

October 2001

Number 47

In Our 12th Year

# All-Points

# Bulletin

A Newsletter for the Home-Remodeling, Repair, and Real-Estate Industries

## All-Points Bulletin Publisher Yields to Physical Challenges This May Be the Last Issue

**A**fter nearly 12 enjoyable years creating, writing, and publishing 47 quarterly issues, I'm afraid I struggle more and more these days. No, it's not because I'm as busy as those tradespersons I criticized in my "Business Is Booming for Remodelers While Customer Service Fails Miserably" (July 2001). And, no, it's not because I received an attractive offer from *Remodeling* magazine, KNBR-Radio, or "Good Morning America." I wish!

Unfortunately, over the last few years I've lost the ability to walk, due to a progressive paralysis of both legs for which there is no known treatment. Diagnosed with spastic paraparesis, a rare neurodegenerative disease somewhat akin to Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, and ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease), I became physically unable to inspect homes around February 2000: the spasticity in my legs kept me from crawling beneath homes; I needed a cane to keep from losing my balance inside homes; and it would have been suicidal trying to climb a ladder to inspect roof systems. I had no choice but to quickly leave a beautiful home in the city that I had designed and been remodeling for 18 years when it became impossible for me to routinely climb a few steps in my split-level San Francisco home.

Fortunately, my wife, Rosanne, and I found a single-level home under construction in the Mother Lode mountain town of Arnold. We took the opportunity early in 2000 to purchase and develop it and have been remodeling it inside and out ever since.

### Who's Taking Responsibility?

You guessed wrong if you thought that I, a remodeling contractor and finish carpenter for

30-plus years, have been doing all the remodeling and landscaping labors around our mountain home over the past 18 months. That hasn't been possible. But fortunately, my specific affliction does not typically affect the mind as can the related diseases I mentioned. So it's not been too difficult for me to sit or stand for a few minutes near carpenters, painters, bricklayers, tree planters, landscapers, and the like whom I've hired, directing and coordinating their remodeling efforts.

### Being on Active Duty is a Must

There's no getting around it: To be successful, a newsletter must be engaging, useful, and relevant. For a printed piece such as *All-Points Bulletin* to keep its readers up on remodeling and design trends, building maintenance and repair concerns, real-estate-related issues, legislative updates, and economic and environmental news, while providing information that's reliable, fresh, and sometimes hard-nosed, its publisher must be an active participant in each of these specialized industries.

I would have to continue active memberships in remodeling, home inspection, and real estate organizations; keep up with continuing education requirements; stay in close touch with home inspectors, contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, and attorneys; visit trade shows; attend and speak at conferences and local meetings; and so much more. Alas, I've been unable for the last year and a half to accomplish even one of these prerequisites.

What's more, finding myself suddenly retired in February 2000, without the help of an office

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## Last Issue

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manager or assistant, it has been an unending struggle for me to do the physical work of folding, labeling, stamping, sorting, boxing, and delivering approximately 2,400 copies to the post office each quarter.

### This May Be the Last *A-PB* Issue

From the beginning, I'd always wanted simply to stick to my commitment of trying to make each *A-PB* issue better than the last. Regretfully, aside from the physical constraints, I also feel that I may be unable to continue providing *A-PB* subscribers with the quality output that had been my mission since our first issue, Spring 1990.

It also wouldn't be fair to my loyal advertisers if I continued to publish a newsletter lacking punch — such that springs forth following a handshake and chat at chapter meetings and roundtables. And it's obvious that my being out of action prevents me from personally recommending and referring job-specific advertisers to my clients, a responsibility I'd always enjoyed that benefited clients, subscribers, and tradespersons alike. Because of my involuntary retirement, I can no longer interact with clients, subscribers, and the trade, and a loss such as that prevents me from keeping current with industry needs, issues, and trends.

### Is There a Buyer in the House?

I will carefully spend the next three months looking for a company, organization, or person dedicated to acquiring *All-Points Bulletin* in its entirety.

Hopefully, the new owner/publisher will maintain much of *A-PB's* content stream, quality, value, and character. If I'm unable to find an interested buyer, I will have no other option but to discontinue its publication.

### Don't Discard This Issue

Although this may be the final issue, I still have a number of resources and skills to share with my friends. Please don't discard this issue. On the contrary, please keep it handy at all times. It'll provide a valuable ongoing resource you can call on whenever needed, time after time.

First of all, pin up or post the Resource Guide in an easy-to-read location. I guarantee that Bay Area subscribers will not have a more complete, valuable, or user-friendly source of remodeling- and real-estate-related providers, consultants,

and counselors anywhere.

You'll also find on page 4 an assortment of services I'm capable of providing over the next few years: remodeling referrals; dispute resolution consultation; the sale of more than a dozen different earthquake-preparedness devices for homes and offices via mail order; seismic map sales and analysis (for San Francisco properties only); commercial and residential property inspector referrals; leak detection referrals; ongoing guest host appearances on KNBR-Radio's "Ray Brown on Real Estate" program; and the sale of thousands of dollars of building code books from my code expert library.

### Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due

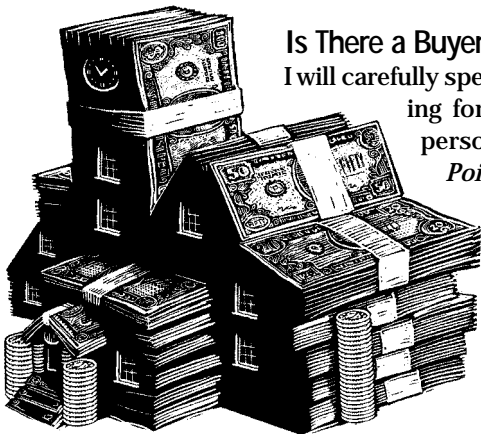
I believe that *A-PB* has been most engaging, useful, and relevant. But publishers don't work alone. I've written nearly all of the 500-plus articles, but I couldn't have published *A-PB* without a lot of help. Although my dedicated and talented contributors have never wanted their names to be displayed on the back page masthead, it's fair and fitting now that I finally say "Thank you all very much!" and pay tribute to the cast behind the scenes.

Graphic designer Starting with issue #1, Michael D'Abrosca skillfully created and maintains *A-PB's* recognizable style and format. Quarterly, he lays out and produces every page of *A-PB* and the Resource Guide from his home office in Friday Harbor, Washington (mdabrosca@mac.com). Corresponding via the Internet for years, we happily use Apple's multifunctional Macintosh equipment and software.

Copyeditor and proofreader You could not have been understood and enjoyed any of my articles over the years without Teri Thomas' superb professional-yet-personal expertise. Reading all my articles' e-mailed proofs, Teri needed lots of patience and red ink to help me (finally) appreciate and learn to express myself more clearly and directly, in ways readers would appreciate. Kudos, Teri (teri.t@home.com).

Printing and film Credit for top-quality printing during the first 11 years must go to San Francisco-based J.C. Graphics & Printing. Joe and Johnny Cheung operate two fully equipped facilities in the city (415-512-7270, 415-362-8282). Joe encouraged me many moons ago to print with soy-based ink, while Johnny skillfully created my name in Chinese characters — 金威龍 — which my multitude of Chinese clients and subscribers have appreciated.

The last five issues have been printed locally



by Foothill Printing & Graphics (litho@gold-rush.com).

Mail room crew San Francisco issues were folded, labeled, sorted, boxed, and strapped by a number of high school and college students. Each issue's five-person crew was handily managed by two highly dedicated friends of mine, Lily and Benny Luu.

For the last five issues, which were printed and mailed in Arnold, I'm extremely grateful to one very special person, who, fully aware of my physical needs and limitations, accepted the challenge of getting every one of the 2,400 quarterly issues into the mail, affixed with the correct label and postage — thanks to Rosanne for her patience and perseverance.

Loyal advertisers Let's face it. Without this group, I could not have continued to afford publishing *A-PB*. More than 125 advertisers have been part of the Resource Guide family of advertisers for nearly 12 years. And I'm amazed but quite pleased that I've conducted business with nearly all of them.

But I could not fail to thank those eight advertisers who placed their ads in the first issue,

Spring 1990, and didn't miss a single issue thereafter: Don Strauss Remodeling; Excelsior Roofing; Friis Plaster & Stucco; House of Fans; Lingruen & Associates; Muratore Corporation General Contractors; Rainey Sheet Metal; and Spectrum Painting. Thank you all, my friends!

I certainly hope you enjoy and will retain this issue. I want it to be one that you find valuable and worthy of keeping handy over time.

It was difficult for me to write this announcement. I wish I could walk, lift, bend, and keep my balance as I once could. Perhaps as a result of successful gene therapy, afforded by meaningful stem cell research funding, I may once again regain one or two of these physical skills.

But until then, I thank the Lord for having given me the opportunity to achieve so much for so many years. I'm proud of *All-Points Bulletin* and trust you have found it a worthwhile addition to your home-remodeling, repair, and real-estate library.

— Warren Camp  
wcamp@mac.com

Many  
Thanks!

## Giving Your Chimney a Clean Bill of Health

By Warren Camp

**O**ld Man Winter has no doubt begun knocking at the door, so if you haven't done so already, you still have time to get your house winterized. Take it from me, an ASHI-certified-member home inspector of more than 6000 homes with fireplaces or stoves, a good place to start winterizing is the chimney.

Often neglected, chimneys are a vital part of the structure and mechanical functioning of a house. Chimney defects can result in fires, collapses, and even carbon monoxide poisoning. So, before lighting your next fireplace blaze, take the time to inspect your chimney for signs of common problems.

### Safe and Sound

First, inspect your masonry chimney from the outside of the house to see if it leans or appears to be separated from the building. Older chimneys will sometimes lean toward the south or west because the mortar dries out more on these sides. Chimneys that have separated from the house can be especially dangerous. Often, there's no mechanical connection fastening the chimney to the house. Steel plates that are sometimes used as fasteners will rust away and leave

the chimney vulnerable to collapse. If your chimney leans, have it checked by a qualified structural engineer, fireplace contractor, or professional home inspector.

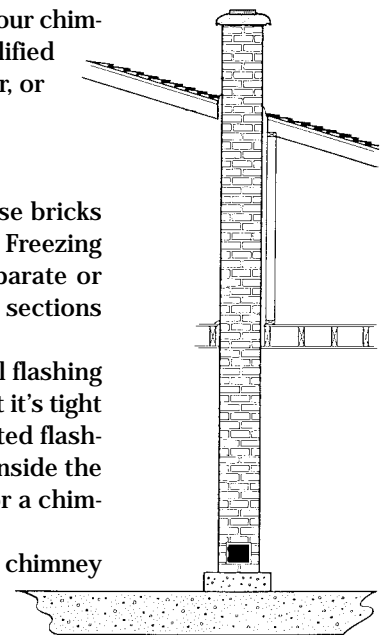
### Come Up and See Me Some Time

Second, use binoculars to look for loose bricks or cracks, especially near the top. Freezing weather can cause bricks to shift, separate or "spall," or loosen up. Any deteriorated sections should be replaced.

Also check to see that there is metal flashing between the roof and chimney, and that it's tight and in good shape. Loose or deteriorated flashing can cause leaks that will show up inside the house. Ask a sheet metal contractor for a chimney flashing inspection and evaluation.

Once you've checked and given your chimney a clean bill of health, it's not too soon this winter to crank up that fire.

Check the Resource Guide centerfold for structural engineers, fireplace specialists, and sheet metal contractors. To find a qualified ASHI-certified home inspector for your area, call 800-743-2744, or visit [www.ashi.com](http://www.ashi.com).





# Wondering Where to Go for a Reliable Referral or Opinion?

## It's Easy to Locate Those Who Provide Specialized Services

By Warren Camp

Although *All-Points Bulletin* appears to be discontinued, I certainly won't be put out to pasture. I have a number of resources and skills to share with my friends.

In fact, I very much want to continue offering many of the services and resources that I've been providing homeowners and tradespersons for decades. Although I've relocated to a home office more than three hours' driving time from the Bay Area, I would enjoy doing all I can to help you as your advisor, consultant, referrer, and supplier.

Here's a sampling of what I have to offer. In each case, you can contact me by phone at 209-795-7661; e-mail at [wcamp@mac.com](mailto:wcamp@mac.com); fax at 209-795-7898; or mail at P.O. Box 986, Arnold, CA 95223-0986.

**Remodeling and Realtor referrals** Because I personally have conducted business with more than 90 percent of the Resource Guide advertisers, whether for my own home's needs or my clients', I can direct you to the most appropriate resource provider.

I'm often contacted by subscribers asking, "Which of the three advertising roofers/architects/plumbers/attorneys/contractors do you recommend?" I let them know promptly that I first need to know the type of project they have in mind, the budget they've allowed, and what quality level they assign to this upcoming project or need. Until I fully understand such important criteria, I can't recommend which advertiser to call first.

I'm happy to say that I still do not charge for referrals. All I ask is that you pull your Resource Guide down from the wall or refrigerator and have it in hand as you answer my questions, giving me various ways to respond — phone and fax numbers, e-mail address, and postal address.

**Dispute resolution consultation** Wondering if you have been harmed by a home inspector's report? A contractor's contract? A subcontractor's installation? A client's hesitation to pay for a change order? A supplier's damaged or late shipment?

For more than 20 years, I've been a dispute resolution consultant and an arbitrator (privately and with the American Arbitration Association), specializing in construction defect, building code conformity, and real-estate disclosure litigation. Though I'm not an attorney, I know very well when it becomes time to supplement my consultation with the assistance of a case-specific attorney — and I can comfortably recommend some of the best.

Fees for my consultations via telephone, fax, mail, and e-mail are \$40 per quarter hour. (Note: I can no longer arbitrate Bay Area disputes; neither do I leave my Arnold home office for hearings, testimonies, or depositions.)

**Earthquake-preparedness devices for sale** Since 1985, I've tracked down and tested more than a dozen different earthquake-preparedness devices for homes and offices. I've amassed a stock of functional and easy-to-install devices and offer them for sale via mail order.

I've sold more than 2,800 pairs of the most popular product — Safety-Z flexible furniture brackets — after introducing it on three seismic safety segments I created and directed for KGO-Television's "The House Doctor" in 1990 and 1991. My vast selection of devices also includes cabinet door latches and catches; glassware and collectibles putty; computer, TV, and stereo equipment fasteners; book restraints; file cabinet and refrigerator straps; quake-resistant mirror clips; and more.

For a catalogue of nonstructural home and office devices to stabilize such things as bookcases, bureaus, armoires, grandfather clocks, mirrors, glassware, and small collectibles, send \$3.20 to Warren Camp at the above address. With your catalogue, you'll receive a sample of QuakeHold glassware/collectibles putty.

And if you hurry, orders of \$50 or more will receive a 20% discount — but they must be postmarked by November 30, 2001, to qualify for the discount.

**Seismic map analysis and sales** At the close of the majority of my more than 6,900 home inspections, I provided an optional seismic map analysis (for San Francisco properties only). I'd help show interested clients how

engineers anticipated buildings on a specific block would perform during strong and major earthquakes. Whether you are concerned about an existing home or one being considered for purchase, each of the eight different maps shows accurately the relationship of a city block's structures with each the following:

- Estimated intensity of ground shaking
- Building damage levels for another 1906-type quake
- Landslide locations
- Inundation areas due to reservoir failure
- Geologic makeup well below the structure
- Areas of potential liquefaction hazard
- Areas of potential subsidence hazard
- Areas of potential tsunami inundation

The map analysis fee for one or more San Francisco blocks is \$40 per quarter hour; most single-block analyses cost \$40.

If after the analysis you'd like to purchase an eight-map detailed reproduction of one of five sections of the city, map sets cost \$9.

**Property inspector referrals** As a longtime member and past president of the American Society of Home Inspectors, Golden Gate Chapter, I know some of the best ASHI-certified-member home inspectors in the area very well. Call, fax, write, or e-mail me your requests, describing what's to be inspected, where it is, how large it is, and whether you'd prefer a narrative or lower-cost checklist-type report. I'll provide you with names and numbers of the most appropriate ASHI inspectors. (Sorry, but you'll need to ask the inspectors for their inspection fee estimates.)

When you're in need of a competent commercial property inspector, whether for a new purchase, to help you prepare a reserve study, or to find out what it will take to bring an existing commercial property up to snuff, call me for the best commercial inspectors available. Again, I do not charge for referrals.

**Leak detection consultations and referrals** Are those water stains new or old? Is the roof the problem or are there subtle wall openings or flashing and membrane failures? Could it merely be window condensation? Are the gutters sloped and fastened properly? Could the downspouts be clogged or deteriorated? Inside the building, tubs and showers are notorious for springing leaks — can you find the cause(s)? What about steam radiators that drip every now and then, damaging

floors, walls, and ceilings? And have you found water seeping through the building foundation or the tiled floor? Where's it coming from? Is there a way to totally eliminate mildew growth?

Having performed more than 1,800 water leak detection inspections and testified as an expert in more than 15 water intrusion and microbial contamination trials or hearings, I've developed a time-tested technique for diagnosing the sources of unwanted moisture entry into a building. Usually, in no more than 60 minutes after consulting with perplexed clients, I can help them understand what needs to be checked, and they can take the first steps themselves.

Thereafter, if a qualified leak detection inspection and tester is needed, I can refer specialists to you at no further charge. They will be objective inspectors experienced at using electronic moisture meters to measure retention and detect likely sources of water entry before you call roofers, painters, or plumbers for estimates. These special meters determine probable causes of water entry, enabling your inspector to provide you with corrective recommendations.

**Building code books for sale** Because of my retirement, I have a large collection of building, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical code books that I no longer need. Most are in excellent condition. The 2000 International Building Code has never been opened!

Uniform Building Code book versions range from 1979 to the current 1997 version. National Electrical Code book versions go from 1981 to the current 1998 California version. Please call to request a detailed price list.

**Ongoing radio appearances** Five or six times a year I can be heard on KNBR-Radio's "Ray Brown on Real Estate" program. As Ray's guest for the hour-long call-in show, I discuss home inspection issues, whether for buyers, sellers, or homeowners, and answer callers' questions. Ray and I give out valuable information and tips in an hour, plus lots of personalized referrals to the most appropriate tradespersons and organizations.

I'll next appear as Ray's guest on Saturday morning, November 24, at 9 a.m. I hope you'll tune in. If I select your call as the most interesting one for that morning, you'll win your choice of one of Ray Brown's three best-selling

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*One of Warren's trusty moisture meters that take the guesswork out of determining if a water stain is currently wet or merely historic.*

# Cash Rebates Still Available

By Warren Camp

California's energy crisis does have a silver lining for a few. As part of Governor Gray Davis's \$800-million energy reduction plan now under way, \$75 million has been earmarked for direct rebates or tax credits to residents who replace their existing appliances with more efficient ones.

Depending on their level of energy efficiency, refrigerators and air conditioners could qualify for rebates of as much as \$400.

For replacing a dishwasher, washing machine, or clothes dryer, consumers may get \$50 to \$150. And if you buy energy-efficient light bulbs, expect \$2 to \$5 toward your purchase.

The governor's office estimates that up to

600,000 appliances may be replaced in the coming months.

And, if you look inside your next utility bill envelope, you might find, as I did, a \$75 cash rebate coupon funded by the California Utilities Commission. It's for the replacement of a 10-year-old or older clothes washer with a new Energy Star-compliant clothes washer — which uses 30–40 percent less energy per load than those made 10 years ago. But don't wait too long. The retail offer expires on December 31, 2001, or when funds are depleted, whichever happens first.

For more information about rebates and energy-efficient appliances, call the Smarter Energy Line at 800-933-9555 or go to [www.pge.com](http://www.pge.com) and select "Save Energy & Money, Residential."



## Fast Facts

**Did You Feel That One?** Earthquakes occur most frequently west of the Rocky Mountains, although historically the most violent quakes have occurred in the central states. The granddaddy of earthquakes was along the New Madrid Fault in Missouri, where a three-month-long series of quakes in 1811 and 1812 included three quakes larger than a magnitude of 8. These quakes were felt over two million square miles.

**Most Durable Ladders Are Fiberglass** Yes, fiberglass ladders resist corrosion and require minimal maintenance. Aluminum ladders are high-strength and lightweight but can corrode and are dangerous to use around electricity. For any ladder, look for D-shaped rungs, which are easier on your feet than round ones.

**Wood If It Could** According to *Home Energy* (July/August 2001), while wood framing for one house requires up to one acre of mature trees, steel framing for the same house uses just four to six junked cars.

**Contractor Failure Rate** Of 136,000 contractors specializing in remodeling in 1992, 56 percent had failed by 1999.

**Hear That Clock Ticking?** Every second another baby-boomer turns 55. As the members of this demographic tidal wave approach retirement, they will increasingly challenge the definition of the term that once meant a time to slow down and stop working.

**You're Not as Thick as You Should Be** *The Journal of Light Construction* alerts you to the fact that most so-called 1/2-inch-thick plywood is not only stamped 15/32 inch, it might measure only 7/16 inch.

**Have License, Can Paint** About to schedule a paint job inside or outside your home? Any California contractor who contracts to paint and decorate (such as hanging wallpaper, staining, and faux finishing) must have an active C-33 classification license. Installing drywall and plaster requires license classifications C-9 and C-35, respectively.

**Plug the Dikes?** I routinely advise clients when I'm on a water leak inspection that it doesn't take much of a gap for water to pass through it. How small a fraction of an inch, you might ask. Is it 1/8? 1/16? 1/32? How about 1/64? In fact, water needs only a 1/128-inch gap to enter and cause problems for a building.

**Is There a Lawyer in the House?** How about the state? It turns out that there are more than 160,000 practicing attorneys in the state of California. With a population of approximately 34 million, that's one attorney for every 213 residents of all ages.

**Dehumidifiers Can Help Arthritis** According to Joseph Hollander, M.D., in *Women's Health Letter*, "Changes in humidity may cause pain to flare up . . . but a dehumidifier helps maintain a stable humidity level — reducing the frequency and severity of flare-ups." A-P B

# Letters, We Get Letters . . .

*Mail to Letters Editor to All-Points Bulletin, P.O. Box 986, Arnold, CA 95223-0986. Include your name, address, and daytime telephone number.*

## Accessibility Needn't Be Boring or Institutional

As a person afflicted with MS, I found your "Access Remodeling, Its Time Has Come" (July 2001) painfully true yet comforting. I had no idea that accessibility for elderly or physically challenged could be provided by an individual dedicated to personalizing a home and living arrangement — I'd always thought that managed care institutions and insurance carriers provided it in a turnkey operation. Although my home's restoration is already completed more institutionally than personally, I am glad to be informed.

But one thing that made my restoration effort bearable was the fact that I had a hand in specifying what I received, and what a difference that makes. The key to accommodating the physical needs of challenged homeowners is to do so without leaving the room — bathroom, kitchen, stairway, and so on — with a sterile institutional look.

Manufacturers and designers are increasingly aware of the need to offer and provide attractive yet user-friendly fixtures, like grab bars that come in a wide variety of metal finishes and colors; contoured, drop-down shower seats that are comfortable and color-match other accessories in the room; slip-resistant flooring that comes in a wide assortment of patterns, textures, and colors; properly sized and contoured tubs, showers, and toilets that are not only easy to use but do not look as though they came from a hospital supply house. Contact an interior designer or architect for brochures and information on these attractive and stylish accessories.

I'm sure that your article's Accessibility Contractor, Russell Kennefick, not only wholeheartedly agrees that safety, comfort, and ease of use are critical when configuring a user-friendly room, but believes that the transformed room has to look attractive and inviting, not boring and institutional, while providing everything needed to allow aging and physically challenged homeowners to want to stay in and enjoy their homes longer. It has for me.

— Donna Ehrlich,  
Castro Valley

## Mildew Can Certainly Be a Mold Hazard

Kudos to you for your eye-opening piece

"Danger: Indoor-Air Pollution in a Home Can Be Worse Than Outdoor Pollution." I thought your bullet-point tips on ways homeowners can eliminate household fungi by changing a home's climate were especially useful.

I'd like to paraphrase a few facts from my recent article in *ASHI Reporter* (July/August 2001) that your readers might appreciate.

"The U.S. Census data (1998) characterizes 34 percent of all U.S. homes as having had interior- or exterior-source moisture problems. These findings suggest 287 million homes have an elevated probability of having a microbial and/or structural-related problem that can make a home structurally unsound, environmentally unhealthy, and in some cases, uninhabitable. The [ASHI] home inspector [who specializes in leak detection] is positioned to be an affordable, accurate screening tool."

— Matthew T. Cooper,  
ASHI Reporter writer

I love your unique newsletter. Very informative, and it gets better with every issue.

Over the years, you've encouraged readers like me to appreciate grim and gruesome topics of mildew, indoor-air pollution, mold spores, and the dangers of microbial contamination. But in your "Self-Defense Strategies" to eliminate household fungi, you didn't give the common symptoms of microbial contamination. Although I'm no longer a practicing primary care physician, I've provided a list of common mold exposure symptoms that I hope you'll share with your subscribers.

Note: People having these symptoms, whether singly or in any combination, should

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*The extensive moisture and mildew staining in the top photo turned out to be harboring microbial spores, dangerous to my clients.*



*You can see in the lower photo how, after the room's drywall was demolished, its back side revealed severe microbial contamination (*Aspergillus*) that caused my clients to see a doctor and vacate the building until all decontamination, retesting, and renovation could be completed.*

*Don't let mildew go undetected or unmitigated — call an environmental inspector.*

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## Letters . . .

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definitely consult with a physician.

For further help or information, you can contact the California Department of Health Services at these two divisions: Environmental Health Investigations Branch, 510-622-4500, and Indoor Air Quality Section, 501-540-2476.

— John H. Robinson, M.D.,  
Piedmont

Allergic reactions may be the most common health problem resulting from mold exposure. Typical symptoms include:

- Respiratory problems, such as wheezing and difficulty breathing
- Nasal and sinus congestion
- Burning, watery, reddened eyes; blurry vision; light sensitivity
- Dry, hacking cough
- Nose and throat irritation
- Skin irritation
- Constant headaches, memory problems, mood changes
- Aches and pains
- Possible or increasing fever
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath

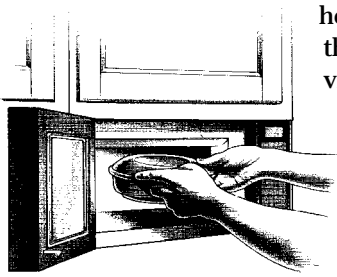
### Energy Crunch Concerns

I found your cover article “Energy Saving Professional Pointers” (July 2001) extremely valuable. Forget for a moment that I’m in the trade and helped provide a few of the electrical pointers for your article. I want to tell you that I’ve gone around my house with my A-PB in hand, checking to see if my home was “up to energy snuff.” To my surprise, it wasn’t, but I’ve started planning to make a number changes this fall and winter.

One pointer I neglected to mention has to do with microwaves. On average, they’re used 1.5 hours a week, or 78 hours a year. For the remaining 8,682 hours in the year, many of them still consume energy. Those with electric panels or clocks use an average of 2.8 watts even when idle. Since microwaves are usually plugged in all the time, one that draws 2.8 watts in standby mode uses approximately 24 kWh per year. That one appliance will cost a little more than \$3 yearly (using PG&E’s current kWh charge of \$0.13).

While \$3 annually, or 1 to 3 watts used continually by one microwave oven, seems small, most homes nationally have dozens of appliances that remain in standby mode all year long (televisions, cable boxes, stereo components, clocks, computer equipment, phones, answer machines, fax machines, stoves, etc.). Added together these appliances can use up to 50 watts of standby power costing \$80 to \$100 yearly. Consider pulling a few plugs now and again.

— Dennis Baldwin,  
Baldwin Electric, Novato



## The Way 道 (tao) and Profundity 洪 (hung)

Having left the big city last year for a peaceful setting in the Sierra foothills, and having had enough of the Bay Area’s frenetic lifestyle along with my relentless pursuit of money, I’ve been fortunate to find the way to enjoy my new more-at-ease life, giving up that fast-paced, workaholic lifestyle. Thankfully, I’ve been able to carve out more time for myself, my health, my wife, and my passions, even when it means making do with less.

Here are a few perceptive quotes I’ve collected along the way that I hope you’ll appreciate.

*“Madness takes its toll. Please have exact change.”*  
— Mark Twain

*“May the forces of evil become confused on the way to your house.”*  
— George Carlin

*“The mind is not a vessel to be filled but is a fire to be kindled.”*  
— Plutarch

*“If I lost all of my senses, I know I could live on inside my mind. For it is the mind we see, and in the mind we live, whether we know it or not.”*  
— Booth Tarkington, author

*“Most people are afraid of change; they’re stuck in a rut of doing what they are expected to rather than figuring out what they want to do.”*  
— Kathleen Gurney, psychologist and author

*“Each time I sold a house, I bought a bigger one to memorialize the achievement and avoid capital gains taxes. My equity increased, so did my mortgage payments. Soon I realized I was working to support the house.”*  
— Elaine St. James, author

*“Live in each season as it passes, breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influences of each.”*  
— Henry David Thoreau

. . . and that’s something to think about.

# Ask the Inspector...



Warren Camp, an ASHI-certified-member building inspector, has inspected more than 6,900 Bay Area properties.

Sample copies of CBIS reports can be found in two best-selling real-estate books: *Home Buying For Dummies* and *House Selling For Dummies* (IDG Books, \$16.99).

More and more Bay Area home buyers are hiring inspectors to check out their prospective houses before making the biggest purchase of a lifetime. According to the California Real Estate Inspection Association, 342,000 of the more than 881,000 previously owned homes sold in California in 2000 were inspected — up from only 8,000 homes in 1983. To help readers better understand the value of home inspections and their importance in sound real-estate transactions, All-Points Bulletin carries a regular column called “Ask the Inspector,” in which Warren Camp, an ASHI-certified-member building inspector, answers questions from readers.

## Chilly Tales in a Windy City

**Q:** When it's windy outside our house, the winds work their way through the tiny roof eave vents and whirl into the attic and down through the recessed-can lights. And that wind can be very chilly. A remodeling contractor suggested I apply a can of foam-spray insulation to replace the plastic I had taped around the fixtures' edges. Should I?

— Raymond Harris, San Francisco

**A:** Foam sealants should never be used on electrical equipment. Some foam products can not only cause a short circuit but may be combustible and may present a fire hazard. Also, when foam sealants are exposed to extreme heat as they can around ceiling fans, the heat will cause the foam to degrade or fail in a very short time.

If you don't have too many leaky ceiling fixtures, and it's feasible for your contractor to build an air-tight box above and around each recessed can, that could be the solution.

But if that's not practicable or affordable, or you cannot find a solution to eliminate wind drafting in the attic and through the ceiling can openings, you can install a gasketed glass trim (cover), available from electrical supply houses. Many manufacturers offer a variety of glass trim styles, usually installed with fixtures in shower and tub areas.

To prevent heat capture that a glass cover can create, use reflector lamps rather than standard or A-base lamps. Assuming you've installed a lamp with the proper wattage, rated for the trim and fixture housing, into each fixture (check inside the fixture housing for this information), reflector lamps project light and heat down and out of the fixture, keeping things from heating up too much.

The correct lamp and gasketed glass trim may be all you need to keep chilly winds outside from entering your warm rooms inside.

## Pick the Correct Caulk Every Time

**Q:** It seems that every year I go shopping for caulk, there are many more types to choose from, and the salespeople don't know acrylic latex silicone from Shinola. I certainly don't want to use an inappropriate caulk. Nor do I care to keep adding to my assortment of unused caulk cartridges collecting on my garage shelves. Can you help, please?

— Walt Abernathy, San Jose

**A:** Yes, the selection increases over the years. And yes, the salespeople are just that. Ask 10 painting or remodeling professionals what caulk they'd recommend for a specific project and I'll bet you'll get at least 10 different answers.

Choosing the right caulk for the job can be an intimidating process, but it's important. Proper caulking can reduce energy loss year round; prevent moisture intrusion and damage; reduce dirt, draft, and dust infiltration; and also improve a home's appearance.

Want to eliminate the confusion? Check my cover article “Selecting the Right Caulk; It Can Be an Intimidating Task” in issue #30 (July 1997). If you don't have a copy, on the next page I've condensed that article into a foolproof list that should be of great help. Photocopy and take it with you to building supply houses, time after time.

Without naming brands, let me break down common caulk types into two distinct families — solvent soluble and water soluble — to make your selections in the years to come easier and less intimidating.



Continued from page 5

“...For Dummies” books. But you'll have to listen and make the call.

Although physically challenged, as you can see I have lots of valuable services and resources to provide. Please keep this issue handy so

you'll be able to contact me quickly when the need arises for referrals, consultations, earthquake-preparedness devices and map analysis, building code books, real-estate radio program schedules, and more. I hope you'll give me the opportunity for years to come.

*Before you buy the next tube of caulk, take a copy of this chart with you to help make a smart and easy caulk selection. Who knows, the salesperson might ask you to answer a multitude of questions — or request a copy of your list.*

*Happy caulking!*

*Compliments of Warren Camp and All-Points Bulletin; 209-795-7661, wcamp@mac.com*

## Solvent-Soluble Caulks

### Polyurethane (urethane)

**Bonding:** Sticks to almost every surface, including concrete, masonry, and wood

**Curing time:** 1 to 4 days

**Paintable/stainable:** Yes, but must dry before painting or staining

**Shrinkage:** Minimal

**Application temperature:** 20° to 100° F

**Life:** 15 to 20 years

**Advantages:** Waterproof; flexible; abrasion and wear resistance exceeds that of silicone

**Limitations:** Expensive; may contain solvents; difficult to apply and control; can discolor from UV exposure; not as durable as silicones; often sticks to hands and clothing

### Butyl Rubber

**Bonding:** Sticks to almost every surface, including damp surfaces

**Curing time:** Never actually cures

**Paintable/stainable:** Yes, but may react to some oil-based paints and stains

**Shrinkage:** Up to 30 percent

**Application temperature:** 20° to 100° F

**Life:** 1 to 10 years

**Advantages:** Good adhesion and water resistance; can be wet-tooled with ease

**Limitations:** Sticky and difficult to tool without applying water; almost as expensive as silicone; may contain solvents that have an offensive odor

### Silicone

**Bonding:** Sticks to nonporous surfaces (metal, glass, glazed tile, plastic) even in damp conditions; questionable bonding to wood, concrete, masonry, and unpainted aluminum, even when dry

**Curing time:** 1 to 2 days

**Paintable/stainable:** No, no, no

**Shrinkage:** Minimal

**Application temperature:** 0° to 140° F

**Life:** 20 to 40 years

**Advantages:** Remains flexible after curing; doesn't mildew; UV rays don't affect stability much

**Limitations:** Expensive; leaves a residue that prevents other caulks from bonding to it; may contain solvents; difficult to control; can corrode some metal surfaces; poor tear and abrasion resistance

### Oil-Based

**Bonding:** Sticks to almost every surface except some plastics and glass

**Curing time:** 7 to 12 days

**Paintable/stainable:** Yes, but must first apply an oil-based primer or sealer

**Shrinkage:** 20 to 30 percent

**Application temperature:** 20° to 100° F

**Life:** 1 to 10 years

**Advantages:** Inexpensive, readily available; resists water; works well outdoors

**Limitations:** Not very durable and tends to crack as it ages; contains flammable solvent

## Water-Soluble Caulks

**Latex** (clear acrylic, polyvinyl acetate, vinyl acrylic, and more)

**Bonding:** Adheres best to porous materials (concrete, masonry, and wood)

**Curing time:** 3 to 10 days

**Paintable/stainable:** Yes, after two hours' drying time

**Shrinkage:** Up to 40 percent

**Application temperature:** 40° to 100° F

**Life:** 5 to 20 years

**Advantages:** Inexpensive; flexible; weather resistant; easy to apply and control; comes in colors and clear

**Limitations:** Deteriorates in wet or damp conditions; can take up to 10 days to cure in humid conditions; not appropriate for outdoor projects unless properly painted; may need a second application after curing

### Acrylic Latex Silicone

**Bonding:** Sticks to most surfaces, including metal and glass

**Curing time:** 2 to 10 days

**Paintable/stainable:** Yes, after it dries

**Shrinkage:** Up to 30 percent

**Application temperature:** 40° to 100° F for most products

**Life:** 5 to 20 years

**Advantages:** Added silicone improves acrylic latex's flexibility; easy to apply and control; cures quickly; comes in colors; usable outdoors

**Limitations:** Some contain fillers that help paint adhere but can hurt performance; more silicone isn't better and may cause paint adhesion failure

### Elastene

**Bonding:** Sticks to almost every surface but is commonly used for kitchen and bathroom applications

**Curing time:** 1 day

**Paintable/stainable:** Yes, works with both latex and oil-based paints and stains

**Shrinkage:** Up to 30 percent

**Application temperature:** 40° to 100° F

**Life:** 1 to 10 years

**Advantages:** Resists mildew; has little odor; available in colors

**Limitations:** Not for use under water; don't use if lower than 40° F temperatures are expected within 24 hours; not easy to locate

# A Checklist for Fall Home Projects

Whether you've just settled into a new home or have been there for years, it's important to establish a home maintenance routine. The best way to preserve it is to maintain it. While fall heralds the holiday season, it's also the time of year when prudent homeowners attend to household chores before winter's weather and activities set in.

So if you haven't watched or taped my televised home maintenance segments that aired over the last 12 years on KGO-TV's "House Doctor," here's my checklist for the fall season.

But you can still get your hands on more than 20 recorded videotape cassettes from my collection containing more than 100 of the show's filmed segments. Call me at 209-795-7661 and this entire "House Doctor" tape collection can be yours.

## EXTERIOR (outer walls, landscape, hardscape, decks, stairs)

- Recaulk siding, trim, steps, and pipe penetrations wherever nee ed.
- Check masonry walls and chimneys (including soil-retaining walls) for cracks, separations, and looseness.
- Check for water stains on downspouts and gutters, eaves, and window and door frames.
- Trim or prune overgrown shrubbery and tree branches in contact with the building (trellis-trained growth is recommended) and with power lines.

## FOUNDATION (interior and exterior foundation areas)

- Inspect the foundation for cracks and crumbling (spalling).
- Check for crystallization (efflorescence), which indicates possible drainage problems.
- Refasten loose nuts on foundation bolts.
- Examine retaining walls, patios, and concrete steps and floors for cracks, settlement, creeping, and lifting.
- Don't forget to check the garage foundation as well.

## STRUCTURAL FRAMING (exposed lumber)

- Look for white stains on wooden framing that may indicate fungal growth and possible decay (hire a structural/pest-control inspector/operator to remove any growth).
- Check the attic and subareas for rodent droppings, ants, or winged insects.
- Look for water-entry stains or dampness in attic and subareas.

## HEALTH and SAFETY (security, fire, environment)

- Ask your security company to test-run the alarm/security system.
- Test smoke detectors with a burnt piece of paper (pressing the detector's test button is not always conclusive).
- Maintain fresh batteries in battery-powered smoke detectors.
- Make sure fire extinguishers are fully charged, easily accessible, and in the right locations (e.g., kitchen, mechanical room, hallways, and garage).

## HEATING, COOLING, and VENTILATING

- Replace dirty dust filters and loose fan belts (found mostly on forced-air furnaces).
- Hire a heating specialist to inspect and service the furnace or boiler.
- Refasten loose under-floor and attic insulation and furnace-duct wrapping.
- Clean furnace and exhaust-fan grills, fan blades, and ducts throughout the house.

## PLUMBING (water, waste and vent lines, gas, water heater)

- Keep clean or snake all floor drains (exterior and interior).
- Look for rust on water, waste, or vent piping.
- Open the water-heater drain valve to check for sludge. Flush and refill the heater tank biennially.
- Look for corrosion on the water heater's supply and return pipes, located directly above the water heater.

## ELECTRICAL (distribution panels and household wiring)

- Trip-test and reset circuit breakers to ensure that they are, and will remain, fully operational.
- Install a timer or photosensitive switch so lights come on automatically at dusk.
- Check for discolored, missing, or spent fuses in fuse boxes and tripped circuit breakers in panels.
- See that all electrical cords are in good condition—no nicks, cuts, or fraying—and that they're outside traffic areas and free of fastening staples or nails.
- Thoroughly examine electric blankets for charred spots and cracked wiring and replace blankets when necessary.
- Switch to energy-efficient interior and exterior lamps.

## INTERIOR

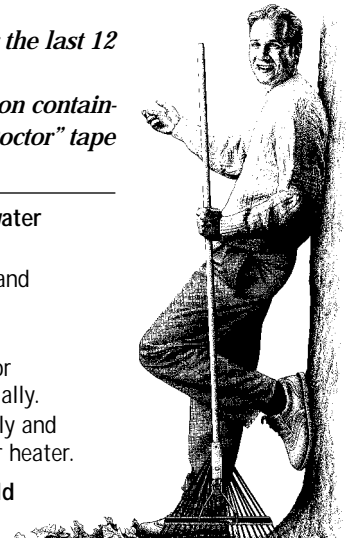
- Inspect door and window weather stripping and replace as needed.
- Free all swollen window frames for easy operation (especially at fire escapes).
- Hire a chimney sweeper to clean the chimney and damper throat from top to bottom.

## KITCHEN, BATHROOM, and LAUNDRY

- Flush the garbage disposal with a solution of one quart of hot water and one-half cup of baking soda to keep it clean and fresh smelling.
- Check beneath sink cabinets for water leakage.
- Check for hose blockage or separation in the clothes dryer's lint-exhaust duct.

## ROOF (gutters, penetrations, membranes)

- Metal gutters: Remove debris from metal gutters and roof drains and inspect for rusted gutters and downspouts. Replace as needed. Wooden gutters: Clean and soak with boiled linseed oil.
- Look for and refasten/replace loose or missing tiles.
- Repair membrane separations, rusted or separated nails, and vapor blisters, and remove collections of furniture and debris from finished roofing surfaces.
- Hire a qualified roofing inspector biennially, before the rainy season, to thoroughly inspect and evaluate the entire roofing system.



*Many maintenance and repair projects can be done by the handy homeowner. However, more complicated and difficult tasks, which require special tools, equipment, and skills, should be left to professionals.*

*When you need objective advice on the condition of your building and its systems, consult an independent ASHI-certified-member home inspector ([www.ashi.com](http://www.ashi.com)) for a thorough maintenance checkup inspection. You'll get an impartial, personalized, expert opinion you can trust.*

# About Warren Camp and *All-Points Bulletin*

*All-Points Bulletin* is prepared especially for homeowners, Realtors, contractors, suppliers, designers, architects, attorneys, inspectors, appraisers, lenders, developers, renters, and handypersons.

We are pleased to have brought you this informative periodical for 12 years. *A-PB* combines up-to-date information about all aspects of home remodeling, building maintenance and safety, real estate, and home inspections with experience accumulated from 20 years of remodeling homes; nearly 7,000 house inspections and reports; mediation and arbitration of numerous remodeling and real-estate disclosure cases through alternative dispute resolution; expert witness testimony in remodeling, construction, and inspection matters; and public speaking engagements, written articles, and more than 40 radio and television appearances.

This is the final *A-PB* issue written and published by Warren Camp, who now offers this periodical outright for sale. Included with full rights of ownership are back issue text files; an extensive graphics/photos/clip art archive; the complete subscriber database of 4,000 strong; our advertiser database of 165 company contacts; business forms and templates; and ongoing guidance and direction for the purchaser. For more information, call Warren Camp at 209-795-7661.

Warren Camp continues to provide the following products and telephone services.

- **Referrals galore:** For reliable contractors, electricians, plumbers, roofers, home inspectors, Realtors, commercial property inspectors, designers and architects, engineers, suppliers, expert witnesses, mediators, and arbitrators, water leak inspectors, and more. All referrals that I provide are complimentary.
- **Fee consultations:** Dispute resolution consultations on construction defect or real-estate disclosure matters; earthquake preparedness; water leak detection and discovery; and building code questions or confirmation. In addition, as your remodeling facilitator, I'll explain what steps to take to see that your project is done satisfactorily; develop budget analyses for a variety of upcoming home remodeling projects; and more.
- **Seismic map evaluation:** Objective 15-minute readings and interpretations of eight specific seismic maps of individual San Francisco blocks — perhaps it's a block on which the property you're considering is situated. Detailed eight-map reproduction sets are available for purchase following the evaluation.
- **Earthquake-preparedness devices by mail:** You can purchase more than a dozen different non-structural home and office devices to stabilize bookcases, file cabinets, stereo and computer equipment, glassware and collectibles, and more that I have personally tested and televised over the last 12 years. Call 209-795-7661 for prices or a current mail order catalog.

*Please keep this A-PB issue handy for ready reference when the need for valuable products and telephone services arises. Thank you very much.*

金威龍

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## All-Points Bulletin

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