

# ToolGirl offers tips to wannabes

Here's some advice from the ToolGirl herself, Mag Ruffman:

- Take courses at Home Depot. (<http://www.homedepot.ca/>). The stores offer free seminars that cover everything from laying tile, to faux finish painting, to fixing a toilet. For a complete schedule, consult the clinic board outside your neighbourhood store.

- Join a Habitat for Humanity build (<http://www.habitat.ca/>). You will learn plenty of valuable skills, such as how to do framing or put in window trim. Best of all, there's no pressure, she says. "It's so fun."

- When going to the hardware store, don't be afraid to take a Polaroid photograph, drawing or sketch so you know exactly what you are talking about and looking for. She has seen many a plumbing contractor in the hardware store with a drawing and a bunch of parts.

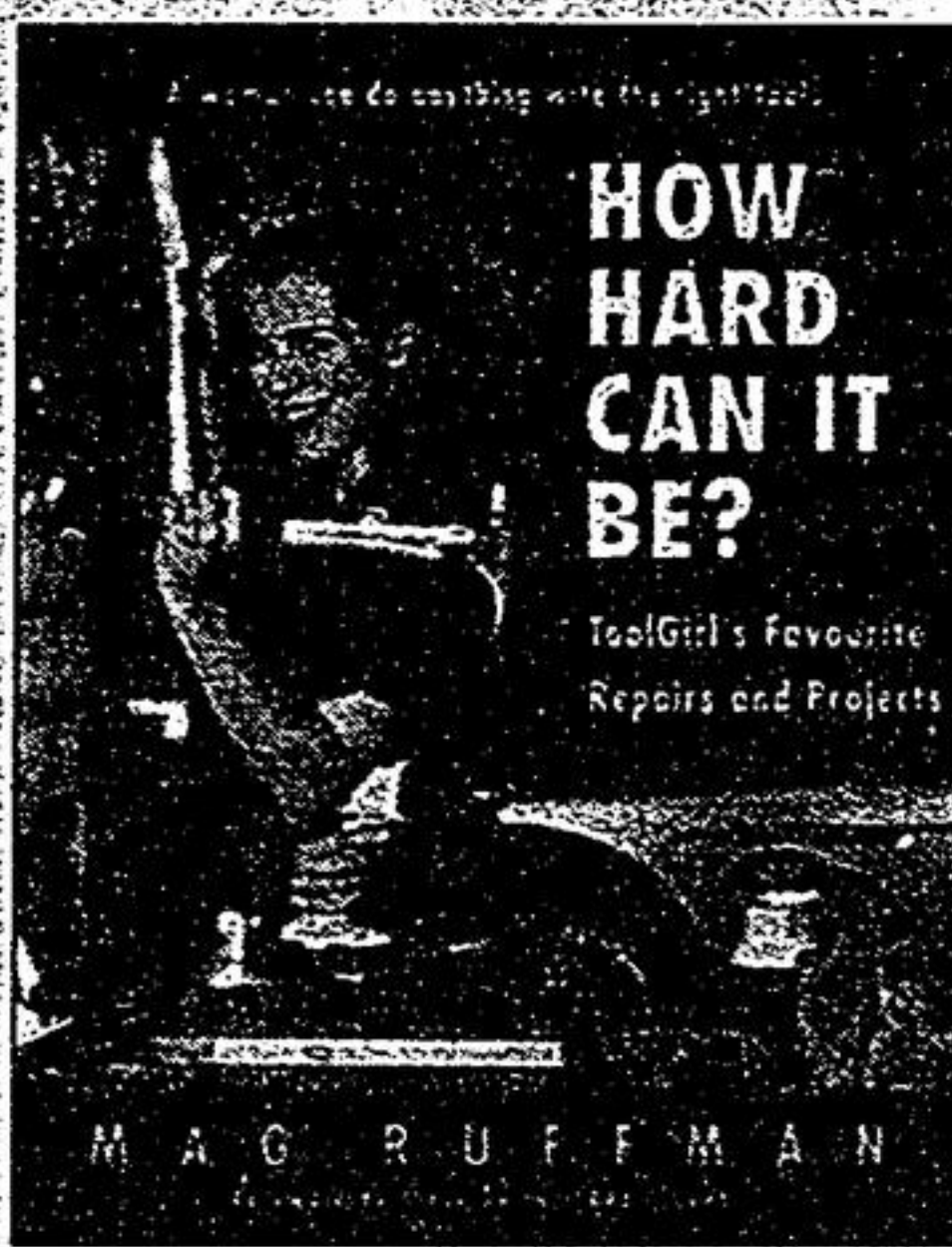
Top three power tools

- Cordless drill. Make sure it is reversible, meaning it not only drills in but can drill out to take out a screw. Make sure it runs at variable speeds rather than just on and off. "Every girl should have a drill. It's the most fun thing when you get your first drill," Ms Ruffman said.

- Sander. Make sure it has a circular plate.

- Electric jigsaw. It can be very versatile, cutting either straight or curvy. "You can use it to cut wood for a dock or make alphabet letters," she said.

- Check out <http://www.homeenvy.com/>. It's written by five independent journalists with expertise in different areas of the home, including repair, maintenance and gardening. Ms Ruffman is one of the columnists. There are articles, other links and a searchable database. Ms. Ruffman is adamant that the information is unbiased and not advertorial.



*How Hard Can It Be? ToolGirl's Favourite Repairs and Projects*, by Mag Ruffman and photographed by Daniel Hunter, is a collection of 50 ToolGirl articles offering house and home do-it-yourself repair, remodeling and renovation ideas.

# Great to see full-figured gal as romantic lead

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The family is still grappling with the loss of its father and these fun times in the park seem to be helping them live again.

Mr. Barrie also finds relief from his dissolving marriage.

His friendship with family and the inspiration it provided for him to write *Peter Pan* is at the core here, not another hashing over of the *Peter Pan* story itself. It is allegedly "inspired" by facts and I have to trust the screenwriter because I don't know much about Mr. Barrie.

The local gossips are chattering about Mr. Barrie's unconventional relationship with Mrs. Davies and her brood, a nod to modern film and TV genres, but it only lasts a moment or two.

They choose to live out their imaginative, silly and entertaining scenarios, staging shows, entering Neverland and remaining wide-eyed at the wonders of the world.

Little Peter starts to come out of his shell, when, suddenly, we are aware one person in their jolly bunch may be ill.

*Finding Neverland* is a candy-coloured, nostalgic foray into a time we never knew, when things seemed to be nicer, finer and more civilized.

It's sweetly emotional and, if you don't watch out, you'll be sitting there, tears streaming down your face.

One great moment occurs when on the opening night of *Peter Pan*, Dec. 27, 1904, Mr. Barrie fills 25 seats with



delighted orphans from a local home. The usual first-nighters aren't too pleased to have these commoners sharing their theatre, but the play brings them together in joy and celebration.

It's not particularly a children's film, as some emotional scenes are pretty intense, but older children and nearly everyone else should have a nice time watching.

So many wonderful performances, Mr. Depp, Julie Christie as Mrs. Davis' meddling mother, the astonishing little Freddie Highmore as Peter, Mr. Hoffman and Ms Winslet.

PS: It's great to see Ms Winslet, a full-figured gal, as a romantic lead.

# Husband motivates wife to do it herself

From page 32.

trical work such as replacing switches and plugs to installing shelving units, many women today are confident in their ability to update and renovate. Mr. Perkin says: "The attitude is they will take on anything."

Women are realizing the unfairness from the trade-off of having their husband install a dimmer switch while they slave over a three-course meal, Ms Ruffman says.

They're thinking, "I can put in a dimmer switch... The energy exchange is imbalanced. He'd be done, the dimmer switch in seven minutes."

To explain the increasing interest among women in home renovation, Ms Ruffman points to high divorce rates, which leave many women on their own.

She notes more than half (52 per cent) of the money spent at Home Depot is spent by women. Just two years ago, manufacturers were speaking of women as a "niche market," she says.

"It (the market) has built fast because women speak to each other," she says.

For example, they will swap strategies on the best way to install a dimmer switch while men are less likely to do this, she said, adding men are expected to know how to do this kind of task already.

At Home Depot stores, do-it-yourself workshops are offered on topics such as installing faucets and tiles or how to fix drains. The workshops are open to both genders but are mainly geared to women.

More women are also buying how-to-reno books, says Nadia Neisha, a cashier at the Hwy. 7 and Yonge Street Home Depot store in Richmond Hill.

"Women are more involved, more hands on. The 'I don't want to break a nail' attitude is over-

ancient."

Some hardware products are also changing to meet the needs of women.

"Manufacturers have started going after them (women) these last 10 or 15 years. They're realizing they are missing half of the market," Mr. Perkin says.

Black and Decker, for example, produces a five-inch trim saw that is light and handy and is mostly for women. But men have started using it, too, he says. Some drills are being made smaller.

## PINK TOOLS OFFENDED

Electric start, snowblowers and lawn mowers that turn on using a key or a button have quickly become en vogue, replacing gas-powered machines that often start by yanking a cord.

But when tools with pink handles were introduced, many women were offended so they were yanked from store shelves, Ms Ruffman says.

"It was a line of screwdrivers and hammers designed for women that may have been ahead of its time," she says.

Manufacturers are making tools that are useful for smaller hands and people with weak hand grips, she says. Some Hitachi and Black and Decker products have been designed for more dainty hands, she says.

Tom-Boy Tools, a company founded to provide tools and home improvement techniques for women, even encourage a type of upperware party where tools rather than kitchen products are sold (<http://www.tomboytools.com/>), Ms Ruffman says.

Women's interest in home renovations dates back to the Second World War, when women worked in manufacturing plants while men were away fighting as soldiers, says Mr. Perkin, who has been in the hardware busi-

ness since the 1960s.

Home renovation TV programs have also influenced women's attitudes toward renovating their homes, he adds.

As mentioned, there's Ms Ruffman. But Mr. Perkin also points to the influence of Amy Wynn Pastor, a carpenter on the popular TV show *Trading Spaces*, in which neighbours transform a room in each other's homes.

Michelle Solomon is just one of the many women following Ms Pastor's lead.

Ms Solomon, who runs a maid service in Richmond Hill and Thornhill, has installed cupboards in her bathroom, put up drywall and converted a basement powder room into a full-fledged bathroom.

"It's a good feeling. It's a really good feeling," she says.

Her inspiration for this manual labour? Her man.

"I cannot wait for a man to do it. He (my husband) says he's going to do it, but when?"

She tells the story of how a pipe in her home was dripping for four weeks until she finally fixed it herself.

Meanwhile, her husband was out fixing other people's sinks and changing other people's drywall.

Ms Ruffman has an optimistic prediction for women. She sees them expanding into higher sectors of the home renovation market.

She predicts women will start their own electrician businesses. While this is not Nadia Neisha's goal, she is determined she will one day be among the scores of women confident in their ability to use power tools. To prepare for this, the 27-year-old Markham woman has started to read how-to-reno books.

"There's even how to do your own decking, paving your own driveway," she says, her eyes opening wide. "It's amazing. Everything is at your fingertips."

Neighbourhood Employment Resource Centre

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