

Randall Garrett Gazette

Vol. XXI

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Home Builder News

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“This Ain’t My First Rodeo”

Music and Lyrics by Vern Gosdin

*She’s down in the
And you don’t know if you’ll be coming home tonight or not
But, honey ain’t*

*Since you don’t seem to hear a thing I say or do
Then I know there’s nothing I can do for you*

This ain’t my first rodeo

This ain’t the first time this old cowboy’s been throwed

This ain’t the first I’ve seen this dog a

This ain’t my first rodeo.

You’re telling me you lost your wedding band

*You say it’s just some old things you don’t wear no more
n’t make it all the way through school
But my mama didn’t raise any fool*

But I’m not dumb and I’m not blind

This ain’t my first rodeo

This ain’t the first time this old cowboy’s been throwed

This ain’t the first I’ve

This ain’t my first rodeo.

Obarry Obama, this ain’t our first rodeo either. That socialists bull (yes, and a pun seems to work here) you are trying to ride, just might buck you off, face first, in the very matter that was excreted from your ride - before the whistle, of course.

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Builders News and Stuff.....

Are “Cost Plus” contracts better than “Fixed Price” contracts?

The answer is very simple. Which one makes you feel more comfortable? When I work with people on a remodel project or building a house, I get that question a lot. I wasn't being a smart ars when I answered the question originally. The answer really is, “are you more at ease with knowing that you will get your project performed at the best price or are you more content with knowing the final number?”

In a “cost-plus” contract, it usually works to where a contractor will take all of his “direct job costs” and add a percentage to it. The percent over and above his direct costs is his profit and overhead. **The most important element of a cost-plus contract is the ability to “trust” the contractor.** Unless you know how to discern the nomenclature of the various invoices that are involved with building a house, or have a good feel for what costs, such as framing labor, trim labor, drywall, etc., then you are wide open to larceny on a cost-plus contract. A very typical scam, in using a cost-plus contract, is for the contractor to instruct a favored sub-contractor, be it the framer, concrete contractor, plumber, etc, to **submit in an invoice, that is to be re-submitted to the homeowner, for a certain percentage more than his normal contract amount.** Upon the contractor receiving his draw, he then pays the framer, concrete contractor, plumber, etc, the normal contract amount and pockets the rest. The percentage of the excess amount is relative to the size of the kahunas of the contractor. The owner has no idea, and the builder makes a little extra “walking around money”.

I heard a story of a builder in high-dollar area of Dallas that was using this scam on a regular basis. Apparently this particular builder had a great reputation and had built several houses on a certain street in a certain sub-division. As is normally the case, “the bust” is born of suspicion. It just so happened, this particular builder was building a house for a female attorney (not that there is anything wrong with that), who became suspicious of the builder for some reason. Who knows why she became suspicious, but she did and went snooping. She drove out to her future sub-division and happened upon a framer who was currently framing a house on her future street. She got out of her, I assume, Mercedes with the “gold package”, and approached the framer, under the guise that she was “thinking” about building a house in that neighborhood and was trying to get some costs together in her head so she would know what to expect. She asked the framer what it cost to frame a house, to which the framer gave the correct answer of,

She pointed to a house down the street that was

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very similar to the house she was building, and she knew her builder built it. She asked the framer,

The framer said (as luck would have it – no so much for the builder), *can tell you exactly what it cost to frame that house because I framed it.* He said, *charged (her builder) \$10.00 per square foot of the total of living area, garages, porches, and other cover* (which was about 10,000 square feet). The builder sent the lady lawyer an invoice for framing, under a “cost-plus fee contract” for \$25.00 per square foot of living area, garage, porches, and other covered areas. The last I heard the builder was indicted on “fraud” charges, and is being sued by, not only the lady lawyer, but some of his other past homebuyers.

As I said, trust is a very important part of a cost-plus contract. Even though there are crooked contractors in this world, as there are crooked doctors, lawyers, plumbers, etc, I still think cost-plus contracts are a very fair way to build a project. Given your builder is not the guy I described above, it is the least costly method, because you only pay for actual labor and materials that directly comprise your house. Even the percentage you pay the contractor is his fee for directly supervising the construction of your house. You don't pay for any “contingencies”, or “mistake reserves” that the contractor may have built into his price on a fixed price contract.

Another area to watch in cost-plus contracts is defining what the “direct costs” are. In a good cost-plus contract, it will define what are considered “direct” and “non-direct” costs. Obviously, all labor and materials it takes to build that house is a direct cost, **but that does not mean the builder gets to over order the lumber so he can take it down the street to use on the fixed price contract he is building.** Office rent, cell phone bills, ones for Baby Dolls, and trips to Hawaii to get some building ideas for your house are generally not considered direct costs to your house unless you and the contractor agree that a certain percentage of that is acceptable.

In a true cost-plus contract, the risk the homebuyer takes is there is generally no ceiling to the project cost, unless the builder agrees to a “not-to-exceed” clause in the contract. If a builder agrees to that then he might as well use a fixed price contract. What can happen to cause the building costs to rise, you say? If a hurricane comes through Louisiana again, causing lumber, roofing, and drywall, to double over night, then I think the legal term is “you are screwed!” If gasoline prices spike upward again like last year, then all costs generally go up because every component in the building of a house is “delivered”, including and especially labor. Should that occur, please refer to the legal term referenced above. Even then, you are still only paying for what it costs to build your house. In those situations, you would be paying for it at higher market levels.

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In a “fixed price” contract, the onus of the budget falls upon the builder. In this contractual agreement the builder will enter a guaranteed price, specific inclusions that will be provided in the proposed home including an “allowance budget” for items to be selected by the purchasers. For example, one of the allowances I give my customers is a “lighting allowance” so they can pick the fixtures that fit their personality and taste. That dollar amount I use includes all hanging or wall mounted fixtures, ceiling fans, and exterior lights. It usually equals about 1% of the sales price of the house (\$300,000 home would have a lighting allowance of \$3000). We, also give allowances for brick, carpet, tile, wood floors, front doors, hardware, landscaping, etc. As long as you select items that cost equal to, or less than those allowances, the home will not go up in price. **I have never had that happen before, but that is the theory of it.** Invariably, the customer will fall in love with some item, like a chandelier, or these certain type of doors knobs, or heavier carpet, which will increase the home price by whatever the additional amount spent on the allowance item(s). I don’t charge any fee for going over on an allowance, but I do when there is a “Change Order”.

The “Change Order” is a form that becomes an addendum to the original fixed price contract **because it means you have chosen something other than what was included in the contract price.** Change Orders can be a “credit” as well which will decrease the home contract price. The home price decrease usually only lasts a few minutes because the husband will start screaming at his bratty little wife and make her cancel the order for those damn, solid gold, cabinet pulls that their wild-ass boys will break off within thirty minutes of living in the house. Then, he will feel guilty for making her cry so much that it caused her Este Lauder mascara run down her cheeks, right in front of the builder, so he sheepishly will surrender and agree to the 48” Sub-Zero refrigerator, the six-burner, Wolfe range, and the matching stainless steel hood, just his brother’s new trophy wife, Megan, has in her kitchen is their new house in Southlake. **This little outburst will end up costing him a \$20,000 Change Order when the solid gold cabinet pulls were only about \$750, but he figures it is ultimately cheaper than sending her that high-dollar therapist in Highland Park, and wasting time in Dr. Phil’s office answering questions about his relationship with his mother.** Some examples of more normal Change Order items would be upgrading the windows, enclosing part of the attic for additional living space, painting each room a different color, increasing the concrete driveway area, etc. It can be a thousand different things, but is it a change from what was originally agreed to, therefore an adjustment to the contract is imminent.

In a fixed price contract, invariably, contractors will have a line item in their budget for “contingencies”, “errors”, “omissions”, or otherwise unexpected costs. The dollar amount varies, depending on the degree of difficulty of the home, and the

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contractor's confidence in his ability to satisfy the home buyers' expectation levels. This is a "real budget line item" and, to the contractor, is as important as lumber in the costing of the house in a fixed-price contract. The harder a house is to build, meaning the level of detail, the accuracy of the construction drawings, and the topography of the building site, the more there is an uneasiness that something unexpected and costly could occur. Most contractors will put in a "contingency" line item in their budget to CYA (cover your ars). In a fixed-price contract this is really not a component of your home, but you want a "guaranteed price" and that is the cost of sleeping at night for you and the contractor.

There is also a cost associated with being difficult as a contractor's client. In the process of getting a project drawn by the architect and quoted by all of the subs, you get a pretty good feel about how the people are going to be to work with. Clients who are not easily satisfied, or are high maintenance will typically pay more for their house. It's true. Time is money and if I have to spend more time than necessary holding your hand then I have to make it worth my while. Now, there is a great deal of communication necessary and reasonable to build a home or remodel a house, but there are those people that require more than a "reasonable" amount of attention. Are they going to call you at home every night at nine o'clock because they just came from the house with flashlights and they have a few questions. This can cause the contractor to lay awake at night trying to figure out what the hell they were talking about? Are they going to want to have a "meeting" every other day because they are very important people, and they want you to know that they expect a lot of personal attention? Are they going to trust you to build the house because you are a professional, or are they going to call you every time they go to the house because they see something they don't understand? I used to get calls all the time about the "idiot sheet-rockers have covered up all of the electrical outlets and switches! Now what the hell are we going to do? They will never find them all again!" I would calmly tell them not to go back to the house for two more days, and I promised the outlets would magically re-appear.) This ain't the sheet-rockers first rodeo either.

Further, there are certain professionals, because of their training in logic and precision, which are more difficult to build for. I would never mention any profession by name, but let's call them snengineers, slawyers, and spilots. I have built for all of these, plus some, and will continue to do so, but residential construction is far from logical at times, and most certainly not to an exacting precision. Thus, these customers and the poor old contractor often reach a level of frustration that borders volcanic.

There are, also, people who came to our country from foreign lands. Communication is often difficult with them, especially over the phone, so explaining the regularities of residential construction can be frustrating and trying at times which is exacerbated by the cultural differences. I built a house in Colleyville for Mr. and Mrs. Patel (Patel is like Smith in India). They were both Hindu that had came from India

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and had two children. They were difficult to build for because they like to use their culture and grasp of the English language as a negotiating tool and “pretended” they did not understand certain things, Mr. Patel, wanted to increase the size of the guest room closet and I told him it would cost more because he was enclosing non-living footage into air conditioned footage, and all of the subs charged by the square foot. We negotiated over that for two weeks because he “did not understand”. Suddenly he understood when I told him he needed to make a decision before the framer left or it would cost three times more. Reluctantly, he gave in because that was going to be their prayer room and that was the only place it would work. He, also, wanted to add a wet bar upstairs, which he thought was cost about \$100. When I told him it was going to be about \$1500 because the plumber had to run a water line and sewer line, for a sink, the electrician had to add power and lights to it, the cabinet man had to build a cabinet, and the painter had to stain it. You would have thought he had gotten a deportation notification. I thought he was going to cry. I asked Mr. Patel why he wanted a wet bar upstairs anyway because I thought drinking was not allowed in his religion. He said it was for guests. Whatever!!! I will say that Mr. Patel freed me from ever wearing a pager. Back then, your mobile phone was mounted in your mobile vehicle, so we wore pagers. Anytime that damn thing went off we ran to the truck to return the call. Mr. Patel would page me 8 or 9 times a day to ask me “one question”. Instead of paging me once and asking 8 or 9 questions, he would page me every time something came across his mind. Today, I know for a fact there is at least one pager in the bottom of the little lake behind the antique mall on Grapevine Highway, in Colleyville. Too much coffee one morning with way too many scoops of Mr. Patel sent the god of baseball’s only visit through my veins, and I launched a throw with my right arm that would have put me in the major leagues if a scout had happened by. That ended the life of that little pager which is probably still going off ten years later. After the wet bar debacle, Mr. Patel told Mikey, my superintendent at the time, “***I don’t***

leettle by leettle”. The bottom line....I didn’t charge him enough. I worked for about \$1 per hour with Mr. Patel. Yes, class, there is a cost associated with being difficult, so lighten up and save!!!!!!!!!!

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Medical Section....

surgery....any doubts...ABSOLUTELY!!!

As I reported in the February Gazette, I was performing some undercover investigative reporting to expose the joint replacement industry, as a service to some of our older subscribers. You will recall I had volunteered to be a human guinea pig for the sake of learning the truth about joint replacement and its travails. You will also recall, I had chosen Dr. Mark Greenberg as my surgeon and had decided to have my knee replaced just for journalistic exploration.

Wednesday, January 21st, 2009. As instructed, I showed up at the Irving – Coppell Surgery Hospital, in the Las Colinas area of Irving, Texas, at 6:30 am, prior to my scheduled 7:30 am surgery. My wife, the lovely and talented Ana Garrett, rode shotgun on the short ride to my personal abyss of unknowns. I say “abyss” because, although the phone book is full of joint replacement doctors and joint replacement recipients, and there are thousands performed everyday, I felt like my body was pushing me and my mind into this oceanic expanse of the unknown with risks of which I have never confronted before. I have been of model health to date, and after all, this is “me” we are dealing with here. I am not completely comfortable with the fact that there will be, placed inside of me, a metallic, Star-Wars-looking, hinge that looks like something they build those robotic American Presidents with in that “Hall of Presidents” show at Disney World. You know the ones that make those freakishly realistic movements. That show always entertains me but it does have an eerie, life-like paranormal air about it.

Back to the surgery at hand. I can remember my mind recycling the thought, “Why are you doing this”, then the left part of my brain would engage and lend the silent retort, “Because you have no choice you idiot. Your knee is killing you and it WILL NOT GET BETTER, so quit acting like this is a marriage proposal. You have NO CHOICE!” Okay, Okay, ease up on a pre-surgical brother, Lefty.

At the hospital at the appointed 6:30 am, first things first. I have to fill out the paper work and answer the questions with the front desk nurse. She had her scrubs on, but you could tell she was not a “nurse” concerned about whether you were having a knee replaced, or a doctor was going to take your heart out and play hot potato with it. She cared about Blue Cross Blue Shield, and the temperature of her coffee at that time in the morning. Like I said she was very nice and she was doing her job to get me to the

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next step.

The next step was what seemed like a mile long walk with a crooked, painful knee, limping towards the secondary waiting room of absolute certain uncertainty. Luckily for me I had the ever-smiling, lovely and talented Ana Garrett in tow and her constant reassurance that I had no choice. It was about 7:00 am when we arrived at the surgical waiting room after the seeming mile long limp, and within minutes, as if to keep me from running out the back door (“running”, now that would be a sight to see with the my knee) I was whisked away to a curtained corner of a staging or prep room. It was there where I exchanged my warm OU hoodie and sweat pants for the uncomfortably revealing, split-tail hospital gown which is quite “breezy” at the dorsal side. At exactly the same time a female voice was asking for clearance to enter staging area, the curtains parted and entered yet another scrub-donned nurse (I don’t think she was concerned that I was “decent” or not. I think she had vast visual experiences with the split tail hospital gowns) for the purpose of asking even more questions. One question I was asked over and over, to my elation, was making sure it was the “right knee” (as in not the left knee). I will admit there have been times when a fleeting thought would pass through the “worry for the sake of worrying” part of my brain thinking, “what if they replace the wrong knee?” I know. I have some narcissistic tendencies. Anyway, I was comforted that they kept re-asking that particularly welcomed redundant question.

Now, the poking and prodding begins. Enter the “hero” (I call him the hero because I don’t remember anything – perfect!), the anesthesiologist (there may have been one other nurse before him but I cannot remember). He introduced himself as Dr. (I can’t remember, but let’s call him Dr. Hero), and he was, as the others, very nice, and once again, checked which knee. He commenced to introduce my arms and legs the first round of many probes into them as he inserted my IV. This I cannot watch (I almost passed out when I was a kid getting my, then required, health card to work at a Burger King). He told me the stuff he just gave me would take the “edge” off and he would be back in a few minutes, in the meanwhile the LAT Ana Garrett would be ushered back to see me before I went into surgery. I asked, in an effort to lighten the moment,

He answered, “I’ll be back in a few minutes.” I chuckled, but then thought, *“hopefully???”* **Hey, that’s not funny It’s “me” we are talking**

” Right on cue, like the timing of a well choreographed musical, the curtains separate and enters Dr. Greenburg, not dressed in his usually logo-ed golf attire, but an un-tucked, white cotton long sleeve button shirts with the tattoo art on it. He also had on some cool looking jeans with the stitching on the back pockets (Hmmm. Dr. Greenberg got his style on. It must have been the drugs that made me tell you that). He asks me if I’m ready for this, which, at this point, I compare that question to the asking of the groom if he is “ready” as he faces the church full of guests, flowers, and attendants. So, my answer, like the groom’s was, “I guess so”. Dr. Greenberg, also,

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verifies that we are replacing the right (not left) knee which. I never stopped appreciating that. I quickly learned from my short relationship with the good doctor, he is not one for idle chit-chat. He looks at his watch which should show the same time as the wall clock being the long hand on the four and the short hand past the seven. He turns about face and says, "I'll see you in there".

A moment or two later, Dr. Hero re-appears along with, still smiling, LAT Ana Garrett who came to my rolling bed with side rails to walk me to the door of the operating room. As she and I were having a quick exchange among the swarm of my inner butterflies, the hero doctor slipped the "big mickie" into my IV. With my wife, who I will "hopefully" see again, walking along side my rolling bed I see the stainless steel doors of the OR (for those of you who voted for OBarry Obama that means operating room) swing open.....and..... night-night, my memory ceased there.

"Mr. Garrett? Mr. Garrett? You

How do you feel? some nurse says. I don't remember what I said, but I must have said something. I do remember not feeling any pain or being uncomfortable in anyway. That was a good sign. Continuing her orientation, she said, "you are going to be here for a little while and when you wake up more, we will take you to your room". I can remember going in and out of consciousness, but, once again, not in any pain.

My first memories of lucidity were in my hospital room. Since the hospital appears to be a fairly new, very nice single bed room. My only complaint was my room had no 60" plasma TV. I'm not sure if all of the rooms are single beds, but I do like the fact that the chances of saying good morning to Joe, your roommate, one morning and his legs and arms are standing straight up in the air (I guess that people only die like that in cartoons, huh?).

Guess what was the first lucid thought I had was ?

I checked which leg was wrapped up. Duh!!! You would too. My second conscious thought was, since I was not allowed to eat or drink anything twelve hours before surgery, those two pieces of white bread, the processed meat product that could have been turkey, and something that resembled green plant life was the best meal I had had in years!!! It was Del Frisco good!! And the orange juice had to have come from the Silver Oak Cellars of Napa Valley. Yummy!!

The rest of the day, as I recall was filled with a nurse coming in, what seemed like hourly, to take my vitals, and family and friends dropping by to visit. Honestly, I do not remember very much as I was trippin on the morphine drip. I do remember the young, perky hospital physical therapist coming by to rah rah me and to let me know she would see me tomorrow to take me for a walk. A walk? The day after surgery? "Yep." She said, "*That is the program* .

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I know all of you have been in a hospital at least once in your life, so I will not go through with a daily report, but I also know that not all of you have had a joint replaced, so here is a list of my perceptions during my stay.

What Dr. Greenberg actually did: I am not one who wants to know all of the gory details, but the Cliff Notes are that he removed the bottom part of my femur (thigh bone) and the upper part of my tibia (I'm not sure if the fibula was involved or not, other than re-attached – sorry, I just don't know that detail). The two bones were re-connected by the new knee. Once again, I am not sure about the actual attachment mechanics, but I believe there a spike-type insertion into the bone that is grouted (glued in) with a natural bone grout that is much stronger than natural bone. Dr. Greenberg told me that I could have walked “theoretically” within five minutes of the surgery because the grout is so strong and quick to set up (for those Obarry Obama voters that means dry or cure).

Pain: During my hospital stay, I was on a constant morphine drip so, the pain was indistinguishable in my memory. As a bonus feature to my morphine drip, it had a “cruise control” button that I could thumb if I felt an oncoming surge of what could be pain. One quick pump and that urge was relegated to quick nap. When I was released from the hospital, Saturday morning, I asked Dr. Greenberg when he thought the pain would peak. He told me that, most likely, it had already peaked, but he prescribed an ample supply of Oxycodon for my recovering pleasure. Today, six weeks hence, I have plenty pills left that are for sale for \$25 each. Just kidding. Just kidding. Upon arriving home from the hospital I did take some Oxycodon as I was afraid of waking up in the middle of the night screaming in pain, but it never happened. In fact, it got to the point that I was taking them to sleep at night because of the “Mid-evil” contraption (that I will discuss later) my leg was strapped in made it hard to sleep. It finally occurred to me that it was somewhat silly to take pain pills to sleep, so I got the good doctor to write a prescription for some sleeping help in the form of Ambien, or its generic. To sum up the pain section, my pain medication of choice, after coming home, has been Tylenol that is over the counter. **All in all pain was considerably less than expected.**

The Mid-Evil Contraption: When I woke up from surgery, and checked which leg was wrapped up, I discovered my right leg was strapped into, what looked like a four-foot long infant car seat from the 1960's and 1970's. You remember the type that had a velvet-like lining in them and were supported by 1/4" chrome steel tubing, so that it looked like a mini roller coaster frame. That is what the mid-evil contraption looked like. The purpose of this contraption was to keep my right leg in a constant, sloth-like motion to affect a steady increase in the range of motion of my swollen, thigh-sized knee. My nurse told me it also aided in the prevention of blood clots, a huge complication to this type of surgery. The motion of the contraption ranged from completely straightening out my leg to bending it as much as possible at a very, very

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subtle pace. The “mid-evil” adjective came when the increased the angle of the knee-bend a few degrees twice per day. Honestly, there were some transition angle adjustments that caused a quick reach for the cruise control on the morphine drip. When I was strapped in the contraption, I had an “icing wrap” on my knee at all times, obviously for the purpose of swelling reduction. Essentially, it was a twelve-pack Igloo cooler with a pump in it and two rubber hoses coming out of it. These hoses ran into a foam wrap with small water lines through out it. The pump constantly pumped ice-cold water through the foam wrap to serve the same purpose as standard ice packs. When I went home, they sent the mid-evil contraption and the ice wrap home with me, to be returned upon the first doctor check up. In summation of the “mid-evil” contraption, I was very glad to return it. I hated up because it meant sleeping on my back, which is the last position I prefer, and I had to wake up the lovely and talented Ana Garrett in the middle of the night to de-strap me so I could go potty. Then she would have to wait till I got back to re-strap me in. **“Hated it”, said in a high effeminate voice.**

Speaking of the lovely and talented Ana Garrett: I do not know, I could not have survived this surgery without her. Not only did she get up early Wednesday morning to ride shotgun to the hospital with me, but she slept in the room with me. In my hospital room, I had a window with a seat in it. It was about six feet long and about the width of a sofa seat. They kept a cushion on it, I guess, to serve as an extra bed. I thought that was genius. Anyway, she brought her pillow and her blanket so she could be on standby in case I needed something during the night. My memory is quite foggy but I think she stayed the first two nights there. When we got home, she had to wake up every single night to de-strap and re-strap me during the middle of the night for my nightly relief stroll with my borrowed, four-wheel drive walker, in low-rider metallic blue, fully equipped with hand brakes to hold my speed down. In summation of the LAT

Ana Garrett, there is no one who could make a better life partner for me than the beauty queen from Venezuela. I think I had help from upstairs to find her. “

The first walk: You will recall the perky physical therapist, I mentioned earlier, who came by the evening on my surgery, saying “We were going to get up and walk tomorrow”. She said it so enthusiastically that I almost believed her, but then thoughts of a greater percentage chance of monkeys flying out of my butt, or declaring Mr. Potato Head Obarry Obama as my leader. Not so much. Sure enough, the next day, Thursday, she comes bouncing into the room. She does not even give me a chance to use some extraordinary excuses I had been formulating. She bribes me by de-strapping me from the mid-evil contraption (smooth talking girl). She and the attending nurse cradle my right leg and slowly lower it to the floor putting me in an upright, sitting

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position. Before my borrowed, four-wheel drive, low-rider metallic blue walker, fully equipped with hand brakes to keep my speed down, arrived I had to use the hospital issue, standard two-wheel drive, aluminum standard walker with dual rubber stoppers for brakes. She told me to put my weight on my “good leg” (that knee is probably 2 years away from the same program, so let’s not get carried away) and pull myself up. Surprising, I did that without any problems, so off we go with rolling hat rack full of bags of liquid hanging on it with tubes hanging from them that are plugged into me. Not bad. It did not hurt to slowly ease my self around for about 80 or 90 feet. The only issues were getting used to using a walker and my knee, of course, is as crooked as a dog’s hind leg from all of the surgical jacking with tendons, ligaments, muscles, and my knee cap. I don’t know if it was the drugs, or that I am just that badly out of shape, but that brisk little walk did wear me out. It was truly a case of “baby steps”.

How did I go to the bathroom: Going to the bathroom is not a pleasant subject, but it must be covered, given you wanted a complete report. Going Number 1 for a man is no problem because we have the half gallon milk jug with the crooked neck that we can simply “use”. Going Number 1 for a female, I don’t know what to tell you. I guess see Number 2 below. Going Number 2, is a little more involved. Ya think!? You need help for this exercise. The fortunate thing about being on morphine is that it sort of removes the need for a while, but eventually the hospital food will fight through that. It took me a good couple of days to build up my momentum. At that point you need help. You have to hit the nurse’s call button because she has to come de-strap you from the mid-evil contraption, then she has to walk the rolling hat rack with the bags of liquid hanging from it which has tubes hanging from them which are plugged into me, to the restroom. Then she has to wait for me to come out so she can roll all of that back to bed, and re-strap me back into the mid-evil contraption. In the restroom, they placed, what looks like a camping potty chair (you know little fold out, four-legged toilet seat that you set over the hole you dug) except this one has arm rests. That makes it a lot better for lowering and raising one’s bottom. Bottom line (no pun intended) is that it was very manageable given the nurse was only a call button punch away.

The doctor is releasing you. Whoa! Wait just a minute. I’m not sure I am ready to go home. Are you sure he said it was ok? I think there are two factors in me being released on Saturday, January 24, after a Wednesday surgery. The first one, is that if I can get around in the hospital with a walker, then I should be able to get around the house with a walker once they have unplugged me from the rolling hat rack. The second factor is Blue Cross Blue Shield said something to the effect that we don’t care if he is ready or not, we are not sending any more money. I think the latter influences the former. Basically, there is some anxiety about leaving a registered nurse with paineC(rr)-3(et)-5(t)ΠJ

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mid-evil contraption.

What does that thing feel like inside your leg?: That was one of my biggest concerns/questions. What is it going to feel like having a hunk of metal in my leg. The true answer is that I can't really discern that there is foreign matter in my leg unless I happen to bump it at a certain angle step on it weird, then it sort of vibrates like metal tends to do. All I can say about that is it feels weird but it does not hurt in anyway. It just vibrates like a tuning fork.

Am I glad I did it? Absolutely! My knee does not hurt anymore. Pain is the main reason for having a joint replaced. It looked silly, as crooked as it was, but it still worked. I would not have gone through all of this just for vanity. Yea, you're right. I just might have. I mentioned earlier that the left knee (as in not the right one) will need to be replaced. I will not hesitate to have it done. I was functioning at a 60% level, as a builder, within a week after surgery, since I could not drive or get around very fast. I would tell others to allow at least three weeks away from work to get back to a functioning level. Older recipients might take longer. Physical therapy is a huge time commitment and there is some pain associated with getting my leg to bend and straighten as it should, but it is necessary to the rehab. If you are thinking about a joint replacement, do it. It is not that bad.

Market News...

Of interest....

Randall Garrett Homes, Inc, - For Sale

Let me say that I have possible _____ on my entire inventory of homes for sale, so if you think obtaining a mortgage might be an arduous task, think again. Call me! Let's give it a shot.

Some of my banks are telling me they can get $4-1/2$ %, 30 year fixed, with 20% down. How much lower do you think it will go?

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Keller, Bourland Oaks Community (www.bourlandoaks.com):

816 Gentle Wind - 4 Beds, 4.5 Baths, Study, Game, Media, 3 car (4,189 sf)

Cool Feature - "Pottery Barn" Styling **\$579,000**

812 Gentle Wind - 5 Beds, 4.5 Baths, Study, Game, Media, 3 car (4,487 sf)

Cool Feature - wheel chair access to 2nd bedroom **\$599,000**

416 Settlers Ridge - 4 Beds, 4.5 Baths, Study, Game, Media, 3 car (4,142 sf)

Cool Feature - 2 outdoor living areas **\$559,000**

400 Settlers Ridge - 4 Beds, 4.5 Baths, Study, Game, Media, 3 car (4,596 sf)

Cool Feature - Pond view/best price per sf in B Oaks **\$550,000**

Arlington, Lago Vista - Gated Community with common pool & cabana (randallgarrethomes.com):

4802 Spicewood - 3 Beds, 2.5 Baths, Study, 2 car (2,515 sf)

Cool Feature - "Pottery Barn" Styling **\$289,000**

4810 Spicewood - 3 Beds, 2 Baths, Study, 3 car (2,566 sf)

Cool Feature - only 3-car available **\$299,000**

Hurst, Glade Pointe Court (randallgarrethomes.com):

3209 Glade Pointe Ct. - 3 Beds, 2.5 Baths, Study, Game, Loft, Upper Balcony, exercise room 2 car (3,569 sf)

Cool Feature - It's like living in a mountain chalet with a Low maintenance, wooded lot that backs up to a creek. It's like a bird sanctuary. Mallard ducks cup their wings and land in your back yard during the winter. **\$479,000**

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Classified Section...

New Client!!!

Sundance Southwest <http://www.oasisfire.com>

*Got a Patio or Outdoor Living? Then you need to (or we urge you strongly for the control freaks) go to Sundance Southwest!! The have **"fire tables"** for those pleasant evenings year round, when a touch of heat or the soothing*

*creation. And they are works of art! Go to sundancesouthwest.com and check them out along with all of the other products. They also carry dining tables, bistro tables, seating, fire pits, ice buckets, and more. **"If you have a patio, Sundance Southwest has you covered!!!"***



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Restaurant Furnishings for Sale!! The lovely and talented Ana Garrett closed down her restaurant in Frisco, so we have an abundance of **real marble and granite tables with iron chairs**. Purchased wholesale for \$1200 originally (you can't tear up granite and iron).....per set (1 table, 4 chairs).....**\$250.00**

Original Oil Paintings by Venezuelan artist,**\$250.00**

For Information on the above Call me 817.475.4644.

.....By Randall Garrett

Global Warming Update: True Story. There was a gathering, as of this writing, of over 600 climatologists called the World Meteorologist Organization who are claiming *that*

“Ice Age” type

In fact, they assert the earth has been cooling for the last eleven years. Whaaaaaaaaaaaat? Al, you been lying to me and embezzling my money on that “global warming” crap. Now, Al that's not nice to lie to me like that. Big Al (as in Al Gore of the House of Fraud), what will you do with no “cause”? How will you survive? I guess you will have to call up your old “cause-less” buddy, Jessie. Jessie Jackson has not had a “cause” since Rodney King.

, they just don't work.

Obarray (Mr. Potato Head) Obama Update: Let's see...you have been on Leno and made an ars out of yourself with the Special Olympics. The University of Notre Dame doesn't want you for their commencement because of your abortion views (You voted 4 times in Illinois for aborting babies after they were born – that's called

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murder). You and your teleprompter have traveled all over the country, but not staying in Washington very much. Is it because you haven't done anything about the economy and are afraid to answer any questions? Or is it because your Secretary of Treasury is an inept idiot? Or could it be that you lied about the budget, since it will triple the national debt? Or is it because your dumb-ars party gave AIG billions of dollars and not bothering to check on where they might spent it. Or, Mr. Potato Head, is it because you are incompetent in your job, and you think, if you act busy then the people will think you ARE busy? Obarry, my greatest fears, which I predicted, have come true. You are, in fact, an abomination of what made this country great. You speak in vague clichés with no intention of saying anything germane because you can not answer questions unless the answers are on your teleprompter. **You sir, are an idiot because you think you can run the United States of American, General Motors, Chrysler, AIG, and more coming when you have never even had a J-O-B.** By the way, who dressed Michele when you had her "shovel-ready" with those turquoise boots on? Stevie Wonder?

T. O. Has Shuffled Off to Buffalo: Thank God and Greyhound he's gone.

Joe Biden: You would hope he is a drunk because nobody should be that stupid and not be.

A-Rod Update: The cyst on his hip is a common occurrence of steroid users. Dumb ars!

Rush Limbaugh: Apparently his Rushness is getting into the craw of the Kool-Aid drinkers. They claim that Mr. Limbaugh publicly stated that he hopes President Obama fails. Nooooooooooooo! That is not what he said. I listen to Rush's show that is on WBAP 820, from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm, weekdays. What Rush said was, he hoped President Obama's "**policies**" fail which can potentially destroy our country as we know it. **Me, I hope he, his policies, and his stupid ideology fail. But that's just me. I'm no Rush Limbaugh.**

GM, Chrysler, AIG: Kool-Aid drinkers this one is all on you. You put Comrade Obarry in office. Do you really think that the government of noted buffoonery can actually run anything!!!!???? Name one thing the government does well. One thing...I'll wait. I thought so. The government cannot do one DAMN thing well. The IRS is one of the poorest excuses for a collection agency. They cannot even get their boss to pay his taxes. The US Post Office is so inefficient that UPS and Fedex have made billions. On a more local level, go to your nearest "free health clinic" and see how long you have to wait. Kool-Aid drinkers this is ALL on YOU.

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nterest....

Wine Tip of the Month....

I was cruising through Central Market in Southlake the other day searching for inspiration for the wine tip this month, when I happened upon the “Central Market Partners Pick”. This column of wine had a tag with some older guy’s picture on it (I assume he was the choosing partner) while none of the other columns of wine did. The “choice” was a **2005 Cabernet Sauvignon** called **Heavyweight Red**. I had never heard of it, but the price of \$13.99 and the picture of the older guy on the tag got me. I told you I was looking for inspiration. I picked up the bottle which had a rendering of a 1900’s circa boxer on it. I flipped over to the back label which read, “*I slid beside a pretty strawberry blonde at the bar. ‘A glass of house red’,*

side, a guy like me...(said) ‘give me something BIG’, he says, ‘I want a red
’ ‘I’ll have one of those too’, she smiles in his
.....
brains. Heavyweight Red.” Ok, I’ll bite. That got me to take it home.

Wine Rx describes it as, “*An encounter with Heavyweight Red is something like an encounter with a heavyweight champion. It is not bruising of course, but it is*

aromas and the eyebrows go up. The aromas shout of blackberries, licorice and currants. The attack is swift and lingering. They are difficult to sort out because of the complexity. The taste is a similar experience. It is a long continuous expansion of the bouquet and one must take some extra breaths to appreciate it thoroughly.

Heavyweight Red is a is should be a jolt and surprise to the senses of taste. You know that you have had an encounter with a heavyweight red wine champion. The constituents are Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Zinfandel. Cabernet offers complexity. Syrah offers structure and Zinfandel, its delightful fruit. This is a wine
-flavored foods of both

ethnic and modern American creations. What a cop-out description!! He is sort of right though. There were not many distinctive flavors that hit your palette, but it does taste versatile for any food or just for swilling. It earns the highly sought after **Randall Garrett Gazette** “YUMMY!” medal. Enjoy!

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Humor of the Month

“

”

There was an elderly woman that called her small town police department to complain about a man, who had just moved in next door, was exposing himself. The desk sergeant answered the complaining phone call to which the lady said, *My name is Sue Curley and I live at 1818 Maple Drive. I have lived here very happily for forty years, but my new neighbor, obviously a single man, has moved in next door and is ruining my life by*

Hearing all sorts of wild complaints, sitting at that desk for twenty-eight years, the desk sergeant seemed to care little, but assured her that he would send a cruiser by to check it out. Within an hour, a very nice young police officer knocked on her door to investigate the situation. The police officer asked Mrs. Curly if she knew the man's name, or anything about her new neighbor. She said that she didn't know his name, but he had only moved in two weeks ago. She did say that he had a very identifiable tattoo on his right upper thigh. The officer asked how he was exposing himself to her. He asked if he was out in the yard, or coming over to her house, or exactly how was he perpetrating this act of perversion. The lady said,

She leads the nice young officer into her guest bathroom and says,

The officer could only see one window in the bathroom and it is fairly high up off of the floor. The officer stands there for a minute, and finally says,

only window facing his house is so far above the floor and you are not a very tall

Then Mrs. Curly said,
(puh-dom-pom)

Parting Thought

I read a book last week (no, it did not come with crayons or pop-up animals) that my friend Robo (obviously a nickname – I don't like to give up my friends without their permission) recommended to me. The book is called The Shack, by Wm. Paul Young. A quick history of the book is that the author was not an author at all before The Shack. He had experienced a great deal of personal trauma and abuse so he wrote the book as a means to settle his demons within. He would, however, write poems and short stories to give as gifts, so his wife suggested he give copies of his thoughts to their children, which resulted in the book, The Shack. He only had enough money to have 15 copies (8-1/2 by

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11) printed at the office supply. He gave away these 15 copies to his kids and friends. The next thing he knows, friends are asking him for additional copies for their friends. Eventually he has people emailing him that he doesn't know, asking for copies. To make a long story short, there are now 7 million copies in print today and it had been on the list for over a year.

After reading the book, which is capable of changing one's life, I started thinking of how the book touched me. The author goes by Paul. He made that clear when my friend Robo and I went to Breckinridge, Texas, to hear him speak at the First Methodist Church. Mr. Young presents a completely different concept of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, otherwise known as the Holy Trinity.

The God Mr. Young describes is a "relationship" God who would be more like your best friend. In The Shack, Paul throws a high and tight curve ball at your head with the concept of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. You will be completely, yet pleasantly pleased with his humanization of Them. No, it is not blasphemy, nor am I being a "right winger". We all have to conceptualize God in our same form in order to wrap our mind around such an infinite concept. As a child, I had developed a concept of God in my head. Don't laugh, but I visualized God at a very early age of 4 or 5 years old during my First Baptist Church of Arlington Sunday school days. The God I say in my mind's eye was a smallish, slightly humped over man with a black marching band jacket, sans the shoulder stringy thingy's. His head was mostly covered with one of hats, like the Beatles wore when they came to the US (my picture of God was years before John, Paul, George, and Ringo showed up though) and dark, extra wide "aviator" sunglasses. I realize I may require counseling, but that was my concept from 4 or 5 years old, and it has stuck with me. We, as humans, have to put God in a concept that is understandable, so the only comprehensible form of God for us is in some type of human form. In this book, Mr. Young does that, but you will be surprised!

The other concept I had developed through my formative years (around age 54) was that I was ever under the watchful eye of God and I BETTER NOT DO ANYTHING WRONG OR I'M GOING STRAIGHT TO HELL. The Shack presents another belief

That doesn't seem like a very loving God to me. In the book, Mac, the main character (and an alter ego of the author Paul Young) loses a child in a very tragic way, and Mac asks God two things. The first question, is why is he spending so much time with him (Mac) as there are so many other people in the world and the second question is why he won't he torment and send straight to hell, the person who committed such a heinous act to his child. God simply explains that he (Mac) and the perpetrator, were both His children. Mac had a horrible childhood to blame all of his demons on, so God asks Mac what type of childhood did he think the killer had to make him do such awful things. God gave Mac a problem to solve. Mac, in the book, had four children. God asked Mac to pick 2

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of them, it did not matter which two, and he would automatically send them to Heaven. The other two were to be condemned to hell. God said to pick the two you love the most, and let the other two go. Mac said, "I can't do that. I love them equally, each in their own way." "Exactly!" God said. "Neither can I".

The point God was trying to make was that we are all His children. He loves us equally. **He may not choose the path you take, but He will never leave you for any reason.**

I thought, "*Wow, I have never really thought of God in those terms.*" You know in life, hopefully, we are in relationships with people, being our family and friends that care about each other to the point that one will not leave the other for

These are people that care about each other enough to work through the obstacles of life because of the importance of the relationship. They are committed to each other just because each person needs the other person. I have done some pretty stupid things in my life, but there are family and friends that are still with me. Why? I do not really know except that I must offer something important to them, but I really don't know what it would be.

My parting thought is....can you conceptualize God being like that? Can you understand that he is our "Friend" who will do anything in the world for us even though we are often pretty stupid? He wants a relationship with us. He wants a relationship that is not of constant judgment, but rather constant companionship. He is right there with us all of the time and he is not leaving us for "any reason". **Look! He gave his only Son.** I like all of yall just fine, but you're not getting any of my kids, so if you're counting on me for your salvation, I wouldn't dress to warmly.

I have not turned into a religious zealot, but the book really moved me. I hope you will go to Barnes & Noble, Borders, etc., and buy the book. I think it is \$15.00

See you next month, hopefully.

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