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### The Sweetness of Long, Hard Work

I believe in working on the backyard. If an individual owns his own property or small patch of dirt, he should work on it himself. Nobody needs to be hired for cutting the weeds or trimming the hedges on a tree. I can do my own yard work. I agree in returning money to the economy, but I also believe in saving money. I believe in installing a sprinkler system since it reduces water costs, and it is better for the environment. If a tree is to be planted it should preferably be a fruit tree. Planting fruit trees is good for my mental state. It feels good to eat what I have been waiting for a whole year to grow. I believe that even if I have enough wealth to hire somebody, this should not be done.

“I want an apple tree and a peach tree,” I excitedly told my girlfriend as we went shopping around Lowes for our next year’s promising produce.

I remember when I was a kid I always loved to work in my backyard. I believe this is necessary since it builds my character. I remember my father saying, “Pick up those rocks” and “Shovel that dirt over here.” I believe that made me stronger both physically and mentally. I remember the muscles in my back burning at the end of the day and taking a nice cold shower after a long hot day outside. Simple things like taking a shower help me appreciate how convenient it is now to have running water. I believe in a good meal after a good day outside.

“What do you mean hire somebody!” my father would tell me. “We can’t afford that.”

When my dad would tell me to plant a tree, it seemed like he was doing it out of spite. “Hurry up and dig that hole deeper!” he would say as he walked away from my never-ending chore. My summer was ruined, I thought to myself. Looking at about twenty trees, I was going to be outside working forever. So, there I was with a pick in one hand, the shovel in the other, and the great taste of cow manure on my lips. I knew I was going to hatefully remember that summer for the rest of my life.

I think my dad just wanted me to get stronger. He didn't grow up on a farm, but he always emphasized how important it was to be strong physically. I never understood this since I had always been a scrawny little kid and refused to play sports such as football or basketball. I was on the swim team though. It's not that they didn't interest me, but physically I could get hurt very easily. So, there I was with my trees on a hot El Paso summer day just waiting for my dad to come outside and check on my progress and demotivate me some more. He would not even bring me a glass of water. “Drink out of the hose,” he would tell me. It's okay, I imagined, because one day I would grow up, and he would want a glass of that precious liquid, and I would tell him to go outside and get the hose.

Now I stand in my backyard contemplating where I will plant these new trees. I need to think strategically so that later the roots will not affect the house's foundation. I also need to think about where the trees will get the most sunlight. The more sunlight, the sweeter the fruit.

I obviously did not receive much positive reinforcement, but that's okay. I believe the way that I was treated as a child is now a strong foundation for my attitude and the way that I look at things and also react to situations. When I turned eighteen, I was glad to join the Marines since I knew I wasn't going to have to plant any more trees, but the joke was on me. Now I had to dig trenches and fox holes to cover my body and save myself from enemy attacks. I

remember those days in Iraq. Even though it was hot as hell, I really wasn't hurting as much since I was already acclimatized to the heat. All the Marines complained about their backs aching, shoulders hurting, and developing blisters on their hands while I, on the other hand, did not suffer any of these hardships. For hours at a time, we would work, moving stuff over here, shoveling things over there, sand everywhere. It reminded me of home. Here were the great high school athletes who were all stars in their game were beaten down by something as simple as dirt and lack of negative reinforcement. I could hear my father in my head while all of this was going on, "Hurry up! Drink from the water hose." Ha! How I wish then I had a water hose at least. Those were good times.

I hope my child learn these values as well. I promise I won't be as cruel as my father was with me. I will bring him water whenever he needs it, and I will provide him with ample motivation. I'm not suggesting I want my child to join the military, but it would be nice if someday he gets to plant a tree with me. The blisters on his hands will make his hands hard and callused for that future just in case he needs that thick layer of skin. If he wants to join sports, that's fine, but he must also know that most likely his sports career ends on the day that he graduates. The trees that I planted by myself as a child are still there at my father's house, and even though I remember how hard it was to plant them, I am not mad or angry anymore. I believe my father taught me to plant what I like so that one day the fruit would provide the house with some fresh food. I know the Wal-Mart is always across the street, but it's always nice to just go over to my own tree and get fruit. I thank dad for teaching me these values. He doesn't have to drink out of the water hose ever. It was a good life lesson, and now I can taste the sweetness of long, hard work.