ceramic boards, we were told, would last nearly forever. The melamine, on the other hand, could wear out over time and may stain if words or symbols from the markers were left on the board for an extended period of time. I felt that a 4' by 8' ceramic would be the best way to go, but at $350.00 there was no way I could look Boots in the eye when he returned from his vacation and say, "Guess what we chopped from the budget to afford this little beauty?" A prudent assistant, after all, does have limits.

Dave and I were about ready to give up on the idea because of the cost until I wandered through the local lumber yard one day. There, among the various sheets of paneling and wallboard, was a white 4' by 8' sheet labeled "melamine". The price? $6.99. Now there was a price we could live with.

The next day, I told Dave of my discovery. He immediately went down to the nearest office supply store and purchased a four color pack of the erasable marking pens. He then proceeded to the lumber yard to do a little test marking on the melamine board that I had seen. Once satisfied that the markers would show up well and erase easily, Dave bought the melamine sheet along with a 4' by 8' sheet of 1/2" plywood and a can of panel adhesive. He then glued the plywood to the back of the melamine sheet for strength and rigidity. After that, he drilled eight holes along the perimeter of the board and bolted the entire unit to the interior wall of our shop. For about $35.00 and a couple of hours of labor, we made one of the best improvements to our maintenance program since we offered our stimpmeter in a sacrificial meltdown.

Once installed, there are a number of uses for the whiteboard. Illustrations of all sorts can be made to help give directions or instructions to staff members. Daily task assignments can be written in numerical order of priority and then erased upon completion. John Harris (another proponent of whiteboards) suggests listing upcoming and ongoing projects in one special area. Because of the large size of our board, we can list phone messages, equipment problems, parts lists, special events, rainfall amounts, and still have room for the occasional graffiti. Imagination is the only limit to the successful use of the whiteboard.