

Creative Living



(O1E)

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organizing

Dorothy Lehmkuhl

Fighting junk mail

An Illinois man recently began fighting back on intrusive telephone advertising into homes. Bob Bulmah started a business called Private Citizen Inc., (PO Box 233, Naperville, Ill. 60566) to help people stop being hounded by telemarketers. Bravo!

Heading about Bulmah inspired me to follow through on a threat I've been making for a long time: To fight back on junk mail with a "Less is Better" campaign. I'm tired of being inundated with coupons I don't want, cards that fall out of magazines (onto the floor 100 percent of the time), flyers from stores I never shop and advertising inserts that accompany almost every bill — especially with those noxious perfumes.

I'm weary of advertisers "crying wolf" — going to any length to get my attention. I recently received an expensive envelope (closely resembling a major carrier's saying, "Express Overnight — Extremely Urgent," etc. Inside — sure enough — a Bulmah dealer would give me the car of my choice, if...

I was not impressed. Throwing out junk mail without opening it is risky. Many checks have been lost that way. Once I almost pitched an unopened Mailgram, which experience had taught me to consider junk. In fact, it was an urgent message from my niece, a linguist on the island of New Guinea.

Not only does junk mail infringe upon our time and energy, it also increases environmental waste disposal problems. (Besides that, I'm tired of taking out so much trash). Although a few people seem to enjoy receiving unsolicited coupons and catalogs, most don't. I'm wondering about you?

Are you tired by an overwhelming influx of unwanted paper? If so, 1) which particular items bother you most, 2) what items do you enjoy receiving, and 3) what constructive ideas do you have for solving the problem?

There is an address in New York to reportedly get names removed from some mailing lists, but I've been told it helped only for awhile. Is there more than one place to write? Have you tried doing this? Has it worked? If so, for how long? How can junk mail be fought at the local level? Do any particular advertisers bother you most?

If you are tired of advertising overkill, join the "Less is Better" campaign. Send your replies to: Less is Better, in care of Organizing Techniques, 6165 Worthington, Birmingham 48010. If the response is great enough, I will send your message to the advertising industry. The results will be published in a future column.



condo queries

Robert M. Melsner

Q. When my wife and I were divorced, my name was on the mortgage of the marital home which has now been quit claimed to her. Unfortunately, I continue to get credit statements showing that I am also a mortgagor on the house that is undermining my ability to borrow since it is reflected in part by the balance owing on the mortgage which my ex-wife is now obligated to pay in accordance with the divorce decree. What can I do with respect to this matter?

A. Write the mortgage company and tell them that you wish to be removed as a co-signer, so to speak, from the mortgage. Depending upon the amount of equity in the property, as well as your ex-wife's ability to pay the mortgage company, the mortgage company should be in a position to let you off the hook. If they refuse to do so, see a lawyer who may be able to assist you in obtaining some additional relief.

Also, make sure, if it is not already done, that your ex-wife will give you an indemnification and hold you harmless from any liability in connection with her failure to pay the mortgage payments. That should have been done, presumably, before the divorce judgement was entered.

Q. I am thinking about buying a "site" condominium, but I am concerned about the architectural controls that may not be enforced against the units by the developer. Do you have any comments?

A. Site condos are becoming more popular because it gives a developer an opportunity to circumvent the Subdivision Control Act, as well as to provide greater flexibility in terms of the types of units that may be constructed. Unfortunately, concomitant with that flexibility is the possibility that the developer will not enforce architectural uniformity in regard to the construction of units on the condominium site. Moreover, the construction of units may be staggered over many years and the quality of construction may not be uniform. Site condos are too early to pass judgment on, but additional caution is a good idea because of the unique nature of the concept.

Robert M. Melsner is a Birmingham attorney specializing in condominiums, real estate and corporate law.

Inside/out



A Japanese garden helps create a serene feeling on the once too-hot patio.

Brother-sister design team stress importance of tying 2 areas together

By Becky Eminger
special writer

Once the basic plan is in place, the accessorizing begins. The duo's close working relationship helps the client to put a lot of themselves into the design. They take "ownership" of it, so to speak.

Staff photos by
Steve Cantrell

OUT IN Bloomfield Hills is a graceful condominium tucked in a park-like setting. As you approach and explore it, it strikes a chord of serenity as beautiful as a simply melody.

Wouldn't it be nice to have an environment that blends so naturally with its surroundings, the interior and exterior seem to be one? Have you ever wished to create a place that reflects you as closely as notes in a symphony?

For most of us, it would be an unfinished symphony.

ENTER THE team of Karen Gagne and Patricia Sellenraad. This talented sister-brother duo specializes in helping create an environment that flows between the interior and the exterior.

Gagne is president of the design firm of Gagne and Sellenraad Interiors of Troy. Her brother is president of award-winning Klein Bloemendaal Nursery of Birch Run.

She does the inside; he designs the outside. Together they help the client create an environment to fit his/her specific needs. The exterior design repeats and emphasizes the themes and lines of the interior, extending the tone of the home.

Gagne and Sellenraad are members of an artistic family from Frankensmuth.

Gagne pursued her design degree at Michigan State and Delta College. Sellenraad finished his degree in horticulture at Michigan State University and his master's degree at Ohio State.

Because an interior may be

spoiled by a poor view of the exterior, Gagne suggests her brother's services to clients who could benefit from landscaping design. Sellenraad, in turn, does the same.

SUCH WAS the case at a Cranbrook Manor condominium. Gagne began the project after water damage from the left necessitated renovating the main part of the first floor.

The enclosed atrium, a major design feature of the home, was so hot that the window treatments had to be drawn to keep out the heat. Another patio also reflected heat. Sellenraad picked up on the design elements of the interior to create outdoor rooms.

THE COURTYARD entry sets the mood. A brick path leads through a carpet of groundcover dotted with specimen plants.

Both designers believe the entry provides a transition, setting up anticipation and intrigue. Sellenraad's subtle use of art deco lines and a Japanese maple sets the tone for the eclectic design waiting within.

The atrium, the showplace of the home, is an extension of the parquetry-floored entry. Accessible from the entry, living room and master bedroom, it echoes the peaceful, luxurious home surrounding it.

IT WASN'T always this way. Sellenraad created a serene mood by building a Japanese garden in the 12-foot-square area. He placed a waterfall and reflecting pool among varieties of azaleas, low juniper and miniature roses.

These, along with flowering perennials, provide season-long color. A



Shell pink walls was the backdrop for the condo owner's collection of art deco and oriental art.

tanyoshio pine and lacelent Japanese maple echo the peaceful, Oriental mood. The running water from the waterfall camouflages road noise and cools the area.

The atrium now provides a changing concert of color in which to relax and soak up the sun. The finishing touch? A washing basin, a Japanese tradition provided to visitors for hand-washing.

GAGNE MADE the walls of the open living-dining room glow in shell pink. They furnish the perfect backdrop for the collections of art deco and Oriental pieces the owner has collected in her travels.

SELLENRAAD VISUALLY extended the floor space by installing a raised deck over a nearby cement patio. Because the patio radiated so much heat, it was unusable.

The deck created an outdoor eat-

ing area that remains cool and private, but catches breezes.

The brother-sister team agrees their goal is to "... approach each (situation) as an individual design problem to be solved." They start each project by learning all they can about the people who will live in the area.

Although their questions may sound nosy, they really want to find out how that particular client uses the space, Gagne said. By defining what needs the space must satisfy, the designers can draw up several options for the client to "try on."

"Forethought is more important than money," Sellenraad said.

"Decorating isn't superficial," Gagne said. And finding the right background for indoor and outdoor activities takes patience and guidance. The result is a symphony of beautiful design, not a cacophony of ideas and elements.

Has apartment hunting become a royal pain?

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