

# HOME FRONT

## FIREPLACES

by: Harry Nieuwsma

Those of you who have a fireplace probably use it. If you don't you are missing an opportunity to keep some of your paycheck from SDG&E. The climate in Ocean Beach is mild enough to enable us to heat and cool our houses without any help from the gas company. That's right, 100% of your heating and cooling bill is unnecessary, if you own a fireplace or wood stove. You may have a fireplace but haven't used it because you are unsure of its safety. That's reason enough not to use it until you check it out. You will need to borrow a flashlight and wisk broom from that guy down the street who seems to have everything (except the putty knife you borrowed and forgot to return). Then have a beer, put on your grubbies, and climb right into the fireplace. Brush the soot and dust from the back and sides so you can see the brick and mortar. You are looking for missing bricks, loose and cracked mortar. Nobody knows what goes on behind these walls so assume there are combustibles back there just waiting for an ember to shoot thru and start a fire. If the damage is serious, and you're not handy, get a qualified mason to repair it. Usually the damage is cracked bricks, loose or missing mortar, and you can fix it yourself if you can count to ten or so on your fingers, without getting mixed up. Use only fire clay to repair mortar in the fire box, which is available at block/brick yards and fireplace shops. You can stuff the mortar in with your fingers or a spoon or tuck pointer or your neighbor's finger. How you get the mud in between the cracks is not as important as what you are accomplishing and that is to hold the bricks in and seal off any crack where fire may get through.

By the way - the backwall tilts in and forms an overhang - it's really supposed to be there so don't tear it out or think that the wall is falling. The overhang forms a smoke shelf which helps the draft keep smoke out of the house. It also keeps bird droppings from landing in the fire and spoiling your mood.

Most old-time fireplaces have some sort of damper; all new ones do. The damper's function is two-fold:

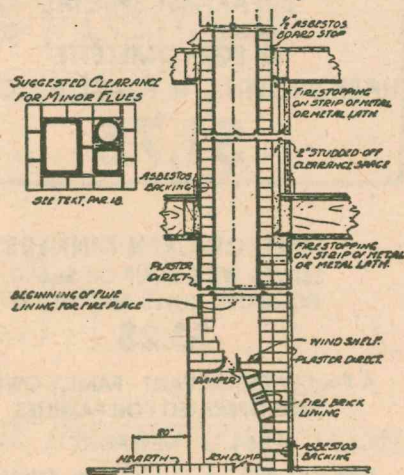
1. to remind you to open it a few minutes after you start a fire, and
2. to allow cold air to come in and warm air to escape when you forget to close it after a fire.

These dampers are quite simple - one moving part, so it should last for years. If it has not been used regularly, rust and dust may cause it to stick. Urge it a little, and get it to move back and forth so you can open it and peek up through it. (I

said you need grubbies.) Now you are looking at the flue lining. In older masonry fireplaces the chimney had a ceramic liner of many sizes and shapes: round, oval, rectangular or square. The important thing is they allowed fire to roar through them at temperatures which could melt steel. You need to check these flue liners for cracks and gaps, where fire could get through. If you can get on the roof and look down into the chimney, that would tell you a lot also. You'll need to get a mason to fix any problem here. Look for carbon deposits. If there is a build-up of carbon or soot, a good roaring wood-fire could ignite this carbon and you would have a super hot burn-out. There are ten chimney-sweep companies listed in the Yellow Pages. If you suspect your chimney needs cleaning, call one and get ready for the next heating season.

So the firebox and flue check out, now you can inspect the mortar on the outside of the chimney. Some parts may show in your attic, so crawl up there with a flashlight and poke around looking for loose mortar and bricks. Dig out loose mortar and replace with fresh. This stuff can be regular mortar which is available at O.B. Paint & Hardware for around \$3 a sixty-pound bag. Mix with water and stuff it in your chimney.

In researching this article, I found a very helpful gent named Dave Tannascoli who knows everything about fireplaces and helps Futura Energy Products keep their customers happy. Dave tells me that most of the heat circulating, pre-fabricated, free-standing and even the masonry fireplaces are not energy efficient. The same principles that keep smoke and fire out of the living space also draw great quantities of air from the living space. Approximately 350 cubic feet of air goes up the chimney each minute. The obvious solution to this problem is to close off the front of the fireplace with glass doors. In order for combustion to take place, however, you must

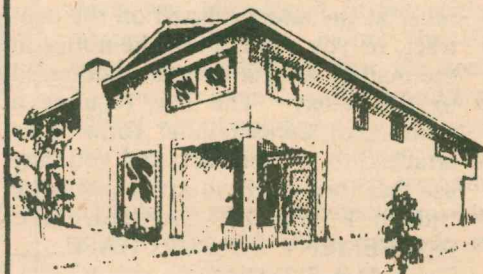


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## HAPPY FATHER'S DAY to all O.B. Dads Sunday June 20th from the staff at the Beacon



### WE ARE SELLING A LIFESTYLE



AWARD WINNING SOLAR HOUSE  
CAREFULLY PLANNED & CONSTRUCTED  
3 BEDROOM 2½ BATH, DESIGNED FOR  
SECOND UNIT OVER 3 STALL GARAGE  
DELUX AMENITIES.

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### GRAND OPENING 10¢ OFF ALL ITEMS



O'KELLY'S  
Original  
ICE CREAM

& Frozen Yogurt  
June 4-6 4967 Newport Ave.

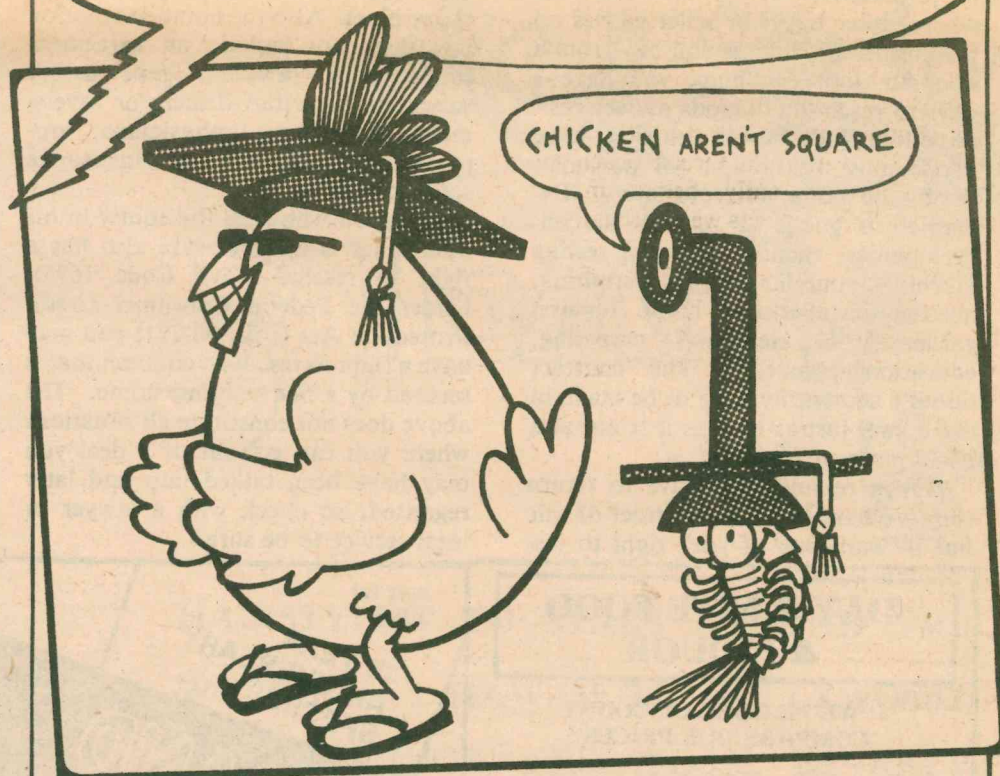
### SPECIAL FEATURE

Homemade cones Saturday, June 5.  
Come sample ye old American Cone  
and watch them being made  
PLUS yogurt samples.

### OTHER LOCATIONS

1355 N. Harbor Dr.  
2343 Midway Dr.

NOW NOW OW OW....  
WITH A DEGREE GREE REE REE IN N N N  
CHICKENOLOGY OGY OGY OGY GY GY....



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11 to 9 everyday \* 224-1270 \* and food to go

BEGINNING MAY 28TH WE'LL BE OPEN TILL 10:00