

## **OLDER PEOPLE FIND EXHILARATION IN THE MOST ORDINARY ACTIVITIES**

**10/19/99**

You have heard me say many times that it's hard to come up with a topic every week. Well, not this week. This is not the column I had intended I am sorry to say. Something happened the week before this that takes precedence.

As desperate as I am for topics I would do most anything to avoid this one. It's not pretty for me, but I would be in a lot more hot water if I ducked this one. As one guy put it, "You have to be able to take it if you dish it out."

Everyone has heard me complain about the vicissitudes of growing old, It seems lately I can do nothing right. The simplest tasks I once did offhand are now nearly impossible. I know exactly what I want to and how to do it, but my body and mind do not seem to be able to cooperate. I do not know why I try.

My mind is constantly accepting assignments my body can't perform. I have expressed concern to others that I am afraid I will hurt someone or myself. The episode I am about to unfold proves it.

I charged out of the house the other morning all fired up to wind up affairs around the house so I could spend as much time hunting as possible. We have some trees around our house and my mother-in-law's that have been plaguing me for some time, so I decided now was the time to go at them. I have had some experience and luck in the past at such a venture and could see no reason it would be a problem now.

I was very methodical about loading all my equipment in the truck and approaching the first victim quite eagerly. If I had any sense my brain would have told me to quit right then because I was tired out from loading the tools.

Three of the trees were leaning out toward the electrical entrance line leading to our house. The butts were showing decay and some dead limbs were evident in the tops. I placed a steel cable 15 feet or so up the trunks with a ladder. A snatch block pulley was placed around the butt of a sturdy tree in the direction I wanted to fall the trees. The cable was passed through the pulley and on to the bumper hitch on the truck. The trees were notched by the book and as I made the back-cuts

my helpmate gradually put tension on the cable and guided them over. We repeated the process on four others at my mother-in-law's.

By the time we finished it was after 5pm and my body was feeling the effects. It's just too bad my mind didn't realize it, too, was distressed. We had one more to go and it looked like a piece of cake after the last seven.

I started my back-cut and Baby started pulling. I had the back-cut nearly through when we found out the rear of the truck wheels were spinning and unable to pull the tree over. There it teetered with every gust of wind. Suddenly panic set in and I realized we were in real trouble - my wife was, at least.

She exited the truck and was a safe distance away in a flash. My son-in-law, Jim Williams, arrived on the scene at that exact moment and beat it back to his home for a rope and come-along. We got it up as far as we dared and put some tension on it in the other direction. The rope was not strong enough to put more pressure on, so Jim returned for a chain. We had no more than gotten the chain fastened when over she came.

It crashed squarely across the box on my new (3,500 miles) truck.

After the dust settled and I had time to consider the possible implications of the situation, I realized just how lucky we were. There is no need to explore the myriad reasons of what went wrong. The bottom line is, there is no way I can blame anything or anybody but myself for what went wrong. I plan to leave the stump sticking up in the air as a monument to stupidity.