

Molded Fiberglass Bulkhead

by Charles Wardell

The Journal's pick of curious, interesting, and useful products



The *Clamdoor* fiberglass bulkhead looks like the hood of a car and is put together like a boat. It's formed in a mold with marine fiberglass, then coated with a tough, two-part epoxy gel coat matte finish. The *Clamdoor* costs about twice as much as a steel bulkhead (it lists for \$497), but since it weighs only 75 pounds (as opposed to 200 pounds for steel) and comes fully assembled, the manufacturer says it can be installed in only 20 minutes. It's designed to be maintenance-free, never needs repainting, and is available in three standard colors: brown, gray, and green. (Thirty additional colors are available as a special order.)

The manufacturer stresses the *Clamdoor's* ease of operation: A pair of the same pneumatic lifters that are used on automobile hatchbacks make it possible to lift the door with only 1½ pounds of pressure, and will hold the door securely in place when open.

Contact: Palmer River Products, 97 Broad Common Rd., Bristol, RI 02809; 401/254-0490.

No-Spill Ladder Hook



The manufacturer of a new *Paint Can Holder* claims it will virtually eliminate spills and splashes. The arms of the holder fit around a gallon-sized can of paint, while the contoured hook securely grips any round or D-rung ladder. It holds the paint steady, while leaving both of the painter's hands free to work. The device is made of lightweight, corrosion-resistant aluminum, and folds flat for storage. It sells for \$6.95.

Contact: Bon Tool Co., 4430 Gibsonia Rd., Gibsonia, PA 15044; 412/443-7090.

Heavy-Duty Camera



When Polaroid told me how tough their *ProCam* camera was, I decided to call them on it. So after taking it to a job site and using it to play catch with

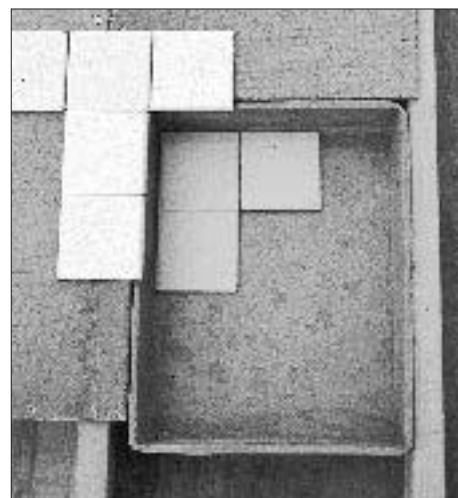
the contractor, dropped it on the plywood subfloor several times from waist height. This would have destroyed my \$700 Single Lens Reflex camera, but it didn't hurt either the *ProCam* or the pictures I took later.

Polaroid says that the *ProCam* was designed for job-site use. It weighs only two pounds, is weather- and dust-resistant, and has a rubberized exterior that absorbs shocks and serves as a nonslip grip. A heavy-duty strap next to the trigger lets you hold the camera and take pictures with one hand while hanging off the side of a building with the other. You can also set it to print the time and date on the photograph, a useful feature when documenting work progress. It will focus on details as close as 18 inches (12 inches with an auxiliary lens) and can be mounted on a standard tripod.

Image quality is not up to portfolio standards, but the photos are more than adequate for documentation. The camera is also ideal for taking quick shots of an existing building for use in a remodeling estimate. The *ProCam* retails for between \$200 and \$250.

Contact: Polaroid Express, 2 Osborn St. 3A, Cambridge, MA 02139; 800/552-0711.

One-Piece Shelf Backer

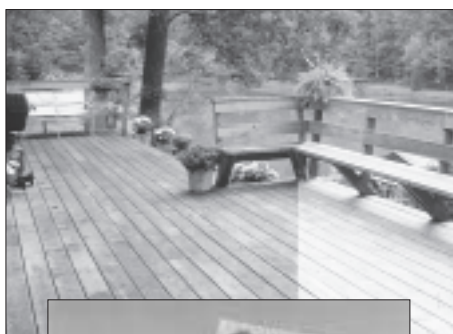


Tile shower shelves are handy, but can be a pain to rough in. The thin strips of backerboard needed are hard to cut and tend to crumble when you fasten them. A time-saving alternative, the *Rockast Recessed Bath & Shower Shelf*, is a precast cementitious

box that fits in a standard 4-inch wall cavity (the depth of the studs plus any backerboard or drywall fastened to them), and between a pair of 16-inch on-center wall studs. Made from a 1/4-inch-thick mat of cement-soaked polyester felt, the shelf can be fastened through its sides to the studs with four screws without cracking or crumbling. It accepts all tile and stone adhesives. It measures 17 1/2 inches high by 14 1/4 inches wide. The 3 7/8-inch deep model costs \$30, and the 5 7/8-inch deep model \$35.

Contact: Residential Engineering, 687 Kincaid, Highland Park, IL 60035; 708/432-6440.

Bleach-Free Deck Cleaner



In the past, gray, weathered exterior wood was cleaned with household bleach, trisodium phosphate (TSP), or oxalic acid. But bleach kills plants, and produces a washed-out appearance. Bleach also can't remove ground-in dirt and dead wood cells — both of which can retard the long-term performance of paints, stains, and other finishes. TSP does a better cleaning job, but is being outlawed in some markets because phosphate encourages algae growth in ponds and streams. Oxalic acid is good for eliminating tannin stains in redwood and cedar, but it won't do much about mildew or dirt.

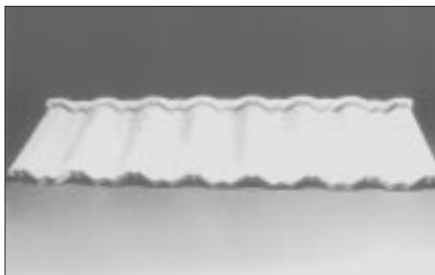
Wolman Deck Brightener contains no bleach, won't harm plants, and removes dirt, sun-damaged wood cells,

and mildew. It uses a percarbonate-based technology (the manufacturer likens it to a baking soda/peroxide solution) that's modeled on Efferdent, a denture cleaner. To use *Deck Brightener*, simply spray it on and let it foam for ten minutes to loosen mildew, ground-in dirt, and the top layer of sun-damaged wood cells. Then hit it with a stiff bristle broom and hose it off.

Wolman Deck Brightener is safe to use over water-repellents, stains, and paints. It's harmless to plastics, glass, metal, and concrete, and can be used on both pressure-treated and untreated wood. A small packet costs \$7 to \$8 and cleans 150 square feet.

Contact: Wolman Deck & Siding Protection Products, 1850 Koppers Bldg., 436 Seventh Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15219; 800/556-7737.

Stone Veneer Tile



Stone-coated steel tiles have been available for some time, but the company that makes the Dover roof tile says it's the first stone-coated steel tile available in permanent white. The Dover is a galvanized steel barrel tile with ceramic-coated white stone chips permanently bonded to the surface. The manufacturer reports brisk demand in California, Texas, and Florida, where white tile has always been popular. (Tile keeps a roof deck significantly cooler than asphalt, because of the ventilating effect of the airspaces beneath the tiles.) The steel tile is approved for new construction as well as for installation directly over an existing asphalt roof. And since steel is much lighter than clay, you can retrofit an existing home without having to beef up the roof structure.

Contact: Gerard Roofing Technologies, 955 Columbia St., Brea, CA 92621; 714/529-0407. ■