

A Good Start

*"All the snow has turned to water
Christmas days have come and gone
Broken toys and faded colors
Are all that's left to linger on"*

- *Souvenirs*, John Prine

I love that the holidays are over.

For me, it's a catharsis. As when I empty the garbage then put fresh trash bags in the containers, or clean out the refrigerator and dispose of the outdated food, I just feel better. Fresh start, clear mind, clear heart, clear vision. January 2, the official end of the holidays, is a special time of year when I finally find time to complete tasks that I've postponed ever since the holidays started last February.

First up, closet cleaning. Time to evaluate every article of apparel that I own, cull the herd, open up valuable closet space, and donate items that missed the cut to charity. A bittersweet chore. Bitter because I must part with old friends who have served me well. Sweet because I know that somewhere, some homeless dude is going to be very happy to acquire these new-to-him treasures. This year was particularly painful. Among the items culled included a green, bleached out, peace-sign t-shirt; a pair of superman socks that were torn at the heel; and beat-up boots that I had worn, and worn out, walking around Europe in 2015. The loss that hurt the most was a medium size, "Spirits of St. Louis" freebie t-shirt that I had acquired after attending an ABA basketball game with my brother in 1976. The shirt had not fit since 1983 so it had to go. Like the peace-sign t-shirt, the superman socks and the old boots, the ABA shirt was no longer capable of doing its job. Space in my closet must be earned. But I'm not ashamed to admit I cried a bit when I tossed that shirt into the charity bag. Lost youth, as it were.

The next task were some minor house repairs. I needed to fix a bed post in the guest room that had wobbled since 2021, replace a light bulb in the pantry that flickered out in June, and install an organizer in the garage for our mops, brooms and rakes. As a man whom knows his limitations regards home repair, I knew that these projects were probably above my pay grade. Completing these projects would include multiple trips to the hardware store, time spent watching U-Tube videos for instruction, and administering first aid to myself when I got hurt. However, I felt that I was a good enough handyman to fix these issues in about two hours.

In hindsight, perhaps I was a bit delusional. Mistakes were made.

I bought the wrong hardware for the bed post repair. The screw I purchased didn't work and my wife was not satisfied with my job of securing the post with gorilla tape. So on the second trip to the hardware store I decided to ask a real handyman what I needed. Turns out I needed a wood dowel pin. Who would have thought? And what the hell is a dowel pin? But I installed the dowel pin without incident and the bed post wobbles a lot less than previously. Success!

Buoyed with confidence after my successful bed post repair, I next tackled the arduous chore of replacing the burned out bulb in the ceiling of the pantry. The job seemed simple, but an error was made in pre-task planning. I overlooked that in order to change the bulb it would be necessary to move an eight foot ladder into the pantry which has, it turns out, only a seven foot opening. So while wedging the eight foot ladder through the seven foot door, I cut my hand, bloodying the door, the floor and myself. Not finding a proper bandage, I wrapped my hand with a paper towel and proceeded to Walgreen's for bandaids. In that process more blood was spilt in the garage and car. But, in the end, light was restored to the pantry. I was two for two!

After my injury and sub-sequential loss of blood, I decided not to push my luck and postponed installing the garage organizer until January 2025. The mops, brooms and rakes are not hurting anything leaned up against a wall.

So, only three days after starting the two hour project, two of the three repairs to the house were complete. Sure there had been a lot of cursing and a semi-minor injury. Yes, the bed post still wobbles a bit, and the light provided by the new pantry bulb is not as bright as before. But in my mind the house repair mission was accomplished. I was proud of myself.

Having completed the difficult chores, it was now time to tackle my favorite January job, collecting the loose change from my car. Ever since I had my first car, a 1969 Blue Chevy Nova, I have made a habit of tossing any loose change from the day into my car counsel. I don't spend it, I just watch it pile up, and look forward to cashing in after the first of the year. I then buy myself a nice luxury item with the proceeds, something that I would never purchase with hard-earned money. Collecting and cashing in this change always makes me feel financially responsible, kind of like Warren Buffett. It's rewarding knowing my saving habits mirror his. This year, I had \$46.11 in coins. Not a personal record (\$76.93 in 1996), but enough to buy myself a dozen Titleist pro-V1's. These bougie golf balls will surely help my golf game back into the 80's again, a New Year's resolution of mine, so, as they say, I killed two birds with one stone.

Sure, some would argue that I'm too easily satisfied with myself. That I make too big a deal of cleaning a closet. That I'm only a fair to middling handyman with a half-ass savings program. That I have accomplished nothing.

But I have no time for the haters, I'm feeling fine! A good start to 2024.

I can't wait until next January.

That's all I'm sayin'

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