

## Distribution of labor

10May2021

I've sunk me a few fence posts in my time (he says, with a yank 'n sniff with a half twist and a hawk-tooney). But my days with pick and shovel and tamping bar are long gone. Which gave me pause as I listened to Mary arranging for a contractor to install the backyard fence at our new house. I mean, letting others do the work that is so intertwined with my identity as a *real man*... What would this mean?

I've long taken great pride in the types of things for which we've never paid a contractor. And I still do some of those things. I'll shim a door (okay, eventually; that one's still waiting), wire an outlet or install cabinets, stuff like that. But I admit my pride took a hit along with my range of motion when I fell off the ladder. I can't do pick and shovel work anymore, even if Mary would allow it. Which, she will not. So as the time approached for the crew to show up and start digging holes and sinking posts, I wondered how I would feel, watching younger men doing 'my' work.

Turns out, I feel just fine. Watching their progress through the second story window of my workspace is just dandy, as it happens.

Along the same lines, a young couple (okay, young to us) is helping Mary with the landscaping of our new backyard, which starts as basically a quarter acre of weeds surrounded by the afore-mentioned fence. As with the fence installation, it feels funny to let them do 'our/my' chores and I feel guilty paying someone else to do what I feel like I should do for myself.

On the other hand, a few hours of rototilling the other day was rewarded with two days of back pain so I have to be smarter.

I remember when Mary and I were first married and putting in a yard in a new house in the near-desert conditions of a Fresno summer. I cut and scraped soil to lay patio and walkways totaling 7,500 bricks, one hand-on-brick at a time. And while I dug trenches for irrigation and levelled the ground for the patio, Mary scooped out the dirt and carried it away. In August. In Fresno. And the woman was eight months pregnant at the time.

Flip side – this couple is willing to do labor for money. I don't know them well or at all, really, except that they are eager, hard workers. And there were times in my life when I gladly performed manual labor to keep body and soul together.

The world is in balance, even if the distribution of labor sometimes makes me uncomfortable. Seems to me I'm going to enjoy this whole 'be smart and let someone else do the work' thing.