

# Creative Living

Marie McGee editor/591-2300



(OJE)



organizing  
**Dorothy Lehmkuhl**

## Keep W-2s forever

Q: Now that my tax returns have been filed, I wonder which receipts I need to keep and how long to keep them?

A: This is probably the most-frequent question I get about paper, and the most difficult to answer.

First, keep copies of the tax return itself and your W-2 forms as long as you live. More important than your tax return is your W-2. The IRS can supply copies of your returns from several years back (for a fee), but Social Security provides no such service. Since you may need W-2s to verify your employment for social security, you may even want to keep your W-2s in a safe deposit box.

Generally, keep any papers which substantiate your tax returns for three years. For long-term investments such as bonds, stocks and bonds, etc., this means keeping receipts which verify the basis of property three years after you dispose of them.

The only reason for keeping receipts longer would be in case of fraud — which gets into a grey area. After six years, it is up to the IRS, not you, to prove you were fraudulent, so if you have been completely honest, there should be no reason to retain your receipts. However, should the IRS suspect falsification, you could have difficulty without your supporting papers.

One man recently related a horror story about being promoted to a top public relations job with an almost-unlimited expense account. When he suddenly began depositing large sums of money (the reimbursements from his company) into his bank account, the IRS became suspicious that he was dealing drugs. Without his careful documentation, he could have been in real trouble; as it was, they gave him a rough time.

Besides long-term investments, it's wise to retain receipts for possessions you still own (— pitch the one for the coat you gave the Salvation Army five years ago.) These may be needed to prove ownership to your insurance company in case of fire or theft. Staple these receipts to your warranty, maintenance information or service contract and keep them in a separate file.



condo queries  
**Robert M. Melsner**

Q: I am embarrassed to tell you that I had a mouse in my bedroom in my condo and I was petrified. I called the management company of the association and they are balking at sending out an exterminator. Do I have any legal rights, and against whom?

A: See your lawyer and start a trespass action against the mouse! Seriously, I empathize with your dilemma and believe that more than likely the condominium documents provide for extermination services to be at a cost of administration of the association since, presumably, the mouse has come in from the outside through a wall that is a common element of the condominium.

Of course, time is presumably of the essence. You should arrange to have whatever extermination services done if the association fails to do so; and send the bill, along with this article, which may serve to enlighten your association of their responsibilities. Good luck!

## Male presence often overlooked in decor choices

By Joan Boram  
special writer

A LOT of husbands are "doing their thing" in their own homes. That's the word from Carlton Wagner, founder of the Wagner Institute for Color Research in Santa Barbara, Cal.

"Often, when I'm decorating a home, the husband will speak to me privately and beg me to set aside a comfortable place for him. It can be anywhere — behind the furnace, even, if it's a place where he can kick off his shoes, relax, and not be distracted by 'trendiness' or 'prettiness.'"

"Rooms aren't always published in magazines because they live well, but because they're pretty. When decorating, ask yourself: 'What should the space feel like?'" he said.

Lecturing on "Color Power" to a group of professional designers at Troy's Michigan Design Center recently, Wagner insisted that response to color is far removed from aesthetics.

"Aesthetics is a reaction in a particular color to a certain time. If people wanted aesthetics, they would fill their houses with museum pieces. Don't make life's choices on aesthetics, unless you're a curator in a museum," he said.

WAGNER CITED HIS own experiences with color consultants to point out the difference between aesthetics and color response. "I've been to numerous color consultants. I've been a spring, a summer, and a fall, but never a winter. They advised me to wear green to bring out the red in my beard, which is the last thing I want to do. Can you see me appearing before the board of a Fortune 500 company wearing a green suit? I'd look like Robin Hood!"

"Favorite colors vary according to situation. A metallic color is perfectly suitable for our automobile, but more than a touch in clothing and furniture would be considered outrageous." A man with conservative gray and navy blue suits may have a collection of red ties, he continued.

Clients can fail to analyze their own color responses, he said, complicating the decorator's life.

"A very wealthy client and his new wife went off on an extended honeymoon, leaving me to decorate their new home while they were away. 'Don't use green,' they said. 'We hate green.' Well, one side of the house was all glass and the woods was practically growing right into the living room! How could they hate green?"

"Normally, in a situation like that, we would use green in the interior to integrate it with the outdoors, but they hated green, so we worked around it. One day a bolt of silk showed up from China. It was green! I called them to call me. A couple of weeks later, an armchair from France arrived. It was green! I called them: 'A terrible thing happened to the silk on the way from

China: It turned green!' 'Oh, they said, 'We don't hate that green.' Their actual response to green was different from their aesthetics."

CARLTON HAS degrees from UCLA and the Karl Jung Institute in Zurich. His plans for a career as a clinical psychologist were sidetracked when he became intrigued by the influence of color.

A friend's graduate thesis on the influence on a person's behavior of influences outside the body — climate, humidity, color, etc., had captured his attention. Soon he had learned enough to consult with manufacturers on the psychology of color — using color to sell soap. When he won an award for an office interior or he had been invited to design, he decided to attend New York's Fashion Institute of Technology, where he wound up teaching color theory.

At the Wagner Institute, he researches and teaches advanced classes for design professionals and acts as a color advisor for corporations. In design courses such as he recently taught at the Michigan Design Center, he provides participants with a basic understanding of physiological, psychological and geographic response to color.

As a fledgling designer, Wagner was given a garage to design as his part of a "designer's idea home." Through research he had found that most men hated the designer look. Wagner made his garage the ultimate men's toy. He installed a huge receiving dish, with an enormous screen, and the "Playboy" channel. There was a bathtub that filled and emptied itself at the touch of a button on the telephone. There was an electronic closet — "the clothes went whirling by."

"THERE WAS EVERY electronic gadget and trick that I could think of. I designed the room to get the men's response, and I did. They were lined up around the block to see that garage. Everybody else was doing French country, but I had tapped a new market. I had hit notes the men felt good about," he said, chuckling.

Wagner is an innkeeper as well as a color guru. He attributes much of the success of his Bayberry Inn, in Santa Monica, to the woman who owns the inn across the street. "She just loves purple rooms. Men take one look at them and flee across the street to my place."

Wagner predicts that the country look will hold for the '90s, but is being altered. Country blue is the new big seller in interior paint, after all-time best-seller off-white. Prints will stay, but backgrounds are changing to white or cream.

Eighty-two percent of the paint sold in the United States is off-white, Wagner said, and the result is visual deprivation, or cabin fever.

"People say they're not going to get tired of it," he said. "It started out tired. They say it makes the place look bigger. That's because no matter where you go, it looks like where you've been."



*'Rooms aren't always published in magazines because they live well, but because they are pretty. When decorating, ask yourself: What should the space feel like? What do you want in the end?'*

— Carlton Wagner

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