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ToolGirl Mag Ruffman offers tips to handywomen. See page 33.

PHOTO/DANIEL HUNTER

Handywomen growing in number

BY SIMONE JOSEPH
Staff Writer

When Mag Ruffman began hosting the home repair TV show *A Repair to Remember* in 1997, she got negative feedback from people who didn't think women belonged in a workshop.

When the *Road to Avonlea* star worked on her carpenter-husband's crew in San Francisco, the other guys hated her and didn't think she belonged on the construction site.

But today, she is a handywoman legend. Ms. Ruffman, who grew up in Richmond Hill, eventually started her own contracting company and became a contractor in Los Angeles. She is the star of a workshop show *Anything I Can Do* in which she builds pieces for home and garden. Ms. Ruffman also writes home repair and project manuals and is developing a line of hand tools.

Her column, *ToolGirl*, runs in Canadian newspapers.

Ms. Ruffman has seen a shift in the roles and attitudes of the women around her.

"Women say, 'I would like to change fixtures in the bathroom. How difficult can that be?' It's huge how much women are doing."

According to Ms. Ruffman, you can walk into any Home Hardware or Home Depot store and see the difference.

"There are a lot of women in the aisles. They're not just picking out tiles and wallpaper. They're into plumbing and electrical (work)," she said.

But the sign outside Fraser Perkin's Markham store clearly says *Home Hardware: Home of the Handyman*.

Speak to Mr. Perkin and he readily admits this sign's out of date.

Not only is it more than a decade old but it no longer reflects all of his customers. Gradually, over the past 50 years, he has seen an increasing number of women visiting home hardware stores and asking for home renovation materials, he said.

From rebuilding a vanity mirror and counter in a bathroom to plumbing or elec-

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Anne Brodie

On Movies

Peter Pan author bio magical tale

Finding Neverland

Starring Johnny Depp, Kate Winslet, Julie Christie and Dustin Hoffman

Directed by Marc Forster

Now playing

It's amazing to think Marc Forster, who directed the stunning *Monster's Ball*, also directed this biography of author J.M. Barrie.

Peter Pan, after all, is a child's delight, a universally loved story about the magical boy who refuses to grow up and lives in Neverland forever.

Monster's Ball is a gritty tale of human survival and retribution. Both are made with great care and attention to period detail.

Johnny Depp makes a charming Barrie, complete with thick Scottish accent and a second shot as a big screen pirate.

Mr. Depp is an admirable actor, taking character roles that expand his seemingly boundless talent, instead of the easy and lucrative leading man stuff. This is one character who doesn't rely on his signature ironic humour, it goes for all-out, slapstick, child-based fun.

When Mr. Barrie's latest play in 1903 London proves to be a major stinker, he assures his producer, dryly played by Dustin Hoffman, he has another idea. He doesn't.

A chance meeting in the park with a herd of young boys and their mother (Winslet) re-opens his inner plowboy.

Suddenly, he's a kid again, frolicking and play acting with the boys, even as little Peter rejects the idea of fun altogether.

See GREAT, page 33.

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