

Is That All There Is?

Peggy Lee crooned that song many years ago. She seemed to be saying that she never got true satisfaction from any of her accomplishments, even love. I guess I have fallen into that Peggy Lee-driven ITATI Syndrome category myself...and it has to do with the fact that Ruth and I just finished staining our home...all by ourselves. It took over 195 hours and parts of nearly every week all summer.

When I wasn't playing golf or gardening, or when Ruth was not taking care of someone....her mother, sister or one of the grandchildren...we got on our "staining clothes" and got up on a ladder. Besides the weekly progress on our project, we were able to solve the Middle East conflict, the Iraqi War, what to do about North Korea, and to discuss the children and grandchildren. We had a mild amount of fun working together (Better than helping someone move, but not as much fun as going to Europe). Well, now the project is finished!

I came up with this great idea to stain the house as a way to give our grandson, Andrew, 18, a summer job to earn some money before going to Bowling Green State University this fall. Although it had only been seven years since we last stained our house, This would be a way to get Andrew a job and us be able to get a needed job finished several years early. I bought the stain (10 gallons, the first order) several days before he was to graduate from Firestone High School. My plan was to give him a week off and then get started with this rather daunting task. Several days after he graduated,

he found a part-time job for 20 hours each week. This was going to be perfect...20 hours for an employer and 10-12 staining for us each week. It turns out that Andrew is too good as an employee! After working on his part-time job three days, the boss offered him a full time job (40 hours/week) and the same day he was offered an 8 hour/week lawn/maintenance job on Saturdays. "Grandpa, I'm going to be too busy to help with the staining" ended my dream of working with my grandson all summer!

He probably suspected (correctly) he would be spending the summer on a ladder while I did window sills and opted for the 4:00am – 1:00pm daily job and the 8:00 – 5:00 Saturday outdoor riding-a-mower job. Andrew will go far if he keeps making decisions like that!

I now had 10 gallons of Cabot stain awaiting a brush! We would pick a day of the week when it was to be dry and we didn't have golf or other commitments. With the rainy summer we had, it was a good plan as there was hardly a week when it didn't rain at least one day. (It only rained out one day of golf however!)

The 10 gallons turned into 19 gallons...and Ruth started to dread it when I would say, "What are we going to do today?" In fact, she started to commence each day with, "Well, today I'm going to..." before I had a chance to mention staining. Friends started to avoid me, thinking I might ask them to help. I didn't see my children all summer! The cat didn't rub my leg wanting food! Solicitors stopped coming to the house. Staining is a lonely job!

Well, in the end, Connor, 12, stained deck spindles for a day; Jeff, our oldest, did a day's worth of high work; and Ruth, nearly as old as me, bailed me out day after day. We even managed to solve some of the country's economic issues.

The house is finished, friends have started to come around again, the cat sits in my brand new chair and Ruth is being more social in the mornings. I thought finishing the house would bring feelings of deep satisfaction from completing a job well done...after all; there was that \$12K estimate.

But I feel just the same...confident, happy, loving life...nothing has gotten any better! Is that all there is? I think I'm suffering a Post-Staining Depression (PSD). And yet, there is a ray of hope...I am needed...I do have a purpose...the leaves are about to fall...and need to be raked. I'm starting to feel worthwhile. I'll be whole again.

September, 2003