

Letters

More Power for Dump Trailer

Scott Dornbusch's article on buying a dump trailer (1/08) hit all the important points. I currently own several dump trailers. The one problem I've had occurs when the job site is close to the dump, which doesn't give the dump-bed battery enough time to recharge before it's time to dump again. Even the largest deep-cycle marine batteries don't give me enough power to make several dump runs in one day. I solved this by switching to two 6-volt batteries, run in series. I expanded the battery holder, which is located under the dump bed of the trailer, to accommodate the two batteries. This gives me 12 volts to the hydraulic pump, more cold cranking amperage, and faster recharge. I can now make several trips to the dump in a day and still have full power to the hydraulic pump on the last trip. No more worries about raising the dump bed halfway, depleting the battery, and having to unload by hand.

Doug Dolezal

Dolezal Construction
Sacramento, Calif.

Pricing Custom Work

Thanks to Gary Striegler for the article about building arched passageways (12/07). One of the hardest things for me as a general contractor has been quoting complicated jobs like this. How would I price it?

Rick Fisher

Oakbrook Home Improvement
Winchester, Va.

Gary Striegler responds: I've always loved challenging projects. They almost always lead to more work, though I sometimes end up making less money. My first paneled archway took forever, but each one since has taken a little less time. When I price such a project for the first time, I break it down into all its steps and figure the time and material for each — how long, for instance, it will take to

set the forms, rip and plane the material, and glue up the curved rails for an arch. If I am building a whole house, I may add only about 10 percent to my estimate to cover unknown variables; if it's a standalone job, I might bump up my numbers by 30 percent. Occasionally, if I really want the job, I might not add anything; I just have to decide how much education I'm willing to pay for.

In Search of Drywall Shims

In the article "Fine-Tuning the Frame for Finish" (12/07), Frank Caputo mentions the cardboard drywall shims he uses for low spots in the framing. I'd like to use them on a current project but have been unable to find them at any of my local suppliers. Do you know who makes them and where can I find them?



Bill Sobering

Florham Park, N.J.

The 45-inch-long shims are made by Menco Royal (816/257-2552, www.mencoroyal.com). They come in bundles of 100, which sell for around \$12 at drywall suppliers. — The Editors

Source for Layout Stick

Where can we buy the layout tool shown on the January 2008 cover?

**Gay and Mike
Bradford**

Newburgh, Ind.



The layout stick shown in the cover article ("Faster Wall Framing") is the welded model made by Big Foot Tools. It's available from amazon.com or at www.bigfootsaws.com. — The Editors

KEEP 'EM COMING!

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