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HELPFUL HINTS: INTRODUCTION

The late Kemp Roll was one of the pillars of our community. He was among the very first to become an Owner, when Beaverdam Run was still in development and its long- term prospects tenuous. He is therefore among the very few who saw it evolve from its tentative beginnings to its current thriving maturity.

Kemp had been active in the Association from the outset, had served on the Association Board and as Board President. He was on many committees, and he refused to accept emeritus status and declare that he had done his share. He did his share several times over.

For many years he freely disseminated, in the Kemp's Korner column in our newsletter, tips on how to deal with common household challenges that may be unique to Beaverdam Run. In January 2003, he organized much of the material, and the Board published it in the form of a booklet, titled "Self Help for the Self Reliant." This section of the Handbook reproduces, with only minor editing and updating, the wisdom contained in that booklet and in his columns. Kemp assisted in the editorial process.

There are a few editorial caveats. An attempt has been made to replace names of individuals or vendors with the more enduring substitute of community titles (e.g., member of the Water Services Committee) and vendor category (e.g., plumber). In a few places, though, it was considered too cumbersome to do that. For example, in the item titled "Bugs and Beasts," Dodson, our current pest control company, appears rather than Pest Control Provider. Also, Kemp was extremely knowledgeable and came from an engineering background. Many of the remedies that appear in this section are the answers he found to problems he encountered. Still, Kemp would have been the first to tell you that he was not a certified electrician, certified plumber, etc. These Helpful Hints should therefore be understood in that context. Finally, although we plan to update this Handbook going forward, the editor and the Association Board cannot make real time changes that would make this section state of the art at all points in time.

It is hoped that you will find this section both useful and entertaining. Kemp's problem solving skills are evident, as are his inimitable style, wit, and outlook on life.

BEFORE YOU PLUNGE AHEAD

Let's assume you've still got all your marbles — even though you may not always remember what game you're playing. And you're tired of writing checks to plumbers, electricians and others who seem to possess Harry Potter's skills at whisking away your financial resources. And who, too often, must legitimately charge megabucks for replacing a faucet washer or pressing a GFI button. Therefore, must you accept these as the vicissitudes of life one must deal with in the absence of a handy(man)(person) around the house or, as often is the case, with one around the house who's as well coordinated as a fourth-grade orchestra and whose enthusiasm for such tasks flickers like a candle in the wind?

No, you do not! There is hope. You can do it yourself; "it" meaning the repair or maintenance of practically any of the facilities you use every day in your home at Beaverdam Run — including those that fail when you need them most. The self-help information you'll find in this Board-approved document will not help you parallel park an 18-wheeler or understand how a computer chip works, but it will give you a sense of self-reliance and pride in your ability to cope with those challenges that prompt fear and confusion. Nor will it terminate the lucrative careers of plumbers and the like. You need no longer pity them any more than they pitied you and your helplessness.

Most problems encountered at Beaverdam Run involve the use (or misuse) of the common conveniences we all depend upon most — water, plumbing, electricity, appliances, etc. How to deal with them has been reported in newsletters for the past several years. Sadly, most residents usually discard newsletters after reading and in doing so discard the answers to some of the problems they encounter, such as fixing faucets, avoiding floods, sources of strange noises, etc. This document is a collection of solutions to such problems, all based on actual events here in Beaverdam Run. Some are deadly serious. Some, as you might suspect, are not. Yet all contain a pearl or two worthy of reference when disaster strikes. Which it will.

Remember, you can become more self-reliant than you may think. So when you encounter a problem and find a solution, let someone, like the Building Maintenance Chair, for instance, know about it. This way everyone will benefit from your experience. And, often, the Association — that's you — can be spared unnecessary costs.

Note: Some of the case history calamities cited herein could have been prevented or at least minimized if the Unit owners had arranged to leave a key with neighbors during their absence and have their home checked out once in awhile, especially after heavy rain or snow storms. Make sure a key is left with the Association for use in emergencies (see Rules and Regulations).

Let's start with what you should know about dealing with the occasional water problem at Beaverdam Run, since it is likely to require the most rapid response.

CLUES TO A WATER BREAK

Pressure Drop. We own the water system at Beaverdam Run. It's City water but once it passes through a meter off Beaverdam Road we are responsible for its delivery to each Unit. So when a water problem occurs don't waste time calling the Asheville Water Authority or a plumber. Instead call a Board member or someone on the Water Services Committee.

The first signal that something's wrong is when you notice a pressure drop or no water flow at all. This will usually occur when you are in the shower and covered with soapsuds. After regaining your composure and cloaking your modesty, call a neighbor to find out if they, too, are without water. If not, ask them for rinsing privileges and accept the fact that your Unit alone has the problem. Put some clothes on and look around the outside of your Unit. The most likely place is where the water service line from the main into your Unit has ruptured where a buried shut-off valve is located - usually near the hose bib. In most cases these lines enter in the front. Those on lower Clubside Drive and the odd-numbered Units on Stony Ridge enter at the rear of the building. It is to your advantage to find out where your shut-off is. This will save time and minimize water damage.

If you see water where it normally isn't, and it hasn't been raining, call a Board member or someone on the Water Services Committee. It is possible to experience a pressure drop without a break in our water system. Whenever a break occurs in the City's large water main on Beaverdam Road, we will experience a pressure drop in some Units, beginning with 56 Stony Ridge and progressing downward through 32-22 Ridgeview Drive. The Water Services Committee can relieve this inconvenience by redirecting water from our storage tank.

The Venturi Effect. Besides the above or seeing an obvious geyser outside your entrance or finding a pond of muddy water in your lower level, there is another clue: If you have an all-system water filter and notice that it requires changing more frequently than usual, look carefully outside your Unit where the water service line enters (normally the front) for any signs of surface sogginess or puddling water. A small hairline stress crack in a PVC plastic water line can actually suck in [Venturi effect] fine mud particles when the flow rate is changed, i.e., from taking a shower, operating the washing machine. Do not stop taking showers or washing your clothes. Just keep your eyes open when you go outside. Also, call a Board member or someone on the Water Services Committee so corrective measures can be taken.

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CLUES TO A WATER BREAK (continued)

Water Disaster Prevention. A water break or leak inside your Unit can wreak horrendous damage as well as being very costly. Case history: The owners were away for a few days, a break occurred in a connection to an upstairs commode, water kept running, overflowed, soaked through the floor to the ceiling below and saturated the sheetrock which collapsed on the floor and furnishings below.

The best way to prevent such a disaster is to turn off your water main anytime you plan to be away — even for just a few days. It's very simple. If you do not know how to do this, call anyone on the Water Services Committee.

Hint: Your water main shut-off valve is normally located in the lower level near your utilities and should have a red tag on it with "MAIN" on one side and "BRCA" on the other. The Water Services Committee can help you locate this valve and also provide the tag.

Filtered Water Pressure Drop. If you experience a pressure drop in your water system or no water at all, here's a way to check out another possible cause:

1. Try several faucets to see if they have the same problem. Yes = good.
2. Listen for the sound of water flowing elsewhere inside your Unit. No = good.
3. Go outside to see if water is flowing from the ground anywhere nearby. No = good.
4. Call your neighbor to ask if they are having a water problem. No = good.

If you come up with all "good" answers it looks as though you're alone with this problem.

Now ask yourself two questions: "Do I have a water filter?" and "Has the filter been changed lately?" If the answers are "yes" to the first and "no" to the second, find the filter and change it.

If you've done that and the water <u>still</u> doesn't flow, you messed up the filter change. Go back and try again. (Sounds obvious, but be sure to open the valves you turned off after the filter cartridge has been replaced. Doing all that talking to yourself can make one forget little things like that.)

If you consider yourself too hydraulically challenged to deal with this situation, don't call a plumber or the Water Services Committee. Instead, arrange with a home service contractor to have them take care of changing your water filter on a regular schedule.

AFTER A WATER BREAK

What To Do: If your Unit is located where a break in the water system has occurred and you were without water, close your water main shut-off (normally in your crawl space or lower level). When the water is restored, open the hose bib (faucet) at the front of your Unit and let it run for a minute or so — until all the trapped air has escaped and the water is clear. Doing this will avoid problems with dirt, etc. getting into your Pressure Reducer Valve and filters. After that open your main valve.

After A Deep Freeze: Listen for the sound of running water. If a water line in your Unit had frozen, water will start flowing out of the rupture when the temperature returns to normal. Run, don't walk, to your water main shut-off and close it before real catastrophe strikes. Call a plumber and look for signs of water on the floors or ceilings to help him locate the break. If you have no idea where your water main shut-off is, you're still in deep trouble so find it **now** and tag it. (See Water Disaster Prevention, above.)

Milk From Your Faucet? No, that milky-looking liquid coming from your faucets right after a break in our water system has been repaired is not 1% low-fat milk. It is potable, however. The color is caused by air trapped inside the water mains whenever a break occurs somewhere in our system. When water re-enters the lines it not only stirs up brownish sediment but dissolves the air trapped inside. If the water is left to stand a moment or so, the milkiness [tiny air bubbles] will disappear. Nothing wrong with it.

OTHER WATER PROBLEMS

Water on the Kitchen Floor: Should you walk into your kitchen and get that soggy feeling in your socks and squishy sound at your feet, you are experiencing what can happen once in awhile. Assuming you have not accidentally spilled your scotch and water, try to find out where it's coming from. The usual source is under the sink. Open the cabinet doors below the sink; if it's all wet inside look no farther. With your hand you can tell which of the several water inlets is leaking or ruptured.

There are two main water lines coming out of the back wall — cold water on the right, hot left. Both have valves that can be turned off (clockwise). Another valve is attached to a smaller water line coming from one of the two main water lines. It goes to the dishwasher. Here's a checklist:

1. A much smaller valve is attached to the cold water line that supplies water to the hot water dispenser. This appliance is most likely the source of the water leak. After 6 to 10 years of use they begin to develop leaks. Shut the small valve off to stop the water flow. Then be sure to unplug the heater from the electrical outlet under the sink. Arrange with a plumber or a home service contractor to replace the dispenser with a new one.
2. If that was not the leak source, shut the other valves; first one then the other, to see if the leak stops. This way you should be able to keep the faucet functional with either hot or cold water until a plumber can fix the problem.

If the inside of the sink cabinet is dry, check out any in-line water filters you might have installed, for example, behind the refrigerator.

When all else fails, go down to your water main shut-off in the crawl space or utility room. It should have a red tag with 'MAIN' printed on it. Turn it off clockwise. Call a home service contractor or a plumber.

Now take off your soggy socks, dry your squishy feet, and pour yourself a scotch and water. Don't spill it. Drink it. You earned it.

The Uncommon Commode: Your commode is leaking if you see subtle but constant movement on the water surface in the bowl. To test for this put a few drops of food coloring in the tank (yellow not recommended.) If colored water begins to appear in the bowl ***before*** flushing, you've got water running in your commode when it's not supposed to.

Fixing a leaking toilet is simple, even for the mechanically challenged. It's usually due to deterioration of the rubber in either of two valves: (1) the rubber flapper valve that keeps the water in the tank until flushed, and/or (2) the ballcock valve that controls the water flowing into the tank.

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OTHER WATER PROBLEMS (continued)

Here's the easy way to tell if the leak is due to the flapper valve or the ballcock valve. Do not turn off the water line beneath the commode. Lift off the tank cover. Look for signs of surface movement in the tank. If it stops when you raise the float arm attached to the ballcock valve, then that's your problem. If not, it's the flapper. Knowing the difference can spare you the expense and aggravation of "fixing" the wrong one.

(While you're at it, you may be able to prevent a future problem. Rub the outside of the flapper valve with a finger. If it becomes black, it's time for a change. The black color can be messy so wear non-black rubber or plastic gloves. Unless your carpeting is black, don't lay the old valve on it.)

Both valves can be replaced with kits that include everything you need (except a screwdriver and a run-of-the-mill brain). If you are having difficulty locating a replacement ballcock repair kit or Kohler style flapper for your Kohler commodes, Ferguson Enterprises (Asheville) has kept them in stock.

THE JACUZZI

If your Unit still has an original built-in Jacuzzi in the master bathroom, read on. Problems encountered with them did not involve the water but the pumping mechanism that swishes the water around. And most of those problems have been with the push button that turns the pump on and off. When the button is pressed, the water either refuses to swish or won't stop swishing.

Don't waste money calling a plumber unless you know he's familiar with this type of Jacuzzi. The problem is electrical. Neither should you call an electrician unless you have faith in his skills and know that he won't take advantage of your lack thereof. If you do call him in, be sure to show him this explanation of what can be wrong. It will save him a lot of time, which translates into money. Not his — yours.

This is how the pump on/off switch works: It's an "air switch" — no metal — that protects the user from any accidental contact with the electricity operating the pump's motor. The button you push on the side of the tub is connected by a piece of rubber or plastic tubing to a micro switch that is the actual on/off switch for the motor. It's the pulse of air pressure created when you push the button that is transferred to a mechanism that in turn activates a contact in the micro switch.

When this mechanism is not working, odds are that the connecting tube is letting the air pressure escape before it can operate the switch. It's either loosened or is cracked. To fix this, remove the top slab of marble. (It is not attached; just sits there. It is probably caulked around the edges against the wall so this would have to be separated first.) The tubing referred to is clearly visible. If it looks loose at the connections to the push button or the micro switch near the motor, push it back on until it feels tight. If it has fallen off, push it back together. If it comes off too easily, replace it with a new piece. (This can be purchased at a hardware store. Bring the old one with you so you can be sure the new one will fit properly.) You can test to see if the tube is working properly by holding your finger over the switch end and pushing the button. You should be able to feel the air pressure on your finger. If not, keep working at it until you're sure it's not leaking air.

If you do all this and the pump itself doesn't work properly, then the problem lies with the micro switch. Changing this is not a big deal. But first go to your main electrical panel and turn “off” the circuit breaker serving the Jacuzzi. Then remove the micro switch. Take it to an electrical supply company. They will sell you a new one for a few dollars. Re-install everything just as it was. Turn the current back on and test the push button. The pump is designed to operate with water in the tub but you can do this for a few seconds without the water.

Now pour yourself an appropriate libation, fill the tub with warm water, push the "on" button, lie back and savor your moment of triumph over the Jacuzzi builders of the world and the people who service them. (Be sure to undress first.)

FIXING BATHROOM FAUCETS AND DRAINS

Drip ... drip ... drip ... drip ... If you notice a steady drip from one of your bathroom sink faucets — the type with the faucet in the center and the control handles on each side — here's what to do: Reach under the sink and turn off one of the water valves. Leave the other on. If the faucet is still dripping, turn off the other valve. If the drip stops this time, then that's the problem source. (Note: the cold water valve is normally on the right side when you're facing the sink; hot on the left.) Keep the valve for the dripping side shut.

Now, take off the handle (a Phillips-head screwdriver may be needed). With a wrench, unscrew the large ring nut holding the plastic fitting in place. Carefully remove the plastic by hand (if necessary, use a table knife blade to help pry it up). Be gentle, don't scratch or damage it. In a small hole on the bottom of the opening is a rubber gizmo covering a spring. Remove it. You may need tweezers. Examine it for any signs of wear or damage. If so, there's your problem. Buy a new one at a local hardware store (take the old one with you).

Carefully position the replacement on the spring and put the little assembly in place, making sure it is properly seated in the hole. Before reassembling everything, take a close look at the metal piece on the bottom of the plastic unit the handle was attached to. Make certain it is absolutely flat, smooth and uncorroded. The smallest blemish on this surface will create a drip, especially on the hot-water side. Clean it off with a knife blade. Re-insert it in the opening and thread on the locknut, being careful not to use too much brute strength tightening it.

If the faucet still drips, you have three choices: (1) Try to buy a replacement kit for the plastic unit, or (2) call a plumber who will happily install a new faucet in exchange for your next Social Security check, or (3) call a home service contractor.

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FIXING BATHROOM FAUCETS AND DRAINS (continued)

Where Has All The Hair Gone? Chances are if your vanity sink is draining very slowly, some of your hair, no longer gracing your head, is accumulating down in your basin drain line. Getting rid of the problem does not require a plumber. Here's what to do:

1. Buy some Drano or equivalent. Read the directions and follow them. This should break down the hair clog and allow it to be flushed down the waste system.
2. If that fails, turn on the water to wash out the remnants of the chemical, and then look under the sink. You'll see some white plastic piping shaped like a "P" connected to a metal pipe extending from the bottom of the sink. Move aside all the bottles, cans and assorted paraphernalia you've been hiding down there, then put in a pan to collect the gunk that will come out of the "P" drain when you open it.
3. To do that, loosen (preferably by hand) the threaded plastic connections and remove the "P." This is where you'll find your long-lost hair. Remove it manually or with a piece of wire.
4. Reassemble the piping (hand tight).

As for the rescued hair, do what your conscience dictates. A clear rinse and set should restore it for wistful reminiscing. Just don't dispose of it in your vanity sink basin.

Solving Another Faucet Problem: Should you encounter diminished water flow in a faucet, especially the one for hot water, and there is no problem with flow in other faucets (which eliminates the cause being outside your Unit), the problem may not be inside the faucet itself. It can be in the shut-off valve beneath the sink.

Here's what to do: Turn off the water main. Disassemble the suspect shut-off valve by unscrewing the hex nut behind the handle. Remove the valve stem and examine the rubber washer on its end. If part of it is missing, that's the cause. Replace it with a new washer from a local hardware store (take the old washer with you). Then look for and remove the missing part lodged in the interior of the faucet turn-off.

No need to call in a plumber. But if you do, be sure to tell him about this so he doesn't waste his time and your money trying to figure it out.

'Harden' Faucet Fixtures: Most Units built by the original developer were equipped with sinks having very expensive Harden fixtures made in California. At one time, they had a lifetime guarantee. If they fail, you might wish to contact a local plumbing supply company that sells Harden faucets and ask them how to proceed. There are also numerous companies on line that deal in Harden faucets. They might also be a useful resource.

STRANGE SOUNDS

Pay Attention Or Else. One way to avoid serious or costly problems around your home is to pay attention to any strange sounds. For example, if you're vacuuming and the vacuum cleaner doesn't sound as it usually does, stop using it and check to see if the filter bag is full and needs replacing. You may be putting too much strain on the appliance, which can break the belt drive or bum out the motor.

Listen and look for any changes in the way your garage door is operating, especially if the lift mechanism on the ceiling sounds like it's straining or the door itself doesn't go up and down as usual. In this case, stop using it immediately and call any one of the garage door contractors listed in the Vendor Numbers listing. When a garage door mechanism fails it can be catastrophic and very costly.

The Ear-numbing Sound Attack: It starts out as an intermittent but annoying screech. If that's the sound you hear and have no idea what it is or where it's coming from except from inside your Unit, do not panic. Nor should you call a Board member, a home service contractor, the family doctor, family electrician, or 911. It is your carbon monoxide (CO) detector telling you it wants a new battery. So take it down and put in a new battery before it sets up a steady mind-shattering screech.

Another Strange Sound. Should you begin hearing a strange but penetrating sound reverberating through your home and can't seem to pinpoint the source, do this: Check out the smoke alarms located on the ceilings outside your bedrooms. Chances are it's one of them.

It's possible that you have a fire that's generating smoke, in which case do something about the fire, not the detector. If you have a fire in the fireplace, make sure the damper is still open. Be aware that fumes from cooking can also set off a smoke detector; try closing the kitchen doors and airing out the house.

If there's apparently no good reason for the screeching, the device may be trying to signal that it can no longer perform its duty as a smoke detector. After you determine which one is making the sound, get a stool, reach up and turn the device by hand until it loosens and hangs down. The devices we have were installed by the developer and are "hard wired" to the house circuit; no batteries are needed. The wiring connection is a plug that can easily be removed by hand. Remove it and replace the device with a new detector. Local hardware stores sell them (take the old one with you). No need to call an electrician.

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STRANGE SOUNDS (continued)

The Woodpecker Sound: Unfortunately when a woodpecker pecks wood, it makes noise (which is tolerable) and holes in our siding (which is intolerable). If Woody or his friends have selected your Unit to feast upon, they can be discouraged with a special two-sided tape — one shiny aluminum, the other bright red. Tacking some of this tape to the siding where the bird is working, works. Unless Woody is blind or trying to feed on insects. Never mind the reason, though. If Woody is woodpecking your siding, submit a Building Maintenance Request with the location. Exterminators will be summoned and any holes will be repaired.

GARAGE DOOR CARE

Garage Door Won't Operate. Don't call anyone, including the garage door people, until you've done the following:

1. Check to see if you have electricity in your garage. If no lights go on and wall outlets are dead, look for the GFI duplex outlet typically located somewhere in your garage. Press the "test" button, then press the "reset" button (see Electrical Problems: The Mysterious GFI). If it stays reset and the lights go on, the door should now work.

   If not, check the main electrical panel to see if the circuit breaker for the garage has tripped. If so, turn it all the way “off” and then all the way “on”. If it stays on — good. If it trips off — bad. Either look for a short somewhere in that circuit or call an electrician or a home service contractor to replace the GFI. Or, it's easy to do it yourself, if you are not electrically challenged.
2. If you do have electricity but the opener doesn't work when you press the wall button inside your garage, just for the heck of it, press it a few more times. If the door still doesn't open, get your opener from the car and try it. If that activates the door then the wall button needs to be replaced or fixed. A home service contractor can do this if you can't.
3. If the door won't close completely or won't stay closed, look for the two "electric eyes" near the floor on each side of the door. If they are out of alignment or blocked, remove the blockage or realign them. Note: The openers installed by the original developer were not equipped with this safety feature. All new ones require it.
4. If the door comes down but won't go up completely or sounds as though it's struggling, leave it in the down position. One of the counter balance springs located on the steel rod next to the wall above the door opening is broken. Call Asheville Garage Door Service (255-0830). Otherwise, with help, you can release the latch (red handle) attaching the door to the overhead chain and raise the door so it will stay up. It normally takes two people to do this. This failure usually happens on extremely cold nights (the steel springs lose their strength at very low temperatures). Try to avoid using the garage door under these conditions.
5. If you hear a grinding noise coming from the opener mechanism mounted near the ceiling, stop using the opener and call Asheville Garage Door Service (255-0830). The gears in most mechanisms are made of plastic and in time can fail. Have the name and model number of the opener (located on the ceiling mechanism) handy when you call. Meanwhile you can (carefully) pull and release the chain latch (red handle) to enable you to raise or lower the door manually. To re-engage the release, run the mechanism several times until it clicks back into position. (See below for more detail).

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GARAGE DOOR CARE (continued)

To Reengage the Garage Door: During power outages, most residents manage to open their garage doors by pulling down the red-handled release cord. That's the easy part. Re-engaging it once the power is restored is not always that easy. The connection between the door and the mechanism that raises and lowers it is mechanical. Some connectors are metal; others are plastic. The latter tend to break if handled too roughly. Be gentle.

If recycling the lift mechanism by pressing the opener button several times doesn't work, do this: Press the opener button so that the latch is stopped at the open position (nearest the motor drive mounted on the ceiling). If the door itself is in the "up" position, it should be very close to the latch. All you need do is stand on something so you can reach the door itself and push it toward the latch until it re-engages — "clicks" in. If it does not, look closely at the latch itself to make sure it's not broken and that the emergency release is back in its normal position.

If the door itself is in the "down" position and won't re-engage when the latch is close to it, you may have to assist it manually.

If that doesn't work, raise the door manually until it is all the way up and follow the preceding method. If none of the above works, something's broken; hopefully, not your back. Call Asheville Garage Door Service (255-0830). It would be a good idea to familiarize yourself with your garage door mechanism so you can deal with these problems in an emergency without breaking things.

One More Way: Here is another way to deal with garage door opener problems: When the door refuses to do anything and you know it's getting electricity, simply pull its plug! The newer mechanisms have some computer chips in them. They can get confused just like those among us who use a computer. By disconnecting the power to them, they go back to neutral and get off to a fresh start when power is restored. To do this, either pull the plug up on the ceiling or locate the garage circuit on your main electrical panel and turn its circuit breaker off and then back on. If that doesn't work, go back to the methods described above.

ELECTRICAL PROBLEMS

Don't Be Shocked. Doing some of your own electrical work is easy. Just remember two things:

- Go to the main electrical panel and turn “off” the circuit you plan to work with.
- Always connect the same colored wires — black to black, white to white.

The bare copper wire is the ground and should be attached to a green colored screw, if there is one. If you have a three-way switch you'll also find another connection for a red wire. Normally the brass-colored connector is for the black wire (load). The nickel-colored one is for the white wire (neutral).

When it comes to identifying which circuit breaker in the main electrical panel is for which circuit, you could have a problem. On the door of the panel you'll notice a listing with numbered lines. The numbers refer to the circuit breaker number. Some of the breakers themselves are clearly identified, i.e., heating system, range (if electric), etc. Unfortunately, in 95.6% of our Units the listings were filled in by electricians who wrote only in Crimson Nape Cyrillic script. Which defies interpretation unless you, too, are schooled in this version of written communication.

You do have another option, however. Plug a radio in an outlet in your living room, for example. Turn it on so you can hear it when you're at the breaker panel. Begin flipping the breakers, one at a time, to the "off" position. If the radio also goes off, you’ve found the breaker; if the radio continues to play, turn that breaker back “on” and choose another breaker until you find the right one. Use this to make a chart of your own, noting the number of the breaker and the name of the circuit; "living room outlets" in this instance. Or you can turn the living room lights on and check which circuit breaker turns them off.

The Mysterious GFI. The Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFI or GFCI) is the cause of more electrical problems and phone calls for help than anything else at Beaverdam Run. It's an electronic device disguised as part of a duplex electrical outlet located on the walls just like an ordinary outlet you plug appliances into. Only these have two bar-like buttons in the middle. One usually has "Test" imprinted on it. The other, “On” or "Reset". They are designed to immediately deactivate an entire circuit in the event of a short anywhere in that circuit.

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ELECTRICAL PROBLEMS (continued)

The most important GFI is located in the master bathroom. It controls all the outlets and fixtures in the bathroom and dressing room. Unfortunately this clever device is not smart enough to know the difference between a momentary glitch in a circuit and a genuine life-threatening short. So when you're soaking yourself in the Jacuzzi and suddenly all the lights go out, be not afraid. Get out, stagger around until you locate the duplex outlet containing the GFI and push one button at a time until one of them stays in and the lights come back on revealing your wet, prune-skinned body to the world. If the lights stay on, it was just a glitch.

If not, look for the cause of the short circuit. Unplug any appliances on the bathroom circuit. If you cannot locate the cause and the circuit button won't stay in, call an electrician. Don't ignore it.

Building codes require GFI-protected circuits in the bathroom, the kitchen and the garage. The kitchen GFI is not always located in the kitchen, however. Look for it on the other side of one of the kitchen walls, i.e., the dining room wall. Knowing the location of the garage GFI is very important because it controls the garage door opener, outside security lights, and wall outlets you might have a freezer plugged into. If your garage door won't open as usual, don't call anyone until first making sure the motor has power. The GFI test will determine this. (See Garage Door Care for more details about the garage door.)

Short Circuit. Occasionally when a lamp bulb bums out and you see a bright flash of light and also notice that none of the lights work in that area, just go to your main electrical panel (if you do not know what or where this is, you are in deep trouble). Here's how to restore the circuit: Look for the breaker lever that is out of line with the rest. Turn it to the "off' position first and then to the "on". Everything will be back to normal except for the burned-out bulb.

This is what happened: The failing lamp filament inside the bulb broke apart and struck the lead wires inside the glass bulb causing a direct short circuit. Normally, they just break, fall to the bottom of the bulb, and all you need do is replace the bulb.

New Bulb That Won't Light. Occasionally a new bulb won't light when it's screwed into a lamp socket. First, try it in another socket you know works. If it still doesn't light; it's defective. If it does, then the problem lies inside the lamp socket: The bulb is not making contact with a metal tab located in the bottom center of the socket. This can happen when you've screwed a bulb in too tightly and the base of the bulb squeezed the contact down too far.

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ELECTRICAL PROBLEMS (continued)

This is easy to correct. Get a nail that has a head on it. Turn off the circuit to the fixture or unplug it so no electricity is involved. Place the edge of the nail head under the metal contact tab in the center of the socket and gently pry it up about halfway. Now when you screw in the bulb its base will contact the tab, closing the circuit, and it lights up. You can also use a flat head screwdriver to raise the tab if you cannot find a nail. However, it's easier with the nail head.

In case you were wondering, the metal threads on the bulb and the socket form one side of the circuit; the button on the bottom of the bulb and the tab in the center of the socket complete the circuit.

Security Lights Are Out: Every Unit has three "security" lights illuminating the fieldstone columns on each side of the garage door and the Unit number in the center. These are controlled by a photocell to come on at dusk and go off at dawn. Some lights will stay on longer or come on when the day is very overcast. This is normal.

However, if you notice your lights stay on when all others in your vicinity are off, it means the photocell needs to be replaced. This is an Association responsibility. Contact the chair of the Nightscaping Committee. Also contact the Committee if you notice any of your security lights not on when they should be. A member of the Committee will replace them.

If you notice that all three of your lights are off at night, it means they are not getting electricity. Check your garage GFI and the breaker for the garage circuit. It would be an extremely rare coincidence if all three lamps burned out at the same time.

BUGS AND BEASTS

Inside Invaders: If you discover evidence of an animal inside your home, don't panic. Call out, "Here, Fido!" Only a dog will respond to "Fido." Cats categorically refuse to respond to any call. Especially to "Fido." If this fails and you don't see or hear anything, then it's either gotten back out or is hiding somewhere, more frightened of you than you of it. Odds are it's a rodent of some sort — mouse, chipmunk, squirrel, bat, possum, raccoon, etc.

If you suspect it's still inside your Unit, try to locate and isolate it. If you have no clue as to its whereabouts, systematically start eliminating rooms. For example, if it's not in a bathroom or bedroom, then close the door to those rooms so it can't escape into them. If you think it's in the kitchen area, close all the pocket doors to the kitchen so it can't escape to other rooms. Then open the door from the kitchen to the deck and give it a chance to take that escape route. If that doesn't work, your choices are limited. If the critter is a rodent, bird or a bat, call Dodson Pest Control (our current contracted provider) at 252-8992 and explain what's happening. They will advise you on what to do or come out to help with the task. Rodents are covered by our contract, but you will have to pay a fee for birds and bats. If it's a stray dog or a wild animal, such as a bear or a bobcat (yes, we do have bears and bobcats at Beaverdam Run), and it’s in your living space, call the Asheville City Police Dept. at 252-1110. The dispatcher will contact animal control and send someone to your aid. They will also help with raccoons, opossums, snakes and squirrels.

In any case, try to figure out how the animal got in. Was a door left open? Are the screens damaged near the bottom? Was the garage door left open — even a few inches?

All of our chimneys are capped and screened on the flue tops to prevent animals from getting in that way. If you think you detect the presence of an animal inside your chimney, you need to call a chimney sweep. If you keep your fireplace dampers closed — as they should be when not in use (except a slight amount for gas logs with a pilot light) — any animal that gets into the flue will be trapped and unable to get into the house interior. Should that happen, the animal would make a lot of noise at the damper site. That would be a very good time to call the sweep and submit a Building Maintenance Request (BMR) to have your chimney flue screening checked.

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BUGS AND BEASTS (continued)

Got Mice? If you think you do, you have three choices: (1) Ignore them. (Not recommended. They'll get too comfortable, raise families, and make life miserable for you); (2) Call Dodson Pest Control; or (3) Buy some mouse traps. Use peanut butter as bait; it works better than cheese. (Smooth or chunky. Most mice are not that picky.)

Put the traps where you can get at them. Dispose of the deceased in your garbage or outside. Do not flush it. Do not use poison baits. The victim may go into hiding to join his ancestors and leave you to search for the foul-smelling remnants.

Look Out For Ladybugs! Fall is the time of year when ladybugs start looking for comfy places to hibernate. Their ideal entry site is the warm, sunny side of our Units. Since ladybugs are a protected species, our pest control contractor cannot help except to suggest that you plug up any access holes you can find on the inside of your Unit. Caulking around all doors and windows, and new or additional weather stripping is always helpful. You can also call our County Extension Agent at 255-5522 and discuss the problem with them.

Incidentally, when you remove deceased bugs, do not use your vacuum cleaner unless you're prepared to empty the bag right away. Deceased ladybugs emit an un-ladylike aroma.

Getting Antsy? Occasional ants are no problem. However, if they are overwhelming you and cleaning up your breadcrumbs before you can, then call Dodson Pest Control.

Also call Dodson if you notice areas around the outside of your Unit where materials are being carried away by ants, particle by particle. This time it is important that you do something to identify the location. Flag the area with a stick or something that will alert the Dodson technician.

Spider Webs? If they bother you, get rid of them with a stick or broom. Dodson will do it if you can identify the spider as a Black Widow or Brown Recluse. (Hint: the Black Widow has a red hourglass on her body. The Brown Recluse is, uh, brown and reclusive).

HEATING AND AIR CONDITIONING [HVAC]

Beware The Monoxide Scare. The means of heating and cooling your Unit is vital any time of the year. If it's not working to your satisfaction, call in an HVAC specialist. Installing a new furnace can be like getting a heart transplant. If they tell you a new furnace is required, do get a second opinion before committing to such a major and costly operation.

If they use as one of their arguments that you'll wake up dead due to carbon monoxide poisoning, definitely get a second opinion. This is a scare tactic that has no basis in fact with our gas-fired hot-air furnaces. Incomplete combustion is the only way carbon monoxide (CO) gas can be generated. If the gas flame in your furnace is yellow instead of blue, indicating a problem with the air-gas ratio, a thermal shut-off switch will automatically shut down the whole system.

Incidentally, if you installed a new digital thermostat this may be the cause of a heating problem. Not all new thermostats will work properly with your furnace's electronics. To buy a new furnace then would be like buying a new car because it needed a new spark plug. Go back to the old style thermostat or install a compatible electronic one.

Water Too Hot? If you notice your hot water is too hot after a plumber or HVAC service person has been working around your utility pad, take a look at the temperature control knob located at the base of the water heater. Make sure it wasn't turned up above its usual setting. If so, turn it back down and make a note to use some other service provider next time.

The Smell of Humidity. Using a humidifier in cold, dry weather is a good idea. But it can turn out to be not such a good idea if you keep it cranked up to the maximum for too long a period. This is especially the case if you are in a single-level Unit where the hot-air ducts in the crawl space are colder than the inside air. Moisture in the humid air will start to condense into pools of stagnant water inside the flexible ducts. The location of the furnace is irrelevant, since it is designed to circulate the air inside your Unit without introducing fresh outside air (except when windows are opened).

Until the ducts dry out they can cause unpleasant odors. If your proboscis isn't working, you can check for the presence of condensate by lifting the floor vent grates and examining the inside of the plastic duct. If it's wet, turn down the humidifier and turn on the HVAC system’s fan at the thermostat.

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HEATING AND AIR CONDITIONING [HVAC] (continued)

Catch That Air Conditioner Condensate. If you don't, it's going to make a big wet mess in your crawl space or utility room. During hot, humid weather when the air conditioner is on, it's a good idea to take a look at the furnace where the cooling coils are located to make certain the condensate water is being led to a floor drain. White plastic piping mounted on the furnace side collects and conveys the condensate.

Algae can form in this pipe and prevent the condensate water from flowing through. When this happens, the condensate will back up into the furnace itself and out onto the floor, causing considerable water damage. Algae growth can be avoided by pouring a cup of half water/half Clorox into the top of the drainpipe. The top usually has a plastic cap that can be removed by hand for this purpose. It's a good idea to do this twice a year.

Don't Mess With Mold. We live in a paradoxical paradise. Residing in Asheville, you know that the higher you go, elevation-wise, the cooler it becomes. You probably also discovered that in a two-level Unit, the lower level is always cooler than the upper. Normally that's no problem. But during periods of high temperature and humidity, it can become one that encourages mold/mildew growth. This is when white mold can begin to appear, especially in the lower level.

When that happens it's your signal that the air in that area is stagnant; not enough movement. Mold spores love to spend their time doing what they do in a nice quiet, cool, damp atmosphere. Here they can grow, raise spore families (by the gazillions) and ruin your furniture, clothing and whatever you're sharing with them.

One obvious solution is to keep your air conditioner on for longer periods. Or, at least, let the fan run. Another thing to do is invest in a dehumidifier for any unoccupied crawl spaces, making sure that it gets emptied when necessary. Better still, connect the dehumidifier's condensate outflow line to a floor drain. Every Unit has a drain on the utility pad near the furnace and water heater. Another way to keep the air moving is to put a floor fan in the area. Connect it to a timer so it will go on and off automatically.

If this revelation arrives too late — the spores have taken over. You can hire a contractor to do the above for you and clean up the mold mess with a Clorox solution. If it is not your intention to subsidize your contractor's children's college tuition, you can do this yourself by just diluting some Clorox with water (about half a cup per quart of water) and wipe down any mold-adorned area. Be sure to put on some rubber gloves after changing into your grubbiest attire (a Dior dress loses its appeal when bleach spots appear. Okay only if you intend to tie-dye it).

WHEN WINTER ARRIVES

Frozen Hose Bibs (Faucets). Despite many reminders, some residents still leave hoses connected to their outside hose bibs (faucets). You can save yourself considerable plumbing expense and a terrible, muddy mess inside your crawl space or lower level area by going outside as soon as freezing conditions are forecast and making sure nothing is connected to your faucets, such as hoses, etc.

The so-called frost-free faucets (won't freeze even if not turned off inside) are only "frost-free" if nothing is connected to them that would prevent water from draining out of the section of copper tubing where the shut-off washer is located. Water trapped and frozen in this area will rupture the copper and proceed to flood the inside of the cement block wall and back into the inside of the Unit.

This can happen even if the main water valve is turned off inside. The only difference is that the break won't be apparent until the main is turned back on. Which is followed by flooding, followed by plumbing, followed by invoicing, followed by crying. It's a bad scene you can easily avoid by just getting those hoses off and in. If you need help, ask a neighbor or hire a home service contractor.

Leaving hoses out all winter is not a good idea either. Freezing and thawing of water trapped inside will rupture them.

To Drain or Not To Drain: There is no question about it. If you have an outside hose bib on your deck, you must drain the water line it's connected to. Case history: The copper water pipe inside the exterior siding froze overnight, split the pipe and when the ice thawed the next day, water flooded into the wall space. This costly problem is exacerbated by wind chill — freezing temperature plus wind. If you have or intend to have such a line installed, make sure the plumber insulates the pipe inside the wall and installs a drain valve at the lowest point. Then remember to drain it when winter arrives!

Relighting Your Fireplace Pilot. Relighting the pilot light for your fireplace is an easy do-it-yourself task. Open the damper, press in and turn the round flame control knob next to the logs (follow directions on knob). Ignite the pilot with a long match or, preferably, a long-handled butane lighter. The trick is to hold the knob in for several minutes (not seconds) — long enough for the thermocouple (a small metal knob) located in the pilot flame to heat up and keep the pilot's gas valve open. Release the knob very slowly. If the flame goes out, repeat the process. If it will not stay lit at all, then you need to replace the thermocouple. (Local hardware stores sell them.) You can do this yourself or pay a home service contractor to do it for you.

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WHEN WINTER ARRIVES (continued)

Fleeing Snowbirds, Heed. If you are planning to flee south for the winter, or even if you have already flown, it is extremely important that you "shut down" your Unit properly. If not, and we have a very cold winter, you risk a costly calamity due to water damage.

Make certain all your hoses are disconnected and stored inside. If present, turn off the inside faucet to each of the hose lines (these are normally in your crawl space) and open the outside faucets to drain the lines. Best of all, turn off the water main for the entire water system in your Unit. This is also located in your crawl space or near the utilities (furnace, water heater). It should have a red tag on it marked "main."

Also, turn the water heater down to the "vacation" setting. It is not necessary to empty the tank. Set the upstairs thermostat on "auto" and "heat" at no less than 55 degrees.

If you are confused or unable to do this, arrange to have a home service contractor do it for you.

MORE CONDENSATE WATER

Look at Your Ceiling. Take a look at the ceilings in your Unit, especially in the master bathroom. If you see a slight brownish stain it means some snow had been blown into the attic through the eave vents, melted, penetrated the insulation and ended up in the ceiling sheet rock causing the stain. Or your ceiling exhaust vent could cause it. But first, here's how to fix your stained ceiling:

1. Notify the Building Maintenance Committee via a Building Maintenance Request form, which is available on our website or in the Gazebo. Wait until the cause is investigated before proceeding to the next step.
2. Next, purchase a can of Upshot Kilz Overhead Stain Sealer spray paint at a local hardware store. Read the directions. Lightly spray the stained area until it is no longer visible. Do not paint it with a brush.
3. If you sprayed but the stain came through again, don't give up. This time spray it with Zinsser Primer Sealer Stain-Killer. This will definitely hide it.

Note: If you have a ceiling stain caused by a water problem and the Building Maintenance Committee has addressed the problem, it is important that you spray paint the stain so it's no longer visible. Only in this way can the Committee be certain whether the problem still exists or was eliminated. It also makes your ceiling look better. If a stain reappears, then further corrective action will be taken, but not otherwise.

Ceiling Exhaust Fan Condensate: In many Units it was found that condensate water was causing ceiling staining and deterioration around bathroom exhaust/heater ceiling vents. In some cases the entire fixture fell out of the ceiling onto the floor. The condensate was from moisture in the bathroom exiting through the fan and venting into a sheet metal duct suspended in the attic space. When the warm moist air encountered the cool metal duct, liquid water condensed out and ran back down the duct to the ceiling fixture, wetting the insulation and sheetrock ceiling.

Look for signs of this happening in the form of staining around the ceiling next to the fan fixture.

This problem may be reduced by insulating the duct or, where allowed by the Asheville building code, replacing a sheet metal duct with a plastic duct.

Note: A sheet metal duct must be used when a heater is attached to the duct.
All bathroom exhaust must be vented directly through the roof or an outside wall.

HOME APPLIANCES

Avoid The Washer Flood. If your washing machine has not had its hot and cold water hose attachments replaced, consider doing it. But this time do not put in another rubber hose, especially if you own a Kenmore. Washer hoses are under constant water pressure and are known to burst unexpectedly. The result is a big, costly, wet mess.

The ideal safety procedure is to turn off the faucets to which the hoses are attached when not using the washer, but this is easy to forget and not that easy to do.

Definitely do this: Replace the two washer hoses with ones covered with stainless steel wire mesh. These can be bought at a hardware store. You will need to pull the washing machine away from the wall to do this.

Winterize Your Dryer Vent. It is possible to put the warm, moist air coming from your clothes dryer, normally vented to the outside, to better use during winter months. A "dryer vent heat deflector" insert can be purchased at a local hardware store that fits into the 4-inch sheet-metal vent piping. This allows your dryer "exhaust" to vent into your crawl space or lower level. That helps keep that area warmer and provides needed humidity during cold, dry weather. In the summer, it is simple to switch to outside venting. You or a home service contractor can easily install the device.

Clean the Kitchen Vent. After a few years, even if not used, the exhaust vent over your kitchen range should be cleaned to remove the build-up of cooking oils and grease. The wire mesh air filter can best be cleaned in the dishwasher. Greasy range vents are dangerously flammable. Under some conditions they can ignite by spontaneous combustion even though the range is electric, not gas.

Care and Feeding of the Disposal: Your kitchen disposal can be a blessing or a costly and messy problem. There are two ways you can avoid the latter: (1) don't use it; or (2) use common sense.

It helps to understand how it works: Gook and gunk goes in, gets ground up into a mélange of smaller gook and gunk, is flushed into the sink's drain lines and on down, in and around corners — everywhere but up — until, at long last, it joins other unpleasant stuff and exits your Unit into the main sanitary lines serving the community.

Sounds messy, yet simple. True, it's messy but it's not that simple. The disposal only does the grinding. After that, whatever you jammed into it is on its own; struggling its way through a complex routing of small plastic piping. It needs your help. Which is very easy to provide and extremely important. Without it you are facing the horrors of drain lines plugging up, backing up, and spilling out in places you don't want to know about. Water is your best helper.

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HOME APPLIANCES (continued)

Turn the water on whenever you use the disposal. But more important, keep it on for at least 30 seconds after the disposal is turned off. It's the water that dilutes the gunky stuff and helps it struggle around comers until its journey to the outside world is completed.

Hint: If you're doing the dishes: use the disposal first. That way all the rinse water going down the sink drain will help nudge the ground-up gunk through the pipe maze to its final destination somewhere outside your Unit.

Common sense also means not using the disposal to dispose of things that cannot be ground up into small particles. Onionskins are awful. Banana skins, worse. Celery's too stringy. Forget doing bones, especially chicken bones. You wouldn't give your dog chicken bones, would you? Treat your disposal with the same consideration. Such items are the reason weekly garbage pick-up is provided.

Hint: Besides lots of water, lemons are good for the disposal. They sweeten its breath by providing a pleasant lemony scent. Which is far superior to the smell of gook and gunk.

If the rotor of the disposal jams because you didn't take seriously what I just told you, here's what to do: First make sure you've removed any large objects that might be stuck down in the disposal bottom, that the switch is off, and that you cannot hear any sound coming from the motor. Most of the newer models provide a quarter-inch Allen (hex) wrench that fits into a hole in the bottom center of the disposal motor under the sink. This will enable you to turn the shaft easily in either direction.

Some disposals have a reset button on the bottom of the rotor to turn off the power when the motor stalls. After the rotor is cleaned, press the reset button to restart the motor.

The Yucky Splash Guard: "Splash guard" is the name given to that black, sometimes yucky, thing on the top of your sink disposal. The splashguard is an integral part of the disposal in the original installation. It serves as a rubber gasket seal as well as a splashguard. By now it's doubtless disintegrating into a smelly mess that should be removed and replaced with a new, removable splashguard.

Just take a sharp knife and cut it out. Cut as close as you can to the metal edges. Then put on a yuck-resistant glove (the worst part of the thing is the underside) and pull it out by hand. This removes the guard but retains the gasket seal function. Get a replacement at a local hardware store. Just be sure you measure the diameter of the opening. It can vary depending on the make of the appliance. Incidentally, the newer guards are made of a rubber-like plastic that is easier to keep clean.

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HOME APPLIANCES (continued)

Hot Water Dispenser — Live or Die? Let it die! The hot water dispenser originally installed at our kitchen sinks has a relatively short life span — about ten years at best. And they cannot be repaired without incurring costs greater than buying a new one. Failures are typically in the heating system or the holding tank. The best way to replace it is to buy a new one and either install it yourself (easy, if you can maneuver your body under the sink) or hire someone to do it.

Stores that sell hardware may carry several different brands. Be sure what you buy is no larger than the old one so that it will fit in the under-sink space. If you are installing a dispenser for the first time and do not choose to do it yourself, hire someone familiar with plumbing. Not an electrician.

FIRE PREVENTION

All Beaverdam Run residents should think about what they can do now to minimize the dangers of a fire in their Unit. At least, do the following:

- Make sure any battery-powered smoke alarms are functional. (Those installed by the developer are hard-wired and do not require batteries (see Strange Sounds: Another Strange Sound).
- Put fire extinguishers wherever a fire potential exists — kitchen, shop, garage, utility room (elsewhere if you smoke).
- Learn how to use them.
- Decide now what valuables, etc. you want to take with you if it's necessary to evacuate. Have a container, i.e., a pillow case, to put them in.
- If possible, keep a hose and nozzle available near a hose outlet in the garage, on the deck, or in the utility room.
- Do not panic. Know that a small fire can be extinguished easily by smothering it, e.g., oil burning in a skillet can be put out by placing a pot or pot lid over it. Same for fire in a wastebasket.
- Failing that, call 911, grab your valuables and pets and get out with your car as quickly as possible. Notify your immediate neighbors.

ODDS AND ENDS

Your Gate Opener Calls: This is a sad tale of woe. If you are prone to tears, please do not read on.

You're driving home. It's a dark and stormy night. You're alone. Your brain is slightly befuddled (for reasons I do not wish to elaborate, this being a family-oriented document). When you pull up to the gate, finally locate your gate opener, and press the button, nothing happens. So you press it again. And again. Still no reaction from the gate. So now what?

Your clouded mind suddenly becomes clear and sharp. Maybe not as sharp as in your youth a few years back because, when you back up and pull closer to the directory board, knowing that modern electronics will come to your rescue, you can't remember the secret code number that would open it. Worse, you never bothered to write the number down, or if you did, failed to put it in your car. "Alas!" you say. Or words to that effect. (This is still a family-oriented document.) Your remaining option is to call someone and ask them in your sweetest voice tinged with pleading, to open it for you. Agreed, good friends are hard to make but keeping them is even harder if you do this sort of thing in the middle of the night or too often.

Other alternatives are horrendous. How could you sleep in your car or abandon it and walk home knowing that wild bears, wild cats, crawly snakes, sly foxes, ugly possums and nosy raccoons are just waiting to find a victim like you who invaded their home territory?

So now that you know the perils of having a dysfunctional gate opener, read the following carefully and then do something about it. In the light of day take your opener in hand and press the signal button. A small red light should come on. If it does not, take pleasure in discovering that this was your problem: It ran out of electricity — your battery is dead. Like most things nowadays it ran out of energy. Pooped out. Kicked its little bucket. The hot weather of summer is bad for batteries, too. Exposure to heat such as the inside of a car hastens the decline of battery life.

Buy a new one. Not a Radio Shack 9V battery. For some reason they do not work as well as Eveready, Duracell, Rayovac or Energizer. It would also be a good idea to check your other opener even if it is working to see if the red light is dim.

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ODDS AND ENDS (continued)

To replace the battery, open the back of the device and disconnect the wire attachment from the battery by prying it off with something you can insert between the two metal connections. A flat screwdriver will work. Be sure to match up the connections when you connect the fresh battery. If you cannot get the battery compartment open because of a clamp attached to the opener, use the flat screwdriver to pry it up. Be gentle. These are plastic and can break easily. By ignoring the condition of your opener's battery you run the risk of having to face the terrible task of deciding which is best: losing some sleep sitting in your car all night or awakening some friend by calling to let you in. Please don't call me.

Hot Water Forever: This is intended for men's eyes only. So, ladies, please avert yours.

Men, do you like taking a cold shower? Even when not needed to dampen your ardor? And do you enjoy shaving with cold water that makes your razor seem like a dull axe? Does it bother you that those red blobs in the lather are beheaded facial goose bumps? And all because you're too lazy to let the hot-water faucet run for 15 minutes before the hot stuff arrives? Or because, noble as it may seem to your spouse, you don't enjoy lugging a bucket of pre-hot water outside to douse your plants rather than wasting it and adding to our maintenance costs?

If any of the above applies to you, here are some solutions to your frustrations:

- Depending where your hot water heater is located with respect to the faucet you are using, you can have a plumber "loop" your hot water line by connecting the most remote piping to the outlet pipe as near as possible to the tank. This allows the hot water to take the shortest route to your faucet. (I can show you or your plumber how this can be done.)
- Another is to have a plumber install a circulator pump so that hot water is constantly circulating through the system. This is how motels are able to provide immediate hot water to all their faucets — no need to let the water run until hot water arrives. This does require the loop system noted above. The problem with this is that the hot water piping also serves as a heat exchanger so that most of the heat is wasted en route. It will definitely add to your utility bill.
- You can purchase at most hardware stores a small electric coil heater that automatically heats the water when the faucet is turned on. It will add to your electric bill and requires a nearby duplex plug outlet, preferably below the sink.

And then there are two other solutions to consider: Grow a beard, or buy an electric shaver.

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ODDS AND ENDS (continued)

The Radon Scare: “Radon threat lurks in WNC homes.” Does this headline in the *Asheville Citizen-Times* portend a threat for residents of Beaverdam Run?

What the writer did not explain in the article that followed was exactly what radon is and where it comes from. It is a colorless, odorless radioactive gas generated during the radioactive decay of rare minerals often located in bedrock. The gas may rise through rock fissures and porous soils where it can collect in basements and poorly ventilated areas. While some people pay to go into abandoned uranium mines to breathe the radon-air mixture for health purposes, EPA authorities caution against it on the premise that radiation exposure, no matter how minor, cannot be good for you — hence housing codes now include a radon test. It is keeping many companies in business doing this and adds one more element to the sale or purchase of a home, especially an older one where radon contamination could be a possibility.

The real question for the homeowner is: Where is your home located? Was it built over bedrock containing any radioactive minerals? If your home were in the Spruce Pine area of WNC, the answer would be a definite "yes." This is where pegmatite deposits are or were being mined. One of the minerals typically associated with them is radioactive uraninite that is gradually decaying and emitting gamma rays plus radon gas.

Should we be concerned about this in Beaverdam Run? Are we sitting on pegmatite deposits or even granite? Granite is included because pegmatite deposits are usually associated with granite bedrock and, therefore, could contain some traces of radioactive minerals. The answer is "no."

Our homes were built on sedimentary rock; an ancient deposit of sand, silt and clay that metamorphosed into sandstone with pockets of red clay and lots of mica and quartz. No pegmatites or radioactive minerals. Our Elk Mountain sandstone is so old and weathered it is reverting to its original sandy components and losing its strength (which is why it is relatively easy to remove so-called "bedrock" from our crawl spaces). Radioactive minerals are igneous and never found in metamorphic sandstone. There are other parts of Elk Mountain that are granite, but not our part.

Bottom line: If someone insists on running a radon test in your Unit, make them pay for it because, geologically speaking, it is impossible for our homes to accumulate radon. And even if you had to, you could easily pass the test by simply opening the crawl space or basement vents and blowing out the stale air with a fan! If you are still concerned about the possible presence of radon, go to the Buncombe County Extension office for a free radon test kit and other information. You can also check out www.ncradon.org for more details.

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ODDS AND ENDS (continued)

Need a Better Bib? Is your front hose bib (faucet) hard to get at? Perhaps it's too close to the ground or almost buried in mulch? Or you don't relish stepping in the area where it's located because it's, well, dirty? Or your shrubbery has taken over and you don't want to get trapped in a rhododendron thicket? Fret no more! There is an easy, do-it-yourself way to bring the hose bib closer to you and the front walk.

Go to your hardware store and buy the following: A bronze elbow that has protrusions on each side with holes so it can be fastened with wood screws and has the bottom end of the elbow threaded so a hose can be attached. The horizontal end is also threaded so a bronze hose faucet can be screwed into it. This is the fixture that becomes your new hose bib. Do not buy any plastic (yuck!) fittings.

There's one more thing you need to buy: A special rubber hose that's designed for connecting to a washing machine water inlet. This is also sold at hardware stores. It is about four feet long with a female coupling on each end. (Normal hoses have female on one end and male on the other. I respectfully decline to describe the derivation of these designations and how to distinguish one from the other.) You will have the choice of an ordinary black hose or one wrapped in stainless steel wire mesh. The latter is highly recommended for use on your washing machine to prevent catastrophic flooding should the hose rupture. But it's more expensive and not necessary outside where a rupture would only water your front shrubbery.

To make the installation, first put on your old clothes, pith helmet, and safari jacket (Karl Litten will lend you his machete if getting to your outside hose bib is really frightening) and connect one end of the washing machine hose to the hard-to-reach, frost-free hose bib. That done, check for ticks and then attach the other end to your new faucet fixture. Next pick a new bib location wherever it's most conveniently accessible on the horizontal fascia board and attach the new fixture with wood screws.

Test your connections by shutting off the new faucet and turning on the original one. This whole exercise would be futile if it were necessary to turn the original off after use. Just leave it on and only turn off the new one. Make sure neither hose connection is leaking.

It is important to remember to <u>disconnect this special hose in the winter</u> so that freezing won't split it or interfere with the functioning of the frost-free bib. It would probably be a good idea to fill out a Unit Alteration Request to avoid provoking our protocol guardians and to deter others from installing cascading water falls garnished with naked nymphs and gnarly gnomes along with their new easy-access hose bib!

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ODDS AND ENDS (continued)

Fishing at Beaverdam Run. Of the five ponds located on our premises, three may be used for recreational fishing by residents or their out-of-town guests (no local guests): Hillside, Sunset and the Japanese Garden Pond.

Not the entry ponds. The primary reason for not fishing in the entry ponds is liability. Legally, they are considered an "attractive nuisance." If our non-resident neighbors were to see people fishing in these ponds they could assume that anyone can fish there and we would soon have a problem with trespassers. There are significant liability problems should we fail to enforce our "'no trespassing" rule. Also, because of muskrat dens, the banks of these ponds are not stable enough to have youngsters go near the edges. Adults should always accompany young guests when they visit these or any of our ponds.

Fishing is easiest at the Japanese Garden Pond. Anglers are asked to fish only from three areas: near the stonework at the upper end of the pond; midway along the path on the east side where there is a special access fishing area jutting out toward the fountain; and from the bridge at the lower end of the pond. Fishing from other areas causes problems for the pond banks and could be unsafe for the angler.

All three ponds have been stocked with largemouth black bass, bluegill and grass carp. Some ponds also contain black bullheads. The former three species are "catch and release" only. It is doubtful that you will hook a grass carp or koi but if you do, gently put it back in the pond. If you catch a catfish, you can keep it or dispose of it with your trash. Do not put it back in the pond because we want to control the catfish population.

When removing a "catch and release" fish, wet your hands first, use pliers to grab the hook and shake off the fish, or wear vinyl gloves. This protects the fish from fungus infection. If your young guests have never fished for catfish before, be certain to warn them of the hazards of incorrect handling of a catfish. They have very sharp spines protruding from their anterior fins! According to Bob Higgins, a former long-time resident, the record catfish caught at Beaverdam Run was a five-pounder. Our ponds offer younger visitors something to do while visiting, and we encourage the pastime.

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ODDS AND ENDS (continued)

The Screw Loose: To fix a broken gadget you usually have to take it apart first, see what's wrong, and then either throw the whole thing away or figure out how to fix it. If you succeeded in fixing it, the real test of your talents is about to begin: putting the gadget back together without stripping the threads on the fastener screws. And not ending up with leftover screws.

You can easily spare yourself both frustrations:

- Put the screws you remove in a saucer. This is the only way you can really know if any are missing or left over after you think you've finished.
- Learn how to refasten screws without stripping the threads. A screw won't hold diddly together if its threads, or the threads of whatever it's being screwed into, are stripped. This is especially important when plastic parts are involved.

The simple way to prevent stripping is to:

1. Begin the re-screwing process by first turning the screw in the *wrong* direction — counter-clockwise (to the left) instead of clockwise (to the right).
2. Be gentle. This is not the time to show off your brute strength with a screwdriver.
3. You can feel, and sometimes even hear, a click. This is the signal that the threads of both the screw and the nut or plastic are properly aligned.
4. Now turn the screw in the *right* direction: clockwise. You should be able tell when it's tightening and not stripping threads. If it feels like there is too much resistance, back off and try again. You'll know when it's working properly.