

## Fixing the Problem

by Faith R. Foyil

(As seen in *The Advance of Bucks County*)

Do-it-yourself home improvement can be a money-saving, fulfilling and even entertaining hobby for people who know how to tighten loose sockets or repair broken lamps. These people are talented when it comes to manipulating tools and reading manuals.

These people are not me.

I struggle when loosening knots out of my sons' swim trunk waistbands and "accidentally" throw appliance manuals away before reading them. So I was understandably a bit flummoxed when my friend Terri gave me a 448 page "Fix-it-Yourself Manual" for a house-warming present.

The book's sub-title claims it will tell you "How to Repair, Clean and Maintain Anything and Everything in and Around Your Home." In fairness to Terri, I carefully examined this generously-sized, information-packed book and subsequently discovered one really important fact:

The book was very heavy.

So for the first month or so I used the heavy do-it-yourself book to flatten out a curling corner on my family room throw-rug. And let me tell you, that book worked just great.

When the carpet corner was nice and flat I decided to actually *look inside* the book. Sure enough, there were chapters on fixing walls, floors, appliances, electrical wiring and plumbing. This book had so much information there was probably even a chapter on curing the common cold.

Flipping through the pages I spotted a paragraph describing how to patch a copper pipe with a plastic pipe. You simply cut out the damaged pipe section with a pipe cutter or hacksaw. Then you "deburr (the) remaining ends of (the) pipe."

There were two problems with this paragraph:

1. I do not own a hacksaw, nor am I entirely sure what a hacksaw looks like.
2. I thought "deburr" was something you did to your socks after running through a field with your dog.

Another page explained what to do with a sluggish vacuum motor. But I already know what to do if my vacuum motor is sluggish:

1. Carefully wind cord around damaged vacuum casing
2. Place vacuum into car
3. Drive vacuum to vacuum repair shop

For anybody who's ever lost sleep at night agonizing over how to test switches on a VCR here's what you do:

"Set the VOM on RX1 scale and probe switch wires where they are soldered to circuit board."

Then you bring about world peace.

Finally, compare these two interesting phrases and decide which one makes more sense:

1. "To free gears, pry C-clip retainer off each gear shaft"

- (From hand mixer repair chapter)

2. "Oft Scyld Scefing sceapena preatum"

- (From prologue to *Beowulf* in Old English)

Sometimes too much knowledge is just too much, like the chapter with 30 different illustrations of screws, bolts, nuts and washers. Or the "Servicing a Sheathed Element" chapter which sounds like it should be read by consenting adults behind closed doors.

Maybe one day I will get brave enough to attempt to repair a cracked impeller housing on a leaf blower, once I get a leaf blower. Assuming the impeller housing cracks and I have the slightest clue what an impeller housing is. Maybe one day Hilary Clinton will decide she doesn't want to be Secretary of State and will want to sell home-made lemonade to Chappaqua tourists. Until those unlikely days, I have discovered yet another excellent use for the do-it-yourself book:

Placing it under my bedroom TV makes the viewing height just right.

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