

## M R . F I X I T *on Faucets*

This column is for everyone, but especially for one of my neighbors who needs this help. I don't know who you are, but you'll recognize yourself. It's for people who get a loud rumbling noise (deep vibrating, chattering sort of noise) when they turn on a faucet. The problem is that you need a new washer on that faucet.

The original faucets at Telegraph Landing were made by American Standard, but enough have been changed over the past 33 years that I don't know what kind you have. But no problem, here's the cheap and easy way to fix it because any internals will be similar to the originals. You'll need a screwdriver, an adjustable wrench, possibly a knife, a baggie and some rags.

If you have a single-handle faucet (combined Hot & Cold), then go to the manufacturer's web site for further instructions. You need a new cartridge and they're all different. I'll be talking about separate hot and cold faucets.

A regular faucet consists of a base and a stem, held in place in the base by a nut. The stem contains a shank which screws up and down in the barrel when you turn the handle on its top. At the bottom of the shank is a black rubber washer. When the shank is screwed down so the washer presses against the bottom, no water flows. As you turn the handle, the shank rides up in the barrel and water can flow to the spigot. When the washer gets worn, it vibrates and all the pipes carry that vibration to your neighbors.

First, you have to shut off the water. Find the two oval handles on the wall under the sink. Turn them clockwise (righty-tighty) all the way off. Then it's time to disassemble the faucet. If there's an H or C set on the top, pry it up with the side of a knife under its edge and remove it. You should now see the top of the screw that holds the handle to the stem. Unscrew the screw, then wiggle the handle to loosen it and lift it off the stem.

There is probably some sort of decorative skirt surrounding the faucet base. Unscrew it and put it aside. Now you should see the business part of the faucet - the faucet base, a large nut on top of it, probably brass, and the faucet stem. Unscrew the brass nut, put it aside, and wiggle the stem free. Put some rags or old towels around the faucet base because there will be some water leakage due to residual pressure.

Put the faucet stem in a baggie and take it to Discount Builders's Supply. Go south on Van Ness one block past Mission and turn right on Plum Street (just after Tap Plastic). The parking lot for DBS is on your left. They're open every day. 1695 Mission St, (415) 621-8511

Go to the plumbing department (on the right side) and show the stem to a salesperson. They will either sell you a complete new stem or a replacement washer, depending on what you bring. Ask the salesperson if your type of faucet also should have plumber's Teflon tape or other sealant. These are not expensive and you should get the smallest size - it will last a lifetime.

If you bought a washer, install it on the stem. If it's a new stem, it has a new washer on it. If they told you to put a sealant on the stem, put a small amount on the external barrel of it. If they said use Teflon tape, it goes on the threads of the brass nut, where it screws onto the base. If your model has rubber O-rings on the barrel, check to make sure they're in their slots. If DBS sold you new O-rings, put them on.

With a twisted bit of rag, clean out the hole where the stem goes. Replace the stem, replace the brass nut, replace decorative skirt, then replace the handle and test it. You may find that you have to reorient both the stem (in its barrel) and the handle once or twice to get each in the optimal closed position. Then replace the handle screw and the H or C cap, if any. Now turn on the water underneath the sink (counterclockwise, or lefty-loosey, to open the water flow) and you have a silent faucet. Now you and your neighbors won't have to listen to your faucet anymore. And you have the enormous satisfaction of a job well done without the plumber's expense.