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## Messy Desk Makeover: Part 2

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Admittedly, Ken McGill and Elaine Jones are set in their ways.



PHOTOS BY CHRIS CHRISTEN/THE WORLD-HERALD: Cyndy Salzmann, Ken McGill and Ellen Hanks celebrate Captain Clutter's achievement in three short days.

“I probably need help,” said Ken in a World-Herald interview before organizers Ellen Hanks and Cyndy Salzmann were called in for his Messy Desk makeover.

Ken's farmhouse near Decatur, Neb., was a “Temple of Doom” until Elaine retired and offered to help Ken sort through four generations of McGill memorabilia and assorted acquisitions.

“I had nightmares about it,” Elaine recalls. “It's frustrating to me when things aren't returned to their proper place.”

The more time Ken spends at her house, the greater need she sees for boundaries.



McGill's desk before the makeover.

The World-Herald's Messy Desk contest, launched in January during National Get Organized Month, enters the scene.

### ‘LANDING ZONES’

Our organizing pros, Cyndy Salzmann and Ellen Hanks, observe that Ken struggles to get to everything he has — because it's piled instead of filed.



A drapery wall or other divider would define and refine Ken's area while concealing Elaine's storage shelving.

Ken's "landing zones" for tax documents, genealogy records, magazines, etc., make it difficult for him to find what he needs, when he needs it.

For several hours on Organizing Day 1, Ken and Elaine worked through the Great Sort and Purge, identifying items to recycle, trash, shred and donate.

Then they went shopping.

By nightfall, Ken had a headache. Elaine, proud of their progress, baked cookies.

### **THE 3 R's**

**Recommendation:** Ellen and Cyndy, who donated 12 hours of organizing help, sense that Ken needs a more inviting space for his personal time.

**Reaction:** Ken and Elaine agree. They decide on a masculine decor, since Ken spent much of his career in the construction business.

**Result:** Ken and Elaine discuss possibilities, measure spaces and draw up shopping lists. First stop for her: Walmart. For him: Menards.

**Recommendation:** Ken's desk area has great vertical space for shelving that will enable him to organize office supplies, personal interests and business documents.

**Reaction:** The couple buy a 30-inch tall, 14-inch wide black wire shelf unit for the top of Ken's desk.

**Result:** The unit costs \$69 at Walmart but if Ken considers his \$50 gift card for winning the contest, his out-of-pocket expense is only \$19.

**Recommendation:** Captain Clutter needs an open filing system. Cubbies would be ideal.

**Reaction:** Ken and Elaine buy six plastic crates as organizing bins for the four-tier wire shelf unit.

**Result:** The khaki-colored crates have an industrial feel, which fits Ken.

**Recommendation:** A large coffee table next to the studio couch would be more useful to Ken

in front of the couch.

**Reaction:** Get rid of the coffee table.

**Result:** A round lamp table from another area of the house now sits beside the couch.

**Recommendation:** Relocate two wooden ladders hanging on a wall of exposed Johns Manville insulation.

**Reaction:** Ken and Elaine like the ladders. They're staying.

**Result:** The ladders, along with a 5-gallon plastic bucket as a garbage can, are novel accessories that add to the room's character.

**Recommendation:** Ken has an extensive collection of family photos, quotes, jokes and mementos that shouldn't be kept in a drawer or a box.

**Reaction:** Elaine reaches for an unused Plexiglas poster frame. "How about using this?"

**Result:** A montage of favorites hangs above Ken's desk. Whenever he looks up, he smiles. Ken can swap out items whenever the urge hits.

**Recommendation:** A drapery wall or other divider would define and refine Ken's area while concealing Elaine's storage shelving.

**Reaction:** Elaine likes the idea of a curtain. Ken buys and installs hardware, a wooden dowel and drapery rings while Elaine crafts patio door drapery sections and fabric remnants into a handsome curtain.

**Result:** Ken has a space worthy of higher routine maintenance, and Elaine retains convenient access to her storage space. A likely bonus: Grandchildren staying overnight will fight for the room. It's that inviting.

**Recommendation:** Illuminate dark corners with a floor lamp or other light source.

**Reaction:** Ken and Elaine swapped out a fluorescent overhead light, which helped. Cyndy Salzmann further enhanced the space by stacking three books under the base of a table lamp.

**Result:** Voilà! More light.

## **THE SENSATION IT LEAVES**

"I'm relieved that the process is over," Ken tells the organizers on their second and final visit.

"We did a tremendous amount of physical work between Monday afternoon and Wednesday

morning.”

How does it feel to be organized?

“To quote a Janis Joplin song, ‘You know it's right if it makes you feel good.’”

### **MOST UNUSUAL ITEMS LOCATED**

- Six-pack of gourmet beer
- Tokens for public toilets in the Czech Republic
- Action figure from “The Incredibles.”

### **WHAT THEY SPENT**

- Four-tier shelf unit, Walmart, \$35
- Six plastic crates, \$5 each at Walmart, \$30
- 26 drapery rings, Tuesday Morning, \$10.68
- Wooden dowel and hardware, Menards, \$18
- Fluorescent light fixture, \$8

TOTAL = \$106.10

Reduced by \$50 gift card

Out-of-pocket expense: \$56.10

**Next Sunday:** Ken vows weekly “Punch Outs” to keep his space in order. But will he follow through?

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