

HOME WORK

Appliances, ads should aim for reliability, not just innovation

APPLIANCE DOCTOR



JOE GAGNON

Remember the movie actor Jesse White? He later became the guy you saw on television, "Ol' Lonely," the M a y t a g repairman. I didn't know him personally, but I knew many who did. He was a real character.

Several years ago a new guy came into the Maytag commercials. Gordon Jump was involved in Hollywood and a big hit television show. I had the privilege of spending a whole day with

him at an appliance function here just two years ago. I would put this guy in the class of total gentleman and all-around nice guy. I noticed in the last few months a new guy popping up on the commercials with Jump. Later I found out through a story in the Appliance News in Chicago that "Ol' Lonely" is to be replaced by a "perfection seeker" in Maytag ads.

End of Ol' Lonely?
Is this the end of the lonely Maytag repairman? Not yet, but a major revamping and updating of Maytag advertising is in the works at the appliance maker's long-time ad agency. Under current plans, Gordon Jump, the actor portraying Ol' Lonely, will gradually be phased out of the

campaign as the lonely repairman character breaks in "The New Guy," portrayed by actor Mark Devine. But The New Guy won't sit around the shop playing solitaire while fantasizing about actually getting to repair a dependable Maytag appliance. Instead, he'll spend most of his time in a Diogenes-like search for perfection equal to that found in Maytag products.

Eventually, The New Guy will assume the role of the lonely repairman, while the emphasis of the advertising will shift from Maytag "dependability" to "innovation," such as the Neptune washer. "We needed to rethink the lonely repairman to keep him relevant in a changing world," said Jim Hardison, creative director of advertising. When introduced in 1964, the

character's pitch was centered on dependability at a time when appliances were not as reliable as today. But now, most consumers feel that all brands share that trait.

And Leo Burnett USA, the ad agency, had a hard time finding a role for the repairman character in ads stressing Maytag's advanced — and more expensive — products introduced since 1996.

As a result, the revised character will be an "active" seeker instead of a passive sifter, to better merge the promise of innovation into the message, Hardison notes. (Nobody called the Appliance Doctor in Detroit to ask him if he would like to do the commercials on television. I've got white hair and rather old blue eyes and a mature look, I love what I'm doing right here,

so the Appliance Doctor doesn't feel bad about missing out on doing commercials.)

Getting reliable

On a more serious note, it's just too bad that Maytag is removing the concept of "dependability" from their commercials. Officials there want to devote the concept to high dollar prices and new innovations. Well, they didn't do so well when they created the new front load washer which ended up needing a rework installed on many thousands of washers with odor and mildew problems. They plainly shot themselves in the foot when they concentrated so much on new design without enough consumer in-home testing. Maybe these manufacturers should come and sit with me

when I spend four days at the home improvement shows. That's the place where they could get a better grasp on what people expect from an appliance.

Sitting in a factory or an advertising agency does not and cannot give the people in charge a true concept of what consumers want. They need to learn from consumers what the word quality means. Give them quality, and the customer will pay your high price.

Joe Gagnon can be heard on *NewsTalk 760, WJR-AM, every Saturday and Sunday morning.* He is a past president of *The Society of Consumer Professionals.* His second book, *"The Words and Wisdom of The Appliance Doctor"* is available in book stores. His phone number is (313) 873-9789.

Air compressors simplify projects

Many do-it-yourself experts say that anyone who tackles do-it-yourself jobs will complete their projects more quickly and less expensively with an air compressor and compatible tools than with electric-powered tools.

An air compressor uses compressed air rather than electricity to power pneumatic hand-held tools such as impact wrenches, ratchets, spray guns, reciprocating saws, screw drivers, engine cleaners, chisels, drills and more.

Compared to electric-powered tools, pneumatic tools save both time and money. The initial cost of a pneumatic tool is significantly lower than its electric-powered counterpart and has a longer average life span. In addition, pneumatic tools deliver more torque and higher revolutions-per-minute than electric tools, helping users complete their jobs more quickly and effectively.

launched the Home Workshop Series, an air compressor line for do-it-yourselfers. According to the company, the Home Workshop Series is easy to use, virtually maintenance free and powerful and flexible enough to handle a variety of do-it-yourself projects.

Campbell officials recommend using air compressors for routine automotive care to general home improvement.

Air compressors are ideal for routine automotive maintenance. When paired with an impact wrench, tire changes are completed efficiently. Rusted bolts and muffler assemblies are easily removed with the use of a chisel.

Reciprocating saws are great for cutting through auto bodies. After auto body shaping is complete, an oil less air compressor is the best choice for painting like a pro. When used alone, the air compressor serves as an inflator for tires. Indoor and outdoor improve-

ment projects such as sharpening lawnmower blades and painting to upholstering furniture can be tackled easily with an air compressor and the appropriate pneumatic tools.

Also, air compressors inflate balls, swimming pools, and air mattresses in a matter of minutes, taking less time than using a bicycle pump or small inflator.

According to Campbell, an air compressor's versatility makes it ideal for woodworking projects such as crafts, cabinetry or furniture as it can power necessary tools such as brad and framing nailers, screwdrivers and reciprocating saws.

The Home Workshop Series and other air compressor lines are available at Home Depot, Wal-Mart, ACE Hardware, True-Value, Canadian Tire and TCS Tractor Supply Company. More information about how air compressors benefit do-it-yourselfers is available at www.chpower.com.

CALENDAR

Here is a list of upcoming Home and Garden shows:

ANN ARBOR
The 2001 Ann Arbor Spring Garden & Flower Show features Elvin MacDonald, "The Garden Guru," who is the senior editor at *Traditional Home Magazine* and other garden experts. This year's theme is "Homescapes." The public can participate in "Plants on Parade" with forced bulbs, bonsai, houseplants and miniatures. Show hours are 10 a.m. - 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday, March 30 and 31, and 10

a.m.-4 p.m., April 1, at the Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds, 6055 Ann Arbor-Saline Road, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors, and \$5 for children 5-12. For information, contact the Ann Arbor Spring Garden and Flower Show at (734) 434-8004 or e-mail AAflowershow@aol.com

SPRING HOME
The fifth annual Spring Home & Garden Show runs from April 5-8 at the Novi Expo Center southeast of the I-96/Novi Road

interchange. Roger Swain, host of PBS' "The Victory Garden," will share gardening insights. Nancy Lindley, "Michigan's Rose Lady," will educate homeowners on winter-hardy roses. Garden landscapes will be displayed. Showgoers can purchase plants in the Garden Marketplace. Show hours are 2-10 p.m., Thursday and Friday, April 5 and 6; 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., Saturday, April 7 and 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Sunday, April 8. For more information, visit www.builders.org or call (248) 862-1019.

Learn about radiant heat at seminar

The Remodelers Council of Building Industry Association of Southeastern Michigan (BIA) will host "Radiant in-floor Heating Made Easy," Wednesday, April 4.

Jon Zawacki, heating specialist of Etna Supply of Wixom, and Dan McClary, salesperson of Balfrey Johnson of Detroit, will discuss planning and pricing, average cost and installation.

The educational seminar will take place 8-8:30 p.m. at BIA Headquarters, 30375 Northwestern Highway, Suite 100, in Farmington Hills. Registration fees, including dinner, are \$30 for BIA and Apartment Association of Michigan members, and \$35 for non-members and guests. For registration information, call (248) 862-1008 anytime.

Got a story idea for At Home? Call (734) 953-2112

WALL TO WALL CLEARANCE SALE Everything Must Go!

All Clearance Center Merchandise Has Been Dropped-Tagged to 50% Off*

Now... TAKE AN ADDITIONAL 20% OFF!

Thayer-Coggin • Natuzzi Leather • Directional Excelsior • Elio • Swaim • Bernhardt • Visu • Pastel Classic Leather • Weiman • Precedent

Plus... for the first time ever!

50% OFF

Cut Crystal • Italian Glass • Wall Decor Lamps • Pictures • Select Limoges Pieces

2 DAYS ONLY SAT & SUN, MARCH 24 & 25

SHERWOOD STUDIOS WAREHOUSE

24760 Crestview Court • Farmington Hills

248 476-3760

• Groups Sold as Complete Sets

• All Sales Final

*mfr sugg retail

SAT & SUN 9:30 - 5:30

Read Observer Taste every Sunday

Wholesale Countertop Pricing Save 20 - 40%

Marble - Granite - Silestone®

Why buy countertops at retail when you can buy direct. Since we fabricate at our own locations, we beat the "Big Box" store pricing. We offer quick delivery and personalized service.

Granite 3cm thick!

- Luna Pearl
- Baltic Brown
- Verde Butterfly
- Rosa Beta
- Impala Black

\$49.95 s/f installed!

includes straight polished edge 20 s/f minimum

Silestone® 3cm thick!

- Capri Limestone
- Mountain Rose
- Silver Blue
- Tea Leaf
- Azul Leaf

\$45.95 s/f installed!

includes straight polished edge 20 s/f minimum

We stock over fifteen hundred slabs of Marble, Granite and Silestone in over eighty unique colors. We stock the largest selection of imported ceramic tile in Michigan.

Check our prices first!

Ceramic tile sale

6x6 floor tile bone/sand **49¢ s/f**

6x8 wall tile bone/blue **49¢ s/f**

12x12 floor tile stone look #31590 **89¢ s/f**

12x12 floor tile fossil **99¢ s/f**

Installation includes Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties. Others at additional cost. Offer not valid with any other discount. All previous orders excluded. Subject to stock on hand.

Ceramic Tile Sales Inc.

Southfield Rochester

23455 Telegraph Rd. 1972 Star Batt Dr.

248-356-6430 248-853-6654

Visit one of our Showrooms!

Showroom hours:

M-F-Th	W-F	Sat
8:30-5:00	8:30-8:00	9:00-5:00