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Maize and blue tell john's story



Smallest room in the house carries a decided identity. (Staff photo by Stephen Cantrell).

A John is a John to most folks. But to University of Michigan stalwart Jim Richards, it is an alma mater shrine done in maize and blue. His wife, Marion, whose remaining home decor reflects subtle elegance, gave tongue in cheek blessings.

Asked to redecorate the guest lavatory, Richards gave the room what he calls character. The mini museum tells a vivid story of the class of '36 alumnus who graduated with Jerry Ford, yet never completely left the big M. It hints of football fanaticism and boasts of a devotion to the school that helped prepare him for a top echelon Bell Telephone Co. post.

"IT ALL BEGAN when an old friend gave me a Michigan emblem toilet seat; I took it from there," said Richards.

He added maize paint, maize and blue pom-poms that dangle from maize curtains and a Michigan banner that flies high above the medicine cabinet mirror. Framed in French, Italian, Dutch and Latin "Go Blue" signs. The tank water is blue, the rug is blue and so is the soap dish that has U-M soap.

Whenever a Michigan game is played away from home, the yellow candle in the blue holder is lit. The Richards are always in Ann Arbor for home games. They haven't missed one in years. If you don't believe it, notice the weathered football programs

which cover one wall. They date back to 1906 and include the 1977 Michigan-Ole State game docket.

"You know how far back I go when you see the old dance programs papering one way," said newly retired Richards.

Also in the gallery line-up are a blue-lettered gold retirement announcement rimmed in tiny footballs ("a prized gift from my kids"), framed congratulatory notes from coach Bo Schembecker and athletic director Dan Canham, a Phi Kappa Sigma fraternity certificate and hell-week paddle.

THE BLUE CORN FLOWERS in the bud vase are encircled by sheaths of wheat to signify the alma mater theme: "yellow the fields that ripen the grain"—and when you flush the toilet a tape cassette blasts out "Hail to the Victors" over the din of a roaring crowd.

You'll see it all better if you flick the light switch and watch a Michigan blue football helmet light up. You'll know, then, that what started as a joke burgeoned into a full scale U-M labor of love, assembled with imagination and dedicated to the Michigan cause. But woe to the Buckeye who enters—or who reads this. He might demand equal time.

—MILICENT WORRELL

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shown: nighttable from Baker 17th Century English collection

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Louvers carry built-in options

Because they look good and perform well, louvers are as popular in home decor as dancers are in musicals.

Louvers usually "star" as closet doors or as movable window shutters.

Wood louver doors are available as folding and as sliding units. The former open and close accordion fashion; the latter operate on overhead tracks.

Since the styles require little or no floor clearance, they make closets practical for narrow hallways, small foyers, and other areas that will not sustain ordinary swing-out doors.

In either style, the doors can be obtained fully louvered, or with louvers above closed panels. Air flow through the slats keeps the contents of a closet fresh and helps prevent mildew.

The doors make handsome wall accents when used singly or in pairs. Installed in wall-length series, they win applause for visual impact. Louvers also make dramatic

room dividers and connecting doors.

Wood window shutters are actually movable louvers used over the glass in place of shades or venetian blinds.

They operate by moving the louvers up and down. Because the slats can be opened to varying degrees, shutters permit precise and rapid regulation of light, air, privacy, and outdoor visibility.

Shutters adapt with equal aplomb to elegant or casual decor. They come in various styles, including accordion, and can be used as pass-throughs between kitchen and dining areas.

Like louver doors, window shutters benefit aesthetically from the rich natural look of real wood. Both can be painted to blend with room colors, or stained to enhance the wood grain—a treatment that's especially effective for shutters.

Shutters and louver doors can be found in stock sizes at local lumber dealers and building supply centers. They're a quick room perk-up and are easy to install.

To locate leak, search the attic

The major problem in trying to locate a leak in the roof is that often it isn't directly over the wet spot in the ceiling.

If you can get to the underside of the roof in the attic, it's easier to find the leak.

When it's raining, go up in the attic and look for the leak above the wet spot on the ceiling.

If the underside of the roof is dry there, look further up towards the peak of the roof.

You should be able to spot water leaking through and traveling down along the rafters before dropping to the attic floor.

Once you find the leak, push a piece of wire through the spot so you'll be able to locate it later when it stops raining.

Don't go up on the roof in bad weather. It's slippery and dangerous.

When the rain stops and the roof surface is dry, you can examine it.

Be sure to take proper safety measures. Wear rubber-soled shoes to prevent slipping and

make sure your ladder is securely anchored.

If your roof is relatively new and has developed a small leak around the flashing, chances are it can be repaired easily.

If the roof is badly worn, limited repairs won't help.

Signs of a roof in need of replacement are cracked, curled, brittle or missing shingles.

If in doubt, call in a professional roofer who can conduct a thorough on the roof inspection. He's also a good source of information about material, style and color.

Asphalt shingles, for instance, can often be applied over the old roofing, eliminating the cost of a tear-off.

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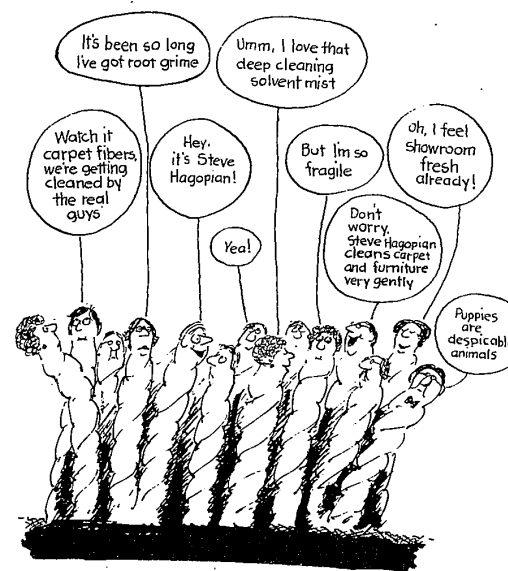
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