



ADVERTISEMENT

Young's Motors 1871 Route 9W Milton, NY 12547
Phone: 1-888-820-9152



Friday, September 7, 2007

Beating the clutter

With a little help and a lot of work, a Hyde Park couple whipped their disorderly garage into shape

By Karen Maserjian Shan
For the Poughkeepsie Journal

Saying Jim Merrick's garage was overstuffed is an understatement. It was totally packed.



Snow blowers, tools, solvents, tires, fishing gear, woodworking equipment, hunting clothes and accessories, bikes, automotive parts, equipment and so much more filled the space wall-to-wall, leaving no room for even a path to walk through the two-car garage.

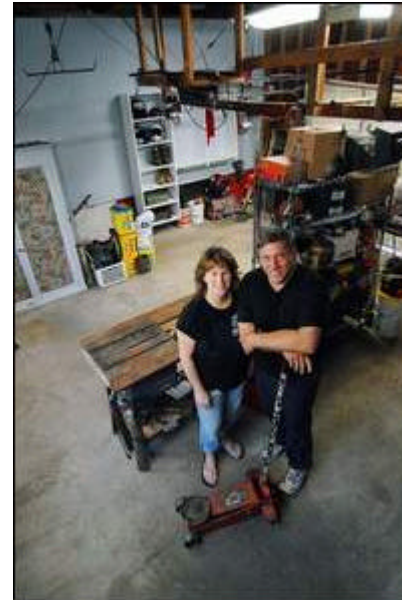
Not anymore.

As winner of the Poughkeepsie Journal's messiest room contest - selected by those who viewed the Journal's Web site from 45 entrants from the tri-state area - Merrick was awarded the opportunity to have his jammed garage cleaned out and organized with complimentary help from Ellen Kutner of Simply Organized in Pleasant Valley and Michael A. Riutort of Smart Closets in Poughkeepsie.

Other contest prizes included a trash bin rental from Royal Carting in Hopewell Junction and Beacon, along with a quarter-page classified ad in the Poughkeepsie Journal announcing a yard sale for no-longer-needed belongings, for a total of more than \$2,000 in services.

Now, after much consultation, organization and a hefty dose of determination, Merrick's belongings have been sorted and suitably stashed, transforming his garage into, finally, a space he can use for his various interests and hobbies. But it wasn't easy, Merrick's wife,

 [e-mail article](#) |  [printer version](#)



Kathy McLaughlin/Journal
Denise and Jim Merrick can enjoy their garage now that they have cleared the clutter.

ADVERTISEMENT

Denise, said.

"Everybody thought it was going to be this dream, like you see on TV," Denise Merrick said about the cleanup process. "In an hour's time, all these people were going to come and help and clean it out and it was going to transform into this Better Home & Garden-type garage. That truly was not the case."

While Kutner spent time with the Merricks, advising them on what needed to be done, how to do the work and providing some hands-on help, the great majority of the actual cleaning, sorting and remodeling work were done by the Merricks and Denise Merrick's father, Richard Armon, over the course of five months. Bad weather, work schedules and family obligations took a toll on the couple's progress, slowing the work.

"It was rough," Denise Merrick said. In the first month alone she calculated the family spent 100 hours on the task. "It took 16 years to make the mess. It [wasn't] going to get cleaned up in a day," she said.

The couple started cleaning out the garage by making piles, sorting items to keep, junk, donate and sell.

Afterward, Armon spent three days installing Sheetrock over the garage's interior walls and replacing a couple of windows.

Then the walls were painted a soft blue and the garage was divided into different areas to house Merrick's fishing, hunting, camping, automotive, woodworking and other paraphernalia. The garage's three worktables were cleared and re-stocked, a closet system was installed to hold Merrick's hunting gear, shelves were set in place and an old armoire was painted and filled with automotive solvents.

Through it all, Kutner made frequent calls to the house, keeping the couple motivated and earning the tag of "our little cheerleader," Denise Merrick said.

"It's a constantly evolving place," Kutner said about the garage. The idea, she said, was not to create a perfectly neat room, but a workable space for Jim Merrick to pursue his many interests.

"Being organized isn't about being tidy," Kutner said. "It's being able to find the things you need, and I think Jim has achieved that."

Merrick said winning the contest was just the motivation he needed to clean up his garage and now that it's looking so good, he doesn't doubt his ability to keep it that way.

"It's still a work in progress," he said, though now he can find the tools he wants when he needs them.



ADVERTISEMENTS

STORYCHAT 

 [Post a Comment](#)

This article does not have any comments associated