

Letters

Decision Unfair

Regarding Mike Mowry's letter ("Good Business Practice," 11/06) about the contractor whose license lapsed: It is the responsibility of the Contractor State License Board (CSLB) to enforce the laws regarding licensing within its purview, and it is the court's responsibility to interpret that enforcement and to administer justice under the intention of the law. That the court chose to interpret the letter of the law is sad indeed. While it is technically correct in its finding, it punishes an individual who did not willfully violate the law of the land.

Did the contractor's innocent oversight diminish the quality of the materials or services rendered, or reduce the customer's "betterment"? Those are the questions that should have been addressed by the court.

The courts should not be performing the CSLB's job. An innocent and accidental incident should not be prosecuted as a willful and wanton violation of the intention of the law. An otherwise honest and hardworking man should not be punished, and the beneficiary of his efforts should not be excused from responsibility due solely to a clerical oversight.

Ronald E. O'Brien

RE O'Brien Contracting
South Kingstown, R.I.

Framing an Elliptical Stair: The Easy Part

I just read your article "Framing an Elliptical Staircase" (*On the Job*, 10/06): What an incredible challenge met and completed. I would not in any way diminish the accomplishment of Will Holladay, but there are some even greater challenges you have chosen to ignore.

What Will built is a carcass; what will be presented to the homeowner is a finished, stain-grade piece of

furniture — yet many more difficult challenges exist between what Will built and the finished product.

Let's start with the outside skirtboard. There is no gap between the stair framing and the outside wall. That creates challenges for both the drywaller and the finish carpenter. Will solved the problem by using the carcass as a form to build the inside carrier beam and then cut the carrier beam to the carcass. Somebody has to do the same thing on both the inside and the outside to create the skirtboards.

Next, each tread has to be patterned, glued up, fitted with the appropriately curved return, and fitted to the carcass — all in stain-grade quality. Then scotia trim has to be installed under the nose of the treads — no small challenge. Some pieces of trim can be steam-bent, but others are so acute the only way to fabricate them is by cutting them out.

The next challenge is the handrail. The most flexible bending rail is designed for radii down to 36 inches, but the radius here appears to be less than 24 inches. That means at least part of the handrail will have to be made by a curved-stair fabricator using a CNC router. In Will's project, I see two places that will need custom handrail parts — at a cost of around \$1,200 each.

This raises a question: Why go through all this hard work just to use a curved-stair fabricator in the end? Why not go to the fabricator with the original house drawings and have him fabricate everything — a perfect stain-grade carriage with a matching stain-grade handrail, all perfectly fitted?

People don't invite furniture makers to build their furniture on site. Likewise, a complicated staircase should not be built on site.

Bruce Abernathy
Niceville, Fla.

Deck-Ledger Bracket Available

Cameron Habel's article "Building a Slate-Tile Deck" (11/06) provided excellent details for tying a deck to the house. He pointed out that the house joists were cantilevered, so instead of a nailed connection he used a bolted connection to anchor the deck to the floor joists of the house. His article addressed the need to

KEEP 'EM COMING!

Letters must be signed and include the writer's address. *JLC* reserves the right to edit for grammar, length, and clarity. Mail to *JLC*, 186 Allen Brook Lane, Williston, VT 05495; or e-mail to jlc-editorial@hanleywood.com.



Letters

resist lateral load as well as gravity load. More than 90 percent of deck collapses can be attributed to the failure of the ledger-to-house connection.

DeckLok Bracket Systems has pioneered the concept of lateral anchoring of decks, providing architects, engineers, and deck builders with design and testing information for more than a decade. Our patented bracket system uses the strength of the house floor joists to secure decks — or any structure — to the joists themselves. Our brackets effectively transfer the loads to the foundation of the house as required by the building code. They have been designed and tested for the ledger connection as well as the railing connection.

Nailed and screwed connections, like the critical deck-ledger connection, cannot be exposed to the weather season after season and remain strong. They need a little help from bolted connections.

Our Web site — www.deck-lok.com — contains instructions and testing information for attaching decks to house joists of nominal lumber, wood I-joists, and 2x4 floor truss configurations.

It also shows details for code-compliant rail post connections.

Michael Morse

DeckLok Bracket Systems
Brookeville, Md.

Cheap Fix for Plywood Paneling

Regarding Tish Iorio's response (Q&A, 11/06) to the question about upgrading dated paneling: Often on remodels I just skim-coat the paneling with Dura-Bond mix, then sand, prime, and paint. Depending on how well I've prepared

the mix, there may be a bit of shrinkage, requiring a fine second coat — but often not.

Follow up with a good primer and latex paint, and you have fantastic-looking walls with little hassle. Obviously, the paneling should be thoroughly prepped with TSP first.

Considering the low cost of a bag of Dura-Bond and the minimum labor involved, this is a quick, attractive fix.

Ron Rodewald

Crystal Lake, Ill.

Worx Clarifications

The article about the Worx recip saw (*Toolbox*, 12/06) was great, but I wanted to respond to a couple of points the author raised.

First, he criticized the blade clamp because it doesn't hold a Milwaukee Ax blade. It's important to note that that blade is made especially with the Sawzall in mind: Its back edge, where the clamp locks on, is much smaller than a standard blade's back edge.

Also, the author wrote that "if you rotate the handle with your finger on the trigger, your finger can get pinched between the trigger and the tool body." However, the saw is intended to be used with the handle locked in position, which prevents fingers from getting pinched.

Finally, the author noted that the foot on the saw he used did not pivot. I went into the warehouse this morning and looked at 30 different saws, and every one had a smoothly pivoting foot. I'm guessing that he must have received a model that had tight rivets.

Eric Moore

Positec Tool Group
Charlotte, N.C.