

Noah and the Feed Room

By

Bill “The Book” Richardson

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Have you ever noticed how as your life goes on, you discover that there is less and less purpose to it? When you are young and stupid, you think the world revolves around you, but as you get older and no less stupid, you start to discover that regardless of who you are and what you have done, the world will keep spinning with or without you. There are other nagging realizations that tend to bubble up as we get older. One of them is the buildup of “unfinished projects.” I don’t know about you but my project completion rate tends to go down every year. These unfinished projects have to be stored somewhere, and as I am short on storage rooms all of the projects tend to end up in my feed room.

It is 10:30 a.m. and guess what? I am sitting here all alone while my wife is doing what she does best -- shop. She is probably still trying to calm down from the events of the morning. Yes, it is early, but we have already managed to have events.

Seems that one of my unfinished projects happens to be a room, which when finished is supposed to be a master bathroom. When I was younger and still attempting to conquer the world, I personally doubled the size of our house, and I think I did a pretty good job of finishing this project, less this one room of course. True, this may have been the one room that my wife was interested in when I started the project; however, I think she is overlooking the fact that I was saving the best for last, and how was I supposed to know that I was going to get old so quickly?

Anyway, as good fortune would have it, while I haven’t finished this room, we now have a 12x12 foot feed room right in our house. I would recommend every house have one! They are fantastic on those cold winter mornings when the mercury dips down into the low 60s as it often does here in Tucson. I can just walk right in and get my feed without even leaving the house. It is very convenient because, as we have discussed in the past, it is located near my little health food center in the kitchen.

Sure there are small inconveniences, like the time I got that feed sack filled with weevils and they got into our closets and ate holes in my wife’s clothes, but these things need to be overlooked for the common good. It is easy for my wife to stand at the door of my feed room and make subtle observations like, “That looks like hell.” But I know that even though she may not show it, an indoor feed room is far more important than another bathroom.

Getting up early this morning, I went and got myself an “ice mocha,” nothing special, just the usual. Then I was off to the feed store to buy 10 sacks of feed. It didn’t take long, so I was home rather quickly. I have already made three mistakes and it is only 9:00 a.m.

First, I have no real place to put 10 sacks of feed; second, my teenage helper is still in bed, probably with visions of wild teenage girls dancing through his head; and third, while getting the coffee, I forgot to get one for my wife. Let me set the stage for you. The truck is at the front of the house near the dead tree with the limbs missing on one side -- I think we discussed that episode in the last article -- and the feed room is at the back of the house where the bathroom was supposed to be. Unfortunately for me, our bedroom is just on the other side of the wall from the feed room. There, are you happy? The stage is set.

Of course, at this point I hadn't realized any of my mistakes other than already knowing that my son wouldn't be much help until after 11:00 a.m. However, I did get the clever notion that if I was real quiet, my wife would never find out about all of the pigeon food I had just bought. In fact, the more I thought about it, the more I realized my good fortune -- with any luck, I could be in and out and she wouldn't know the difference.

Have you ever noticed how difficult it is to keep a feed room clean? You hate to throw away the old feed sacks because they might come in handy someday. However, considering my recent project history, one empty feed sack could last out the time I have left if I play it right. Then there are the shipping boxes; they have to go somewhere and the feed room is as good a place as any. Then there are the food barrels, and no feed room is complete without three open bags of grit that I didn't like. As grit is heavy, there it sits. Also, as I mentioned earlier, the feed room is a good place to store plywood and a bunch of other things related to those previously unfinished projects.

Part of the reason I haven't cut down the old dead tree with branches missing on one side is that if I didn't happen to finish the job by taking it to the dump, I might be forced to declare it an "unfinished project" and therefore have to store the old dead tree in the feed room. Again, as the feed room is 12x12 and the tree is around 14 feet tall, it would have to go diagonally into the feed room and, since I have a backlog of "unfinished projects," it might have to be stored there for a couple of years. Given this set of circumstances, it is probably best to leave it in its current upright storage position in the front yard. I still think it will eventually take care of itself; after all, so far it has been hit by lightning and my wife (while driving my truck). Who says lightning doesn't strike twice?

There is an old steno chair in the corner of the feed room and, as that is the only flat surface available, I started stacking the feed sacks there. I got about five sacks high and began to realize that it was getting a little unstable. As I still had five more sacks, I looked in the feed barrel, and there was room for at least two sacks there. However, now I couldn't find my utility knife to cut the sacks open. With some effort, I could have just ripped the top off the sacks, but no project is complete unless you spend 30 minutes looking for a tool.

I happened to remember that the night before I had been packaging something for my friend Steen Haagh in Denmark, and I had used the knife then, so I replaced the lid on the feed barrel and went and found it. When I got back I lifted the lid, but looking around, realized that there was no place to put it. To make things more difficult, the lid had a

couple of things sitting on top of it, so I wanted to keep it level. On top of my second feed barrel, I have a five-gallon bucket filled with flax. In the third barrel, I store a sack of safflower. There was room on the top of that barrel, but I needed the safflower from within to mix into the feed in the first barrel.

I took the lid from the first barrel and placed it on top of the flax seed bucket which was sitting on the second barrel. Then I walked around it to the third barrel and placed its lid on top of the lid from the first barrel to form a six-foot tower of worship to the GOD OF PIGEON FEED. I was really quite pleased with myself because I thought I would get this project done without having to do any cleaning up. I am an adult (in fact, my wife calls me “a dolt” all the time) and I should know better than to think things are going to go easily.

I have previous experience in this whole tower building thing. When I was about eight years old my dad cut up a bunch of old pallets to make hundreds of building blocks for me to play with. One day, I built a tower that went clear to the ceiling. I brought him into the room to show it to him, and he was quite impressed. Then I said, “Watch this!” I was going to knock it down by throwing one of my blocks at it; however, as things go, I missed and the blocks flew in slow motion right through my bedroom window. All I could think to say was, “Did you still want to see me knock it down?” I don’t know what windows were worth back then, but I can tell you that apparently this one was worth a weekend of hard labor in the backyard.

I was pulling the sack of safflower out of the third barrel, when the edge of the sack happened to catch the bottom of the lids that were precariously stacked on top of the bucket which was sitting on top of the second feed barrel. This of course started them sliding. Unfortunately, lids have edges and during this slide process, the edge of the lid caught the top of the underlying bucket that was filled with flax.

I saw this happening and turned to grab it. As I was doing so, my foot hit the cross-member under the steno chair causing the sacks of feed to fall over. I was attempting to turn back to the sacks of feed when the top sack caught on a piece of plywood from one of my many “unfinished projects” and the sack ripped open. It was about this time that all of the lids and the flax bucket hit the floor with a reverberating clang, and flax from the bucket was flying all over everything. Of course the five sacks of feed couldn’t just fall; they had to take out three shipping boxes on the way down. One of the bags hit the corner of one of the boxes and it tore open as well.

It was about this time that I heard an inspirational booming voice coming either from the heavens or the other side of the wall; at first I wasn’t sure which. Yes, sleeping beauty was now wide awake and spinning up like a Tasmanian devil. My first instinct was to run, but my shoes were now filled with grain, and the yelling was now rapidly getting closer.

My survival instincts were now kicking in, and it is funny what can pop into your mind during times of panic. For some reason, I thought of Vlade Divac (from the NBA

Sacramento Kings), and his stupid little pratfalls came rushing into my mind. Flop down and fake an injury; that is what he would do. There was no time, so I grabbed a shin which gave me the opportunity to look at the floor during the difficult time. It was then that my wife came rushing around the corner and stopped dead in the doorway of my beloved feed room. She just stood there for a second. It worked!.....Or, I thought it worked. I probably did look a little silly standing there bent over holding my shin (she probably thought I was praying) with 100 pounds of feed covering my shoes, but that didn't faze her for long. When someone starts screaming at you, "Do you know what time of the morning it is?" don't answer because I can tell you from experience that it pretty much leads to moving your feed room into the backyard.

I realize my feed room is trivial by comparison, but in this bent-over position with the blood rushing to my head, all I could think of was Noah. It is perfectly possible that it was just such an incident that inspired Noah to build his ark. Maybe one day after hitting him in the shin with a 2x4 to get his attention, his wife told him in a booming voice to get all those animals the heck off the property. Because of the intense pain in his shin, he couldn't really focus, so he thought he was having a revelation and that the voice he heard was coming from the heavens.

While I can't speak for Noah, but in this instance my shin didn't really even hurt, and I was receiving a revelation loud and clear. I have translated it for you.... "Thou shalt move all thy trash from this sacred place, to a less sacred place other than here. This shalt be done in haste before ye feel my wrath. Blessed is he who listens carefully and acts swiftly, for he shalt have shelter at nightfall." There was much, much more, but it basically boiled down to that. Moses couldn't have chiseled a clearer message. By the end of the revelation, I was so inspired that I was standing upright. I was healed! It might have been a little loud, but it might have been worse. I had survived. Sure I had visions of my little feed barrels leaving the house two by two, but what more could she do to me?

That is when she noticed my iced mocha (with the two shots of chocolate and whipped cream). I hadn't had time to drink any yet. (I was saving it for when I finished unloading the feed, which was now looking like it might be awhile.) Whose is that? "Oh yeah, I bought that for you," I lied. "Well, all right then, why didn't you bring it to me?" Before I could think, I blurted out, "Because you were asleep, and I didn't want to wake you." "So you figured you'd wake me up with all this noise instead?!!!" My "ark" may need to be bigger now because it may take 40 days and 40 nights to get this straightened out, and in the meantime, I may need a place to sleep.

Until next time!