

LETTERS



“Getting Burned” Sparks Change

To the Editor:

In horrified response to the article “Getting Burned by a Client” by Chuck Green (6/96), I have renewed my business plan to include the following:

1. Stress spec home building.
2. Say no to clients who are not using a lender for the project.
3. Have my wife, who is more intuitive than myself, join in the initial interview.
4. Have an attorney review my standard contract.
5. Investigate the clients and their background.

I must say that I even considered not building for clients at all, but only doing spec homes. To allay the fears some builders have after reading your article, how about an article where the General wins some disputes?

James R. Anderson
Lyons, Colo.

Disgusted

To the Editor:

I read the article “U.S. Builders Show Japan Some New Tricks” (*Eight-Penny News*, 5/96) with a good deal of disgust. I hope that while Mr. Simpson was in Japan he had an opportunity to visit some of the Japanese structures left over from the 7th and 8th centuries that were built with “ancient traditional methods.” I’ll be lucky if the house I live in outlives me, and it

was built fairly recently, no doubt by a couple of “19-year-olds with less than a year’s experience.”

It was interesting that Mr. Simpson used the Kobe quake to exemplify that traditional Japanese structures “lack the ruggedness and structural redundancy of a stud-and-plywood structure.” Really? Compared to what? Fillmore, Calif., or what’s left of it?

Invitation or no, haven’t we taught the world enough?

Kevin Drake
Thousand Oaks, Calif.

Eight-Penny News editor Ted Cushman responds:

The reason Kobe needs to build 40,000 new housing units as fast as possible is because all those old traditional homes fell down in the earthquake. The reason they are looking at American building methods is because the few American-built stick-framed homes that existed in Kobe came through the quake with minimal damage.

Thousands of Kobe residents died in collapsing homes, and tens of thousands are still homeless. Entire city blocks are now vacant lots. The Japanese now have the choice between building stick-frame homes that can handle the next quake, or paying more and taking three times as long to build houses that will fall down again.

U.S. timber frames, I understand, do quite well in quakes because of the knee bracing that Japanese frames seem to lack. It makes you wonder whether the Japanese craftsman’s tradition would be flexible enough to allow them to make the frames rigid enough to stand up in a quake. Maybe so, but it would still take much longer to house the displaced citizens of Kobe.

White Pine, another alternative trim which has become popular in the Northeast. Finger-jointing offers a consistent source of clear product other than solid wood.

From our research and experience, we strongly endorse Mr. Fisette’s recommendation to use factory applied oil-based primer on all surfaces. We further agree that prompt final coat painting and regular maintenance enhances the performance of alternative trims.

Stephen L. Jones, President
Princeton Forest Products
Orange, Mass.

Heat-Purging Boiler Control

To the Editor:

The article “Reclaiming Heat From Boilers” by John Siegenthaler (*Focus on Energy*, 3/96) was on the mark. No one wants to waste energy, especially in climates where heating costs can really add up. For oil-fired boilers, we sometimes use a control by Buderus, a European company, that varies the boiler operating temperature according to the outdoor temperature and will purge unused heat in the boiler to an indirect water heater. The system also offers other operations and boasts an improvement in comfort and fuel savings of up to 30%. However, not all homeowners are willing to spend the extra \$1,000 or so for this improvement.

Brooke Greenhouse
Cayuga Country Homes
Dryden, N.Y.

JLC E-Mail Forum

To participate in this free discussion group, send an e-mail message to JLCforum@bginet.com. All questions and comments about construction-related topics are rebroadcast daily to the entire group.

Finger-Jointed Trim

To the Editor:

The article “Exterior Trim: Alternatives to Solid Wood,” by Paul Fisette (5/96), is very timely. We are experiencing rapid growth in the demand for finger-jointed Eastern

Keep ‘em coming! Letters 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; or e-mail to JLC@bginet.com.