

## APPLIANCE DOCTOR



JOE GAGNON

## When you don't get results, take them to court

*This is one person's story picked from the several hundred consumers who call me every month. It has no factual names to protect the innocent, but the facts themselves are true.*

**S**ussie Q — Mr. Gagnon, I have a 2-year-old R-rated brand electric range. I put it through a self-clean cycle yesterday, and now the window inside the door is all brown.

This is the first time I used the self-clean feature because my husband and I eat out all the time. The inside of the range was over so slightly dirty, and I just wanted to shine it up a bit. There is no way for me to clean the glass inside the door so I called the R-rated customer service department.

After speaking with a representative who told me that nothing could be done without my paying for a service technician to take the door apart, I asked to speak to a supervisor.

The supervisor told me I was at fault because the inside of the range needs to be cleaned by hand first. I explained I'd accept that if there was food spillage and splatters all over the place, but the inside of my range was almost as clean as when it was new.

### Getting the runaround

The supervisor told me I'd have to pay a technician to take the door apart and clean the window because the warranty expired. I stated that if I chose this route, and cleaned my stove again in another year, and it happened again, I would be in the same boat. His reply was a definite affirmative.

The supervisor also said that this stove is one of the most popular models, and they never get any complaints like mine. I pointed out that this is all the more reason to suspect that there is something wrong with the range I have in my home. I told the supervisor I was sorry I bought this product and would never purchase anything with their name on it again. He answered the company would certainly not go broke because I felt that way. At this point I hung up the telephone in disgust. I'm calling you because I don't know who to call. What can I do?

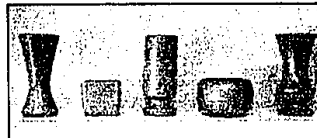
My conversation with Sussie Q went like this — Sussie, there is no one else to call, and that's a crying shame. There once was an organization in Chicago called the Manufacturers Action Panel, or something like that, but they went out of business a few years ago. They were totally funded by the Appliance Manufacturers in this country who decided to shut it down.

You could file suit in small claims court. Call the service department of this R-rated product and have them come out and repair it. Pay the bill then file a claim. You may not even have to rely on the wisdom of the court because I don't believe the other side will show up. When that happens the judgment is granted in your favor. Although I am not a lawyer, and have no business giving you advice, I think it's worth a try.

Stay tuned folks for the second part of this story. Names will be used to reveal the guilty.

Joe Gagnon can be heard Saturday and Sunday on 760 WJLR. He is a member and past president of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals.

Got a question for the Appliance Doctor? Call him at (313) 973-9789, or write to him in care of Keely Kaleski Wygonik, Observer Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150.



Before and after: Above, homeowner Maryann Baxter in her newly designed Oxford home. The view of her living room before the redesign is pictured at the top right. The new view from the kitchen shows open space where the hostess can visit with her guests. Top Right, Page green pottery on the mantle above the fireplace replaced antiques.

STAFF PHOTO BY LAWRENCE R. MCKEE

## No kidding around

With the children grown, empty nest couple makes new space in house all their own

BY LANA MINI  
STAFF WRITER  
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**D**ave and Maryann Baxter didn't sulk in their empty nest when their sons grew up and moved out of the family home. Instead, they transformed it to accommodate their new lifestyle.

The Oxford house isn't one that remained a stereotypical home owned by grandparents that's cluttered with antiques — instead it couldn't be any fresher with its dazzling energetic aura.

Today there's more space for the daughter-in-laws and grandchildren who bless their dining room table. More space for the Baxter's individual home offices.

While day hours fill the house with natural light, nighttime is for candles and coziness — something the couple needs. Dave is a manager for Ford Motor Co. in Dearborn, and Maryann an IBM executive consultant.

"They're a busy couple," said designer Shirley Maddalena of the posh Maddalena Design Limited in Birmingham. "I wanted to give them a place that felt like a vacation house."

The 2800 square foot, four-bedroom, 2 1/2 bathroom standard colonial was updated from classic country to the new modern. Gone are the common white walls, beige carpeting and excessive antiques and in are interesting sage walls, streamlined furniture, flat molding, light hardwood floors, clean lines and a fresh new flow that's definitely more California than Michigan.

Perfect pot: There are lots of options for container gardening. Here's a selection of the many types of pots you'll find at your local gardening store.

"We moved to the suburb within the country 15 years ago to be closer to the schools," Maryann Baxter said. "It was a great place to raise our kids, but it was time for a new look after the boys left."

Fate brought the Baxter's to Maddalena. Baxter and Maddalena's sons are friends which is how the union between client and designer was formed. Evidence of that bond can be found in the simple, yet interesting umbrella stand Shirley's son, created.

The redesign emanates the sophistication and high style of Maddalena — and it radiates the elegance of the Baxters.

"I started with vision: Uncluttered, sophisticated with simple elegance," Maddalena said.

Redesigning homes of empty-nesters is much different than doing so for families with children. Empty-nesters don't necessarily require breakfast nooks or spacious tables near the stove for kids to do homework while mom or dad cooks. They don't need mudrooms or extra rooms for hockey equipment and school gear.

At the Baxter's home, Maddalena did away with the country-style chicken and pig figurines and heavy dark window treatments and molding.

She replaced standard beige carpet with brilliant hardwood. The main floor is painted sage with eggshell trim throughout. Upstairs the color subtly changes to soft khaki.



STAFF PHOTO BY LAWRENCE R. MCKEE

Collaborating: Interior designer Shirley Maddalena, (right), of Maddalena Design Limited in Birmingham, works closely with homeowner Maryann Baxter. After Baxter's children moved out the house, it was completely updated, re-designed and remodeled.

"One of the biggest changes was in the kitchen," Maddalena said.

Since the Baxter's planned to entertain the family often, Maddalena created an anchor in the home. The kitchen.

Walls knocked out, old stoves updated ala Tuscan style with an enlarged hood and stainless steel. Granite countertops create a friendly place for guests to stand and socialize and munch on appetizers.

"We love it," Maryann Baxter said.

"At night we can't wait to come home."

In the family room the brick fireplace was replaced with a new one. Simple sage muted clay pots replaced the antique figurines collected over a lifetime. Still, the house has a personal touch. The early 20th century style can still be felt here and there. Items the

Please see EMPTY NEST, C2



## Contain plants to a small space with colorful annuals

BY MARTY FIGLEY  
SPECIAL WRITER

Container gardening is the perfect way for people who don't have space for traditional gardening to "dig in the dirt" and bring beauty to decks, patios, and porches.

Container gardening has been around for many years and is still a popular activity. The selection of plants has grown tremendously with ones that are less susceptible to insects, and

drought. Color and growth habit have also been improved, therefore a larger selection is now available at nurseries and garden centers.

Annuals can be grown from seeds so that they will be large enough to be placed in a container when the weather cooperates. Now is the time to start plants from seed indoors. On the other hand, nurseries and garden centers will have a large selection from which to choose.

Please see CONTAINER, C4