



From Where I Live

Bruce Stapley

I don't do 'handy' anymore

One skinned knee, a near-sprained foot, and countless hours later, I have a whole new respect for carpenters.

You'd think a guy who once built custom pine furniture for a living would be able to tackle a three and a half by seven foot closet. After all, there's really not much to it. Draw up a plan, order your materials, and get up early on a Saturday morning and get the job done.

Gerry Ratchiff and the boys down at Schell Lumber in Stouffville were more than helpful. In fact, it must have looked like a take for one of those "yes you can" building centre TV commercials as they politely and patiently led me through the steps. Which type of bifold door to use, how big to make the opening, the different sizes of nails and screws to use for the studs, the door frame, the dry wall, etc.

I checked and rechecked the plan I had scratched out on a page in my steno pad. After correcting some measurements and making a few preparations, I finally started to work.

About an hour or so into the job, I leaned over from my position on the step ladder to reach for a two by four which was destined to become part of the outside wall frame. But the stud eluded my grasp, and began what seemed like an interminable slide down the side of the wall towards the brand new French door I had painstakingly installed two days earlier as a preamble to beginning the closet.

My desperation lunge to intercept what seemed surely to be a glass-shattering disaster resulted in the upsetting of the step ladder. I began to tumble floorwards. The two by four, miraculously, somehow managed to engage the door without coming in contact with any of its 15 inviting mini-windows. In fact, it ended up skidding innocently to the ground.

The same couldn't be said for me. Undaunted, I arose to hammer again. Things went relatively smoothly, though my progress was greatly hampered by the frequent distractions of every day household duties. My workday ended somewhat abruptly when my mother-in-law arrived at the door with her 91-year-old mother, a full 15 minutes earlier than planned, for a Chanukkah celebration. So much for my one day wonder!

Over the next few days, I managed to put in a half hour here and an hour at night there. But my truly spectacular pratfall was saved for Monday evening.

I was perched on the arm of the loveseat. Like a tight rope walker, I shifted my feet to prepare for a descent. But my left foot suddenly slipped, causing a sudden, and unnatural twist.

And now, a full week and a half after starting out on this zippy little task, I'm still not finished.

The next time I feel overcome by the urge to prove my worth as a home handy man, I'm going to go into debt and hire a contractor.

After all, I bet the guys who build homes for Greenpark don't try to write columns in their spare time.

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