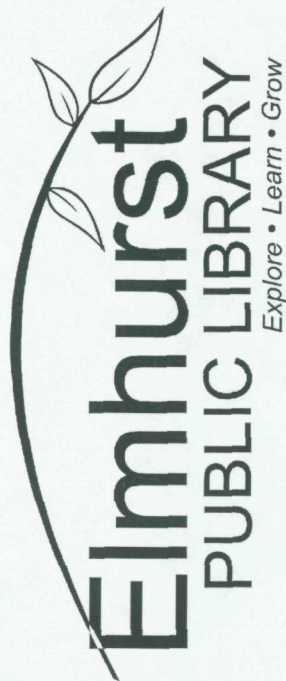


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Hamilton, Gene + Katie

Start small on household projects

By T.R. Fitchko
Dispatch Home Reporter

If you are one of the many homeowners who approach a do-it-yourself project by tearing in and ripping everything out, Gene and Katie Hamilton have some words of advice.

Start slowly and tackle a small job, something in which you can see results relatively quickly and build your confidence. Gradually progress into bigger projects.

The Hamiltons of Chicago were in Columbus last week on a promotional tour for the Minwax Co., which makes wood-finishing products.

Former schoolteachers, they began buying, restoring and selling houses in the late 1960s. As their hobby grew and they became more experienced, they became "professional do-it-yourselfers."

MRS. HAMILTON, a contributing editor to *Home* magazine, and her husband write regularly for publications such as *Family Handyman*, *Workbench*, *Family Circle* and *Mechanix Illustrated*.

They have published *Build It Together*, a book of projects for parents and children, and also are design consultants for a new *Reader's Digest* book, *101 Do-It-Yourself Projects*.

Doing it yourself, noted Mrs. Hamilton,

"is something you have to build up to. Our best advice is: 'Tackle what you can succeed at.'"

Refinishing, Mr. Hamilton said, is not only cost-saving but also can be pleasurable, provided the "start small" approach is followed. Looking at one's accomplishments provides the incentive to continue.

He urged homeowners to start with the "grunt work" that is time-consuming and costly for a professional to do.

He also recommended that couples who work together recognize each other's strengths and weaknesses when it comes to projects around the house. The work should be divided by preference as well as skill.

"BE AWARE that working together is not that easy," Mrs. Hamilton added. "There's the right way, and many ways right and left of the right way."

According to Mr. Hamilton the "whole how-to market has really changed. The do-it-yourself market is strong and steady. No matter what the economic times, people are doing work on their homes."

He said hardware stores and home centers reflect the trend by offering more help to the consumer, particularly with packaging that incorporates instructions on the box or can.

The Hamiltons also had thoughts on unfinished furniture and flea-market finds.

"Unfinished furniture should not be equated with inexpensive," Mr. Hamilton said. "You're in for a rude awakening, if you think it is. Generally, we're talking about a better grade of furniture. The wood is not masked under a finish. You know what you're getting."

MRS. HAMILTON said antique hunters need to investigate what they're buying.

"You might only pay \$15 for a piece of furniture, but then end up paying three times that much to replace the missing hardware," she said.

"If you're just starting out, it's probably best to get something that may not be great furniture but is nice-looking and will be easy to refinish. Stay away from upholstered pieces for a first project."

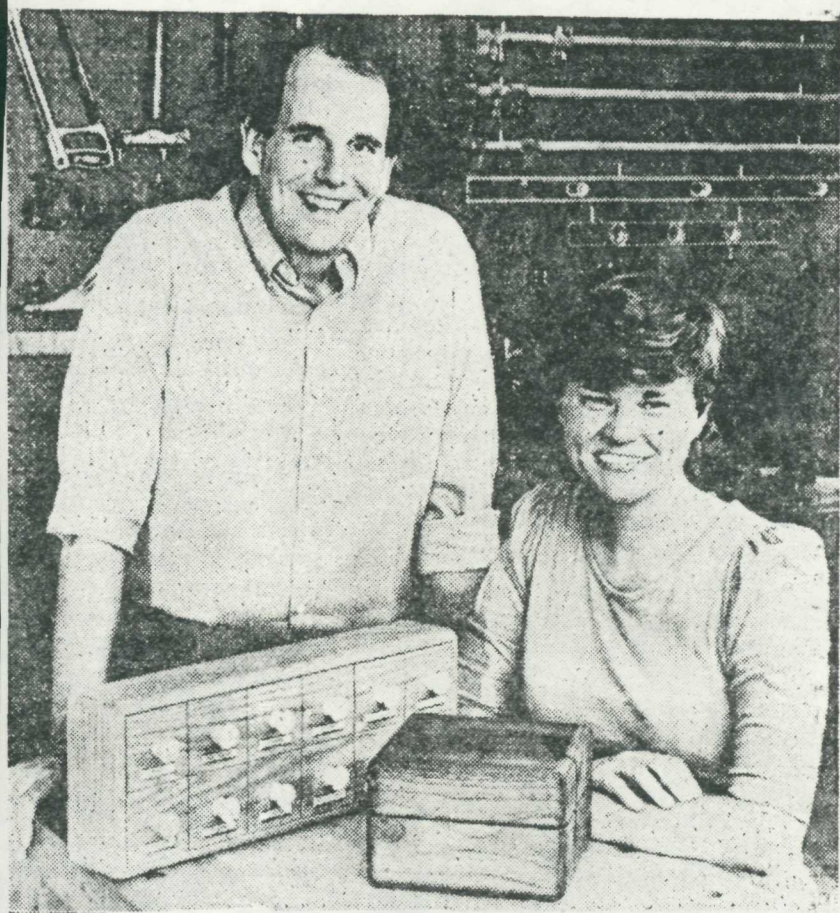
The Hamiltons also emphasized that it isn't necessary to strip everything down to the bare wood. Some old pieces were meant to be painted.

The Hamiltons offer free brochures on wood finishing, available by writing P.O. Box 300, Elmhurst, Ill. 60126.

(Cont. on next page)
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Do-it-yourselfers Gene and Katie Hamilton

Minwax photo

GENE & KATIE HAMILTON

Though it may sound like a contradiction, Gene and Katie Hamilton can best be described as "professional" do-it-yourselfers.

Katie began her career while working as a school teacher in Chicago. With her husband, Gene, she bought and restored a well-worn brick duplex. The profit the couple realized when they sold the property three years later enticed them to try it again, and again. Eventually, the Hamiltons turned this sideline into a full time do-it-yourself business.

Having survived more home repair projects in the last ten years than the average homeowner will see in a lifetime, the Hamiltons have become recognized authorities on the subject. Katie is a contributing editor to Home magazine and both Hamiltons write regularly for such publications as Family Handyman, Workbench, Family Circle, Mechanix Illustrated and Brides. They are design consultants for Reader's Digest's new book "101 Do-It-Yourself Projects."

The Hamiltons' new book, "Build It Together," will be published by Charles Scribners' Sons in spring 1984. The book is full of simple wood projects for parents to do with their children.

Gene and Katie are anxious to introduce more Americans to the pleasure and self-satisfaction that comes with doing it yourself. As do-it-yourself design consultants to Minwax Company, the leading manufacturer of wood finishing products, they're taking their message nationwide.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

BUILD IT TOGETHER, by Gene and Katie Hamilton will be published by Charles Scribner's Sons in Spring, 1984. It is a selection of the Popular Science, American Circle and The Mother Earth News Book Clubs.

The Hamiltons are a writing, photography and design team specializing in the home improvement field. They contribute to magazines such as **The Family Handyman, Mechanix Illustrated, Popular Mechanics, Better Homes & Gardens, Workbench, The Homeowner, Decorating & Craft Ideas and Family Computing.** Katie is the regional editor of **Home** magazine.

Their most recent cover photography appears in the December '83 and April '84 issues of **THE FAMILY HANDYMAN,** and the February and March '84 issues of **MECHANIX ILLUSTRATED.**

As design consultants for Reader's Digest General Books they are responsible for 20 of the projects in the book, 101 DO-IT-YOURSELF PROJECTS.

The Hamiltons produced the protography for two books: DREMEL'S BOOK OF COMPACT POWER TOOLS and A WOMAN'S GOLF GAME. Their work appears in GARAGE, ATTIC & BASEMENT STORAGE by Sunset Books and in two Consumer Digest Books, THE WHOLE BATHROOM CATALOG and DO IT YOURSELF AND SAVE MONEY.

They are partners in Cornerstone Design, a woodworking plan service specializing in contemporary designs in wood.

In their photo studio and workshop they produce publicity pictures for several manufacturers of DIY products.

The Hamiltons have experience in the media. Katie was spokesperson for General Electric's "Quick Fix" program of appliance repair and appeared on television and radio throughout the country. Together the Hamiltons represent Minwax Wood Finish Co. appearing on a nationwide media tour.

Katie is a 1969 graduate of Loyola University with a degree in Sociology and Gene graduated with a B.S.B.A. in Marketing from John Carroll University in 1966. Their expertise in the home improvement field comes from many years in the home renovation business. They are members of NAHWW, the National Assn. of Home and Workshop Writers and ASJA, the American Society of Journalists and Authors.

Hamilton, Gene + Katie

Some Do-It-Yourself Advice

By **BARBARA MAYER**
AP Newsfeatures

Gene and Katie Hamilton have tackled more home repair jobs in the past 17 years than most people would face in a lifetime.

During these years, they have refurbished 17 homes, moving into eight of them themselves.

The two Chicago-area former schoolteachers began their home renovation business as a summer activity between teaching stints. After 10 years of part-time home remodeling, they settled into a full-time career as, what they like to call, professional do-it-yourself persons.

Then, as the high cost of borrowing put a crimp in home buying, they phased out home resales and turned to

photography and writing in the do-it-yourself field.

The two regard their experiences as proof that a desire to do something different is often the first step toward success in a new endeavor.

In a recent interview in New York, where the couple were promoting some of their newest projects, they offered some thoughts on why do-it-yourself home repair and decorating projects are on the increase.

"Today, people have got to do it themselves or do without," said Gene, adding that those who try soon learn that many home projects are well within the capability of rank beginners, particularly if they start with a simple project and make use of pre-cut lumber and other ready-to-use supplies.

"Most of the problems beginning woodworkers have involve cutting wood to the right dimensions. If they relied on wood that is already the correct size, they would have less trouble," he said.

The Hamiltons have recently designed a series of easy projects making use of materials that allow parents to build with their children. The projects will be published in a book they are calling "Build It Together."

Gene has found that nowadays there are both more products and better instructions on how to use them than there were when he and his wife began doing it themselves in the late 1960s.

Mouldings, furniture finishing compounds and fastener systems are among items that can help an amateur produce good-looking furniture and other items in a home workshop.

Gene says he gets some of his design ideas for new projects by browsing in home centers and building supply outlets that cater to do-it-yourselfers.

Katie, meanwhile, has her own methods of getting the help she

needs in hardware stores.

"I look for a man who looks as if he has been working there for many years. There almost always is at least one fellow like that, and that's the one who knows what's what and can help me."

She tells the salesperson what her problem is and lets him suggest the right product to accomplish the results, she said, rather than simply asking for a standard item. That way, as new products come on the market, she finds out about them.

The spirit of enterprise which both possess is also responsible for their success as a do-it-yourself photography and writing team.

A phone call to a magazine got them their first assignment — writing about their own career as home renovators.

Katie recalled that she telephoned the editor of the magazine — "I was so green I didn't know that you weren't supposed to do that" — and briefly described their skills and experiences. The editor invited them to drop in if they were ever in the neighborhood.

"It was only 400 miles, so we got in the car, drove up there and were assigned to write a story about ourselves," she said.

The article along with a picture of the Hamiltons taken by the magazine was the cover story for "Family Handyman" six years ago, said Gene. "In December, 1983, I took the cover photo for the magazine," he said with satisfaction.

HOMES

FOR AMS AND PMS

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