

Ten feet up is nothing...

This past weekend, I decided we had to be prepared for the onslaught of winter.

And part of being prepared is to get the buildings in shape.

When The Sidekick said to me "What are we doing this weekend?" I said we're doing eaves troughs.

Now she's pretty good when I suggest cleaning the eaves troughs. She doesn't complain, or find another place she has to be.

But I do know it's not really her favourite job.

You see, cleaning the gunky rotten leaves out of the gutters isn't one of those jobs that we can tackle like my urban counterparts.

We don't have the water pressure to blow the crap out of them with a garden hose.

And trying to do it with the pressure washer isn't the most convenient way either, as we have only a few outdoor electrical outlets. Besides, it's a long way around the old farm house, and the ground is quite uneven.

So when it comes to cleaning out the eaves troughs, I use the best tool known to a farmer.

The front-end loader.

Yup, maintaining my 'mantra in life' where, whenever possible, I will always use hydraulics rather than muscle power, the front-end loader is the tool of choice.

And guess who has the fun of sitting in the loader bucket to be lifted up to eaves trough level?

You guessed it, The Sidekick.

You see, I can't do it—I have to be on the tractor to operate the loader.

And I don't think Hamish the dog, intelligent as he is, would be able to scrape the gunk out of the gutters, and toss it in the loader bucket.

Besides, he'd get his paws all dirty.

I would go up in the bucket to do the job, but The Sidekick isn't really too sure of herself when it comes to operating the Massey Ferguson tractor. If it were the International, she might give it a shot.

And she claims she doesn't wanna kill me with a slip of the hydraulic lever—but some days she might dispute that.

Ted Brown



So she does it willingly, in spite of the fact it's a crappy job.

Before we did the job this year, The Sidekick was chatting with my youngest daughter. In the past, she's also been my in-the-loader-eaves-trough-cleaner-outer.

They compared notes— grossness of the gunk, how cold their fingers got, how safe they felt with me operating the loader... Okay, I might have imagined that one.

That day, The Sidekick climbed into the bucket and I slowly raised it up. Although she never says anything, I can see the white knuckles showing through the rubber gloves that she wears. And she really shouldn't grit her teeth so much.

The front of the house isn't too bad, level, and about 10 feet off the ground.

Ten feet up is nothing.

But there is one section that is closer to 16 feet off the ground.

In spite of the fact the loader 'almost' reaches that gutter, The Sidekick tends to be a little shakier at that height.

I will say, with white knuckles and quivering knees, the little trouper tackled those eaves troughs and the rain water is now running out the downspouts like a good thing.

As I dumped the loader bucket with the black gunk in it, and she was wringing out her wet jacket sleeve, she commented how nice it was to have that job done.

I agreed and told her it was great having clean eaves troughs— makes the next job in November that much easier.

You know, putting up the Christmas lights.

—Ted Brown can be reached at tbrown@theifp.ca

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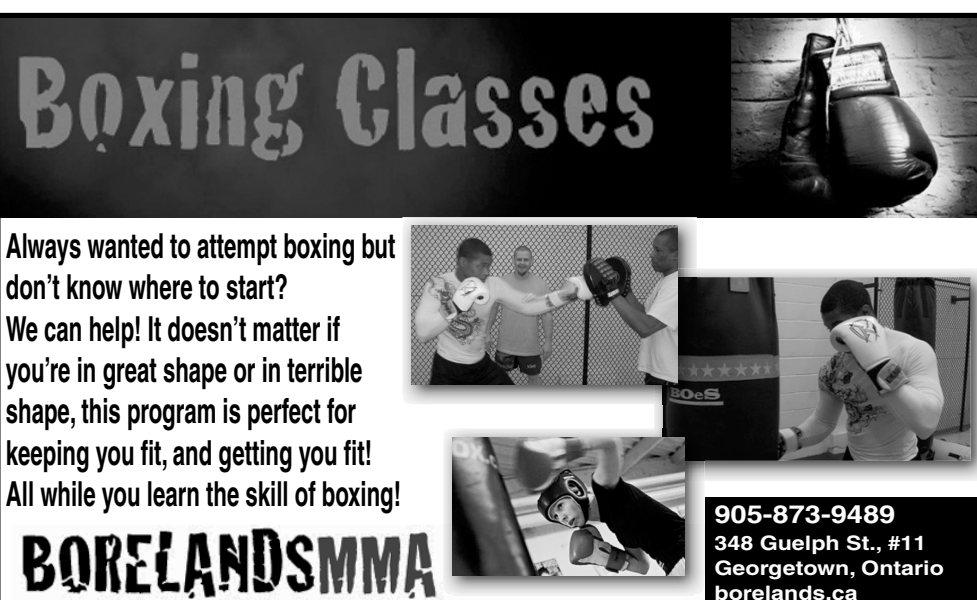
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