

Dear Phil,

3/7/85

Reur 1 and 5, better to write Jerry McKnight at Hood College (History Dept) than at home because he has those files there and the copier also is there. He copied my FBIHQ and Memphis Invaders (how crazy those kids were to take THAT name!) and Sanitation workers files and is using them in teaching. One girl, planning a law career after her brother, did a great honors paper on them. (Another, by the way, has done a paper on the official treatment of Marina Oswald and is expanding it now into an independent study. Several turned loose to work independently in my files have called it the most educational experience of their college careers.)

Instead of more correspondence, the copy of Frame-Up herewith, Total cost \$11.40.

You ask if my outdoor exercise is exclusively woodchopping, say it is difficult for you and makes you sore and that you have much of it to do. What is more difficult is the kind of moving of uncut chunks I'm into now, green, heavy, more than 100 feet to take and stack them, and with the danger entailed for me from even a single piece falling on a foot or striking a leg or thigh. I therefore am stacking these heavy pieces 6 feet high. And with this lead into an older man's advice.

Sunday a younger friend was here and used my chain saw to fell some damaged hard pines. Those about 6" in diameter he cut into 8-10 foot lengths and I carried them up the steep hill behind the house. Thicker logs he cut to stove size and I'll haul them up when I can. First I must move these larger and heavier cuts from the side of the lane near the house. Last winter when he cut some others up, early in the winter, I could not walk up that hill without sitting and resting. But I eased into it and by the time that job was done, many trips, I was able to ~~ex~~ pull a full load in a large cart stopping only once to rest while standing briefly. When he pulled a cart of it as we returned after we had to stop he had to rest 3 or 4 times and could not see how I was able to do it. He is 30 or younger and in a month I'll be 72, aside from my limitations and infirmities.

It is important, physically and psychologically, to be your own master and to get to be able to do what others do, within normal limitations. You are a college prof, not a lumberjack, so you operate at your level, and do not try to equal a professional man in wood working.

I can use my gas powered chain saw but I do not because I do sometimes get dizzy and it does not stop automatically, the electric chain saws do. I use the electric some of the time but most of the time, on smaller wood, I use a pruning saw, about 15". It gives me exercise. Sure it takes time, but the exercise is worth the time.

I have enough space to avoid stacking wood high as the top of my head and higher, but that gives me exercise I get no other way and besides, I can be and am careful, and I'm resisting giving in to weaknesses. This is important, including to the mind and its attitudes and fixes.

When you say you get sore, you've gotta be real soft because I do not and my skin is extraordinarily tender from the anticoagulant, of which I take a high level daily. If a small piece of soft pine rubs against a forearm, as happened a couple of weeks ago, through a denim jacket and a heavy flannel shirt I got a large bruise and a piece of skin the ~~about~~ size of a nickel was brushed back and off. I put a bandaid on and went out and moved more of that wood immediately. I was not going to be intimidated or inhibited by a slight mishap. I'm so careful in stacking this heavy stuff, most of which weighs 50 lbs and some are over 75, that when there is any question I walk off and examine the stack to be sure it does not lean in either direction. In short, I live with my many problems but they do not dominate me and thus do not depress me.

Your muscles, your hands or both can get sore. This suggests more than lack of use of the muscles and hands, lack of experience. Perhaps also inadequate tools or lack of familiarity with them. All the tools you can need cost little. If you have a good axe, be sure it is sharp and has a sound, unsplit handle. I've never used one but I intend to get the gizmo they now make to fit on the handle where it enters the axe because in splitting that point sometimes strikes the firewood and is damaged. If you do not have a splitting maul, they are inexpensive. With both, get good quality

because that is safer and in the long run cheaper. Ash makes the best handles. Cheaper steel means more sharpening and more often. You'll want a couple of steel wedges, about \$5.00 each, and if there is much to split a sledge hammer. Otherwise you'll ruin the head of the axe or maul. I had two sets of wedges from when I farmed but they were stolen from a cabin we have here when I used it for storage. So, I bought but a single additional wedge and made my own for larger wedging. Oldtime farmers called this a "glut." Dodwood, scarce, is best. I'm using both sassafras and privet. Yes, those little neat hedges will grow into trees if permitted. A cut of the wood, say a straight limb, is sharpened like a screwdriver on one end, the wedging end, and the other is square. This is the end you hammer on. Get the split started with the steel wedge and then use the glut. Unless you get more wedges.

In splitting aim to circumvent the knots, whatever the wood. Split on both sides of any knots. With most woods, split from the top down, not from the ground-size up. If the chunk is real thick with some kinds of wood it is better to split the sides off, at right-angles to the center of the tree, thick enough to be useful as firewood, and then split that slice in half.

Get and use good leather gloves that fit. Today they've unisized most inexpensive gloves. I have found locally good sueded leather gloves from mainland China for about \$5.00 and they run smaller than the unisized US gloves and are a decent fit. Or you can get ordinary all-leather gloves, like dress gloves only for work. If your hands are tender then a good fit is more important to avoid unnecessary blisters. I have not had a blister since before my first illness, so they can be avoided with simple care.

If your back is sore, use a larger chunk as a stand for the cuts you'll split, like a work-bench. If you are not used to axes or splitting mauls this is better because you do not have to adjust the arc of your swing. And to ease the strain on the back, flex the knees. Especially in lifting.

Don't even try to split elm. Saw it off in slices. It and I think next gum resist splitting too successfully. Knotty maple unless still green also can be hard to split. If you do not have a chain saw, you can get a small one that for most uses is adequate for about \$100 and the electric ones are about half as much. A good 14" electric around here is about \$50, but they require ~~uninterrupted~~ manual oiling of the chain and the oil reservoir is tiny, so they require more frequent filling. Of the gas powered inexpensive ones, probably Homelite is best, with Ecoulan next. The Japanese and Germans export some rather good ones but they cost more and you do not have that need. Remember, these 2-cycle gas engines work off momentum, so you run them full speed. The electric ones have but a single speed.

You also say you do not see how I can do so much of it. I do not do that much for the time I spend. I'm very inefficient - and it doesn't bug me a bit. My interests are two: exercise and care. I get the exercise and I am careful. So it takes me longer. What difference does that make? I rest when I should then work again. Sure if I'd let it dressing for the cold and then undressing too would be a problem, but all such problems are in the mind and exist only if you let them exist as problems. This is true also of your getting sore. Part is in the mind and unless you have orthopaedic or similar conditions the rest is from inexperience and softness. Either or both. It didn't both me to stop this and go out and load, unload and stack. I also, by the way, keep a small transistor radio in a pocket, and got a DC all-news station, like at least last time I was up there WEEH was, too. With CBS news, such as it is today.

I've taken this time because for those who lead sedentary lives exercise is important and may, as with me, be life-saving. I'd not have survived the last emergency surgery if I'd not been physically active all my life. The surgeons praised my jogging and told me it had probably save my life because usually the heart quits under the strain of a blockage like I had. Only I've never jogged. I've always walked much and I've worked hard during periods of my earlier life. Think about it and you'll get around your soreness. But get exercise, and wood splitting is very good.

It is Marrell not Merrell McCullough. Best wishes,

5/1/85

Dear Harold,

Thanks for 2/25, 3/1 and enclosures. The Court materials are very instructive. I'm over the flu, thanks. Is your "outdoor exercise" exclusively wood chopping? I have all kinds of wood to chop but find it very difficult to do so because it makes me sore. I don't see how in hell you are able to do so much of it, especially when relying on your upper body.

Yes I've read Frame-ups (of course) but I took my copy to the university and it was ripped off from my office (10 days ago) and my research assistant says that our library copy is missing too. Please tell me the cost and I'll send you a check and I won't take it out of my home office and my queries will be fewer. I don't know why, but assassination books are real hot items around my university (even bad ones like Blakey's are missing from the library).

I root for a conviction in the appeals court.

Best Regards,

Phil

March 5, 1985

Dear Harold,

Can you give me Gerald Mc Knight's address. I want to ask him for some documents that he cited in his South Atlantic Quarterly piece on the Memphis Sanitation strike (documents dealing with Merrill McCullough).

Thanks,

Phil