

# Westchester

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## The Great Escape

In the Garage, a Man Can Do What a Man's Got to Do

By CHRISTOPHER J. COHAN

**R**OLL up my garage door. It makes the sound of a cranky old man being awakened unexpectedly from a sound sleep. There before me, in its eclectic splendor, lies my garage. A big boy's toy box. A place of infinite possibilities, reflecting years of acquisitions and years of refusal to discard even the most inconsequential items.

My garage is a wasteland of half-finished projects. It is stocked with tools galore, waiting to be called into action. Impulse purchases from the hardware store of I-just-had-to-have gadgets that are still waiting politely on a shelf to be noticed.

I enjoy waking early on the weekends, throwing up my garage door and gazing around, while pondering several different projects all at once. Without any planning, I jump right in. Part way through the first project, I realize that I have overscheduled, again. That is why garages are great fun. A guy can begin a project and then just roll down the garage door until he has time to continue.

Garages are still a bastion of male aesthetic sensibilities. They're a place where men can slam a nail into a wall without the careful oversight of a spouse. Nope, just arbitrarily

hammer a nail in and hang whatever on it. Done!

Recently, I took the initiative and repainted my garage interior. I mixed many partially filled cans of paint and slapped it on the walls. No mind-numbing analysis of paint chips in various lights to determine the exact shade, tint or custom color mix to choose. The job is done, com-



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pleted, finished. I have closure.

I hung our old kitchen cabinets in the garage, including the lazy susan, which allows me to store all sorts of totally useless stuff. I have neatly stored broken tools, leftover tile from a bathroom renovation, buffing pads from a floor polisher that we have not had for 10 years, a coal shovel and the packing boxes for my wife's college-era phonograph and

records.

To be fair, I have also used the extensive set of cabinets to store useful things like Christmas ornaments, ski boots, skates, toys and an extensive collection of functional tools. Admittedly, I have stored some things so well that I cannot find them. Nevertheless, I sleep easy knowing that I have them just the same.

In my sanctuary, I keep worn shirts and pants that my wife feels are no longer presentable. They hang, like Superman's costume, ready to go forth and do battle in the name of "Mr. Fix-It."

In my old clothes, I can while away many an hour pattering, organizing and reorganizing the contents of my garage.

Occasionally I even try to clean out the garage. I move most things out to the driveway, with the sincere intent of throwing many things away. Somehow all of it makes its way back into the garage.

My wife has found me leaning back on an old milk crate, nestled between bicycles and garden tools, dreaming about my next project. She smiles, turns and heads back to the house. The garage is mine.

When I am ready to begin a new project, I know that whatever I choose to do, I can do it without any committee review, spousal oversight or pressure of a deadline. The garage waits patiently for my return.

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