



Relief

Before I tell you the story, I'm going to relate something I read (or heard) somewhere many years ago. It was about one of those people described as 'Type A' - an aggressive, assertive businessman, very much the 'go go go ...' type, who would work late every night, and yet be the first one there in the morning, ready to get going again. One day, whether or not related to this behaviour I cannot say, he had a heart attack, and was carried off to hospital in an ambulance. He survived the episode, and - this is the point that I particularly remember from the story - he later related that as he was being taken away on a stretcher he felt one overwhelming sensation ... and that was *relief*.

Finally, he could 'let go'. Now that he was in the 'had a heart attack' category, he could now stop running, fighting and pushing. It was almost as though the attack gave him an 'out'. Before this, if he had slacked off he would have been seen to be 'weak' or 'not a real Top Gun,' but now there was no choice. Thus the relief. "Let those other guys play that game ..."

Before we go any further I have to emphasize that I have had no heart attack, nor do I plan on ever having one! The rest of this story - *my* story - is not about medical issues. It is about attitudes.

I grew up in a home where the sound of a hammer was a regular accompaniment to our daily life. My dad was (and still is!) a fixer-upper type; our homes were always in a state of (dis)repair. New wall panelling? Of course he did this himself. Jack up the house and add a new basement underneath? Why not!

When I myself became a father, I kind of had the expectation that I would do the same thing for my own family - create the living space that best suited our own needs. You don't buy a home, you *make* one!

The problem was, we lived in a rented apartment here in Japan, and that left very few options for even any customization, let alone outright building. I had to postpone the 'dream', hoping that at some point our situation would improve.

It never did. At least not while the girls were 'my little girls'. They grew up and flew away and that was the end of Dave's 'build a home for his family' fantasy. I gave them a good home of course, but there was very little about it that I built myself (except for a ton of wooden toys!).

Move forward a few years, and I became able to purchase a building here in Ome, and with that step, the dream morphed into a new shape. I would obviously now never build an actual home, but this building had a wide empty space downstairs, and I needed a proper workshop for my printmaking, so that became the new vision. I gutted the space, and began from absolute zero, starting to create a workroom that perfectly matched my requirements. Here I was, finally building my own 'home'!

Progress was very slow indeed, as every day of construction was a day taken away from the printmaking work, but I got it to the point where I could 'move in' - even though I was still surrounded by partially finished walls - and I have been using the space ever since, producing many thousands of prints there.

Move forward another few years, and I decided to expand my printmaking activities to include other people working for me as printers. Suddenly that 'perfect' workroom became terribly crowded. What had been just

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right for one man was now a crowded mess. Luckily for us though, my neighbour was not using the adjoining room on his property, and agreed to rent it to us. And so I began - yet again - the process of building a workspace from an empty shell.

I got as far as getting the floor down, all properly insulated, but I was able to spend only such a small amount of time on it that nearly a year passed before that stage was ready. The staff members were constantly 'reminding' me about the situation, either in words, or in the jammed schedule posted on our workshop wall. Something had to give.

And so a couple of weeks ago, I had my 'heart attack'. I let go, and called in some construction guys. They took my instructions, headed out to get some supplies, and got to work. After they had left at the end of the first day, I stood in the doorway of the room with a cup of coffee surveying their work. It wasn't done exactly the way I had wanted it, but I told myself "Dave, just let go. These guys are basically just as competent as you at this stuff. The workroom will be useable. Just stand back and let them do it."

And I stood there sipping my coffee, and feeling ...

Yes ... relief!

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