

One small step for mankind in keeping a house in order

By Chuck Green

Special to the Tribune

Arthur Segil used to be scared to death of the IRS.

"At tax time, when the accountant called me, I'd try to find a cubby hole to hide in," said the Highland Park resident.

But it's not what it might sound like.

The problem was clutter. When the taxman knocked, Segil couldn't find his files to save, well, Uncle Sam.

Today, it's a different story.

"I just reach in and take them out," he said.

Easy as that—with a little help. To overcome the chaos, and in the name of domestic harmony, Segil

contacted a professional organizer to help make sense of the balance sheet that was his life. However, he concedes that whipping his possessions into shape, much less turning to a professional organizer, went against his true nature.

"I'm a born pack rat. I think all these things are terribly significant to—God knows whom? Certainly not history," he said with a laugh.

Segil's clutter isn't exactly history; he requires occasional repeat visits from his professional organizer. But his wife, Hush, remembers what things used to be like at home and appreciates the progress her husband has made.

"I think he was worried he'd

die under a pile. It was everywhere: his drawers in the bedroom, under the beds, the closets. We're having [the organizer] come again, because somehow, he can't control himself."

But at least he tries.

Jim O'Connor, a professional organizer and the only male member of the Chicago chapter of the National Association of Professional Organizers, recently completed a declutter project for a woman—unbeknownst to her husband.

"I spent over 30 hours over a four-day period. And her husband didn't know I was in the house. She told him, but she put everything we accomplished in writing, because husbands come

home and see everything is orderly, and they say, 'what was the big deal?'" he said.

It is a big deal in the home of Carmen and Tammie Trombetta of Wheaton.

How big a deal?

"Can a Dumpster come?" asked Tammie.

Her husband, though, uses memories as the motive for what he's accumulated, which includes his high school essays.

"He tells me, 'Do you know how long I've had this?'" said Tammie, who said she has largely waved the white flag. "I've given up. I just try to steer clear of the area. I don't think he even notices

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