimum area *also applied. Sorry you had to learn that the hard way.*

— The Editors

Cam-Lock Panels Offered

To the Editor:

As manufacturers of stress-skin panels, I was pleased to see the article by Steve Andrews in *The Journal's* February 1992 issue. Unfortunately, our innovative panel and fastening system was omitted. We here at The Murus Company offer a cam-locking panel system — a unique and highly effective fastening device for joining panels.

The patent pending cam-lock reduces the need for excessive splining, and offers a notable alternative to the builder for whom efficient construction is important. Interested individuals who would like more information about our products may contact us at 717/549-2100.

C. Stephen Keller
The Murus Company
Mansfield, Penn.

Correction

The correct phone number for Prazi USA, manufacturers of the beam cutter reviewed in Toolbox (2/92) is 800/262-0211.

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,* RR2, Box 146, Richmond, VT 05477.