



# Drywalling "How-To" Help

Drywall Contracting Videos I and II with Jim Frane. VHS color videos from Craftsman Book Company, 6058 Corte Del Cedro, Carlsbad, CA 92008; \$24.75 each.

Jim Frane has the unusual distinction of being both a drywall contractor and a professional engineer. He produced this two-part video series on drywall contracting as an instructional resource for novices in the field. The tapes do cover the basics, but viewing the tapes is like watching someone give a classroom lecture.

Each tape opens with a snappy musical theme, but after that, a rather stiff, expressionless Mr. Frane presents information as if he is reading from a teleprompter. His only variation is to turn right or left to face a different camera whenever he changes topics. The overall effect reminds me of the deadpan, just-the-facts-ma'am style of Dragnet's Sgt. Joe Friday.

To be sure, there are how-to segments with voice-over by Mr. Frane that show the techniques under discussion. But these sequences do not cover all the topics discussed. Mr. Frane's presentation of back-blocking free ends with scrap material is a case in point. Due to a lack of images showing the technique, I was left wondering what he was talking about.

On the other hand, much of the information you might need to do satisfactory drywalling job is included on the tapes. The first video (32 minutes) covers measuring, cutting, and hanging. It includes information on tools, layout, curves, damage repair, material storage, furring, thickness/spacing charts, screws vs. nails, and numerous tricks of the trade. You'll discover specialty tools like the double-wheeled edge cutter and the panel hoist, and you'll learn how to use a temporary ledger to install ceiling panels by yourself. You'll also hear why not to use nails

with 1x furring strips. You might be left wondering, however, why Mr. Frane measures and marks outlet openings instead of using a chalked box face to unerringly demarcate the proper location on the back of the sheet. Also, the portion of the tape that shows the use of T-braces to hold ceiling board in place for solo jobs neglected to show anything but the easiest part of the process.

The second video (38 minutes) completes the training with its coverage of taping and texturing, and it closes with brief remarks on doing business. Here you'll discover more handy tools, such as banjos and corner trowels. You'll see step-by-step taping and find out how wet-sanding with a plastic mesh block (instead of sandpaper) reduces dust. You'll also learn about troubleshooting a variety of inevitable problems such as nail pops and tape blisters. The section on texturing is weak, with no finished jobs presented, and the tips on doing business seem to be somewhat of an afterthought. Both tapes end with a promo (i.e., advertising spiel) for Craftsman Books, which I suppose is fair enough.

A companion book, *Drywall Contracting* (283 pages, \$18.25 paperback) authored by Mr. Frane is also available. It looks very much like the videos in presenting basic information in a lackluster way. The book has more detail and can be toted around with you, but the videos will be much better for people like myself who learn better from seeing a demonstration than from reading. Together the book and tapes (again with a little practice) might even make a drywall out of a beginner.



# Consumers' Building Guide

The subtitle of *Dreams to Beams* is "A Guide to Building the Home You've Always Wanted." It will act as a guide

the "Land" chapter, provide an overview of factors to consider, but fall far short of furnishing the know-how you'd need to actually site a house. Ditto for the rather cursory chapter on planning.



*Dreams to Beams* by Jane Moss Snow. National Association of Home Builders Bookstore, 15th and M Streets, Washington, DC 20005; 1988, 121 pages; \$9.95 paperback.

in the sense that someone pointing the direction of travel is a "guide," but not in the sense of offering thorough and detailed guidance on the intricacies of house building.

Ten chapters lightly touch on the subjects of planning and assembling the architect/builder/interior design team, site assessment, financing, cost-cutting strategies, contracts, insurance, construction, remodeling, landscaping, and settlement costs. Some material is virtually useless - such as the meager four paragraphs (and symbol chart) devoted to "How to Read Blueprints." Other sections, such as

whom the book is really aimed at) is the chapter on construction, which acquaints the reader with each step in the process and includes a sample schedule chart to bring the homeowner into reality. The glossary is a similarly useful feature.

Builders may find this book helpful as a lightweight customer education tool, but overall it's not something I'd push as a serious consumer-protection or house-planning reference.

- Paul Hanke

# Free & Cheap

**Guide to Factory-Built Housing:** The Conservation and Renewable Energy Inquiry and Referral Service (CAREIRS) publishes *Energy-Efficient Factory-Built Houses*, which describes pre-cut systems, panelized systems, modular houses, and mobile homes, and lists their advantages over site-built homes. Discussed are building and energy codes for these houses, government support for this industry, and the improved energy efficiency of this type of housing. Although consumer-oriented, useful information is offered to the contractor who wants to learn more about factory-builts. For a free copy, contact CAREIRS, P.O. Box 8900, Silver Spring, MD 20907; 800/523-2929.

ation cross reference chart are also included. To order a free copy, write Milcor, 1101 East Kibby, Lima, OH 45804; 419/227-6899.

**Fascia Designs:** Five new pre-designed fascia systems are outlined in *Floclad Pre-Designed Contoured Systems*, a 12-page brochure from Binkley Company. Systems covered include radiused soffit, linear fascia, tapered canopy, curved contour, and canopy closure designs. This free brochure can be ordered from The Binkley Company, 12161 Lackland Road, St. Louis, MO 63146; 314/434-7110.

**Doors Galore:** *Milcor Metal Access Doors* is a 12-page catalogue describing specifications for materials and finishes, and choices of hinges and locks for a wide variety of metal access doors. Security doors, fire-rated doors, doors for drywall and plaster surfaces, aluminum ceiling, and triangular doors are all offered. Standard sizing charts and a speci-

**Plywood Directory:** The American Plywood Association offers a newly revised *Publications Index*. APA publications such as source lists, brochures, and training aids, are listed by form number with brief descriptions. An order form is included. For this free index, contact APA, Dept. B300T, P.O. Box 11700, Tacoma, WA 98411; 206/565-6600.

-- Josie Masterson