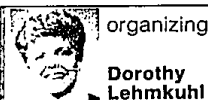


## Creative Living



(C)1E

Monday, March 14, 1988 O&amp;E



organizing

Dorothy Lehmkuhl

Q. What packing and planning can I do before moving into a smaller home next year while keeping our present place neat for showing potential buyers?

A. One of my proudest moments occurred when my husband arrived back to move us to the city where he had begun his new job. He almost panicked at first because he thought I had done no packing. He was amazed as I opened closets and cupboards to see boxes holding all our loose items neatly stored there. All we had to do was pull out the boxes and load them on the truck. (Admittedly we didn't own nearly as much in those days.)

Before packing, however, weed out your belongings. Begin now systematically combing your house, concentrating on one space at a time. Divide articles into four categories: Keep, give away, sell or toss. If you are moving yourself, begin boxing keepers you won't need until after the move. Throw out and give away items on a regular basis — don't keep them all until the last minute. If you decide on a garage sale, set the date and stick to it.

If you know the layout of your new home, decide exactly where you will store each item there. (If you can't figure out where to keep it, reconsider keeping it.) Using a distinctive colored marker, label boxes as to contents and where they are to be delivered in your new abode. Your movers will quickly become attuned to that color only and will learn to ignore any other old markings.

Get moving checklists from moving companies, libraries or book stores and compile your own from these.

A few days before moving, use the same marker to label every piece of furniture with removable labels, indicating where each item is to be placed (i.e. northwest corner, bedroom 2 etc.). On moving day this will save incredible energy in decision making and answering the ceaseless question, "Where do you want this?" Unpacking will also be easier because things will be right where you want them.

Order a self-linking, return-address rubber stamp. This is worth its weight in gold.

## Remodeling

### Home improvements can enhance resale

**H**OMEOWNERS ARE putting more into home improvement than ever before. And, if they do it right, it's worth it," said Gerald Kosmensky, president of the Southern Michigan Home Owners Warranty Corp. HOW is the nation's oldest and largest warrant and insurance program.

The Census Bureau estimates that \$91.3 billion was spent on home remodeling last year, up nearly 14 percent from a year earlier. "Remodeling Contractor" magazine estimates that this year, homeowners will spend another \$90 billion on home improvements.

Why is renovation booming? According to a recent Wall Street Journal interview, people who find their home is the best performing item in their portfolio are buying houses and making improvements with an eye to reselling at a profit.

FROM PURELY investment standpoint, there are both winners and losers when it comes to home improvements. Not all renovations spell profit.

Today's big winners are the addition of a fireplace or a full bath. A recent study by "Remodeling Contractor" estimates that adding a fireplace at an average cost of \$3,350 adds an average \$4,600 to the resale value of a home.

That's a profit of 38 percent. Adding a full bath for an average cost of \$8,200 adds an average of \$10,000 or a profit of 22 percent.

Other cost-effective home improvements include remodeling an outdated kitchen, adding a family room, bedroom or central air-conditioning, and the addition of energy-saving features such as insulation, sliding or storm windows.

The biggest investment mistake, according to "Remodeling Contractor," is a swimming pool. At an average cost of \$19,500, the addition of a pool only adds \$6,500 at resale, representing a loss of 67 percent. Other losers include tennis courts, finished attics and reroofing.

There are other less costly ways to ensure that the value of a home stays high for resale: neutral colors in paint and wallpaper, nice carpeting and a new home warranty.

IF YOU ARE thinking about resale, you cannot afford to overlook that more than 90 percent of all prospective home buyers consider an insured warranty an important consideration in their buying decision, according to "Professional Builder" magazine.

Kosmensky says, "It is clear that today's home buyers understand the investment potential of a home and want to do everything they can to protect that investment."

"A home covered by an insured warranty insures buyers that they are making a sound investment in quality construction. It is one investment that doesn't cost the buyer an extra penny. All they have to do is make sure they contract with a builder that offers an insured warranty on his or her home."

Under the HOW program, builders warranty their homes against faulty workmanship and materials for one year, and against major structural defects and defects in the wiring, plumbing, heating and cooling ventilating and mechanical systems for two years.

HOW builders carry insurance on their warranties so that the home will be repaired by HOW's insurer if the builder does not or cannot make the repairs required by the warranty.

For the last eight years of the program, the builder carries insurance to cover the cost of repairing major structural defects in the home.

HOW is the only new home warranty and insurance program endorsed by the National Association of Home Builders. Today, HOW has 12,000 builder-members and more than 1.8 million homes enrolled in the program. HOW will be an exhibitor at the Detroit Builders Show opening in Detroit this weekend in Cobo Hall.

## The Arrangement: using what's there

By LeAnne Rogers  
special writer

For the person who has everything for their home but doesn't know what to do with it, a new Troy interior design firm may have the solution.

Services provided through the Arrangement are aimed at using furniture and accent pieces that clients already own, according to Jane Garth, who runs the firm with her sister, Jacqueline Stavin.

"The name really fits what I do. A lot of times a designer works and sells pieces," Garth said. "I believe people know what they want. I trust them."

Unlike many interior designers, Garth said she doesn't work on commission and has no incentive to sell merchandise.

"I CHARGE AN hourly rate and come out to see what I can do to update a house," Garth said. "We'll make the house look new without making it so expensive."

By rearranging furniture, Garth said rooms can be given a cozier feeling or a more spacious feeling. Pieces can also

be moved from other rooms, she said, creating a look that clients hadn't thought of.

"Usually people don't need to make a large purchase. It's how to incorporate what they have," she said. "A designer won't usually say add some plants or lower a picture when that's all they client needed."

Bringing in a designer to help arrange the house may bring a new perception to the house and furniture, which the client may be too close to see, according to Garth.

"I really reassure the client in what they have chosen," she said. "I look for colors to pick up in art work or pillows. I let people shop for themselves, and it's exciting for them."

THE ARRANGEMENT'S services are designed to work with the client's taste and budget. Since the firm charges an hourly rate, it's not concerned with the client's price range, Garth said.

"We let clients decide what they need. I've worked through resale shops or on \$500,000 homes," she said. Potential clients for services range from longtime home-

owners who want to update their home, Garth said, to people moving into new quarters.

"I've also had a lot of clients who received half the furniture after a divorce," she commented. "They need help figuring out what to do with what they have."

A graduate of the College of Arts and Crafts in Berkeley, Calif., Garth worked in California for six years before returning to Troy where she was raised.

"If people want to start from scratch, I'll refer them to a good designer," she said. "I stay out of selling and shopping."

ANOTHER AREA GARTH said she would like to begin working in is with people who are selling their homes.

"I can make the house more saleable. There may be a great table in the kitchen which the seller loves," she said. "But to someone coming into the house, it may make the kitchen seem smaller than it is."

Garth's basic philosophy is that making your home attractive and comfortable doesn't always come with an expensive price tag.

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**1988**

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