

Matching thumbnails

Did you ever do something that reminded you of something else?

Monday morning was one of those rare moments for me.

There's a wall clock in the kitchen at home. It chimes on the hour and half hour, and has been there for some time now.

It's a '30 day clock', meaning it must be wound once a month—and Monday morning was winding day, 'cuz it had stopped.

As I stood with the glass door open, winding the timepiece and the chime mechanism, I experienced that moment I spoke of.

I thought of my long departed grandfather. You see, the location of the present wall clock is the exact same place a much older clock once hung.

For all I know, it might very well be hanging from the same nail.

The original clock pre-dates me, but I recall my dad explaining how it was somewhat decorative and was green in colour.

(That's a family joke— apparently my grandmother was quite fond of the colour green, and at some point in time, she painted pretty much everything in the house some shade of green.)

Dad maintained that had my grandfather stood in one place too long he probably would have ended up being green in colour too.

So the green clock hung in the kitchen.

And it was an ornery old clock.

You see, the winding mechanism was quite worn from years of use. Apparently, when winding it, especially at that point where the spring was wound up really tight— well, it would let go.

And when it let go, it spun the key around and generally clipped the thumbnail of whoever was winding it.

My grandfather, being the inquisitive sort, took the clock apart on several occasions, to see if he could file the little sprockets to make it stop 'letting go.'

In spite of several tries, it never helped.

There was one particular time that

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my dad used to laugh about, when my grandfather wound the clock.

It let go, and spun the key around, nailing his thumbnail— bigtime.

His thumbnail was almost knocked off, and he had to wrap his bleeding thumb in cloth. He then took a precaution, donning a heavy leather glove, to protect his 'wounded' thumb against the clock letting go again.

Feeling quite confident, he resumed winding the clock with his right hand, safely protected by the heavy leather.

Only one problem— winding a clock with one's arm up in the air can be tiring.

Halfway through, he changed hands.

Yup, you guessed it.

The clock let go— and he instantly had matching thumbnails.

Apparently, the resulting cloud of profanity he wove that day hung over the northern parts of Esquesing Township for quite some time. It was only topped by the one he created when he slammed the car door on his fingers while on Main St., Georgetown.

(Apparently, the Main St. episode was so intense it caused my grandmother to act like she didn't know him for a several minutes.)

As I wound the clock Monday morning, I found my hand got tired after winding the timepiece side. I then changed hands.

And as I started winding the clock with my left hand, I was certain I heard a voice, somewhere, *waaaaay* off in the distance.

I swear I heard the words, "watch your \$%^%\$# thumb..."

—Ted Brown can be reached at tbrown@independentfreepress.com

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