

## My Fix-It Man

by Terri White

One and a half years after we married, I surprised Steve with the Readers' Digest *Fix-It Yourself Manual* for his birthday. I struck gold. Thereafter, if he could read about it, he could fix it. A few years later, I gave them the revised edition. Nowadays, he either Googles it or turns to YouTube for instructions. That's my guy: the fix-it man.

For 43 years, I have observed Steve learn and complete hundreds of projects. Most turned out well. Others have needed a bit of help from others more in-the-know. But, hey, it takes a village sometimes.

When learning how to tackle a task from a book, it takes longer. Real long. Even longer from a person who already takes a long time on skills already mastered. But as they say, "It is what it is." Sometimes I hate that expression.

Not wired to live in a state of construction for long, I often put my foot down – hard. Because there's just no telling how many distractions will filter into that project. That is not an exaggeration.

In the first year of our marriage, love was still young and I was still clueless about Steve's work habits. Our first rental house, a cracker box with a water cooler and a nosey landlord next door, needed the back porch enclosed. So Steve, who loves a project, volunteered.

This is a man with a new wife, new baby, new job, and reads a fix-it book to learn the task. Enter said task. Said task drags on and on and on and on. Need I say more? That's when I learned to put my foot down.

Later on, he collected bits of uniformly shaped wood chips. Then he promptly decided I needed a planter that I didn't want and proceeded to huddle in his ramshackle shed for days building it after work. Or was it weeks? It seemed like years back then.

On glorious, sunny autumn days, sequestered in his shed bereft of sunshine, he labored over that planter like a man on a mission. He was. Planter completed. Creator beaming. Me shrinking at the hideous thing. Planter soon secreted to his sister who shared his taste for the hmmm. Lesson learned. Or was it?

However, Steve's a great guy. He's put in his dues over the years and has mastered numerous skills – with the tools to prove it. With stellar results. Our home and yard provide the proof. No complaints. Unless it's a planter. (I can't help myself!)

Before Steve retired, his only free time landed on weekends, so hiring outside help seemed logical for big projects. Inevitably, though, the contractor grew sloppy and Steve had to redo something. Oftentimes, many somethings.

Because of that, it was always with trepidation that we spent those extra dollars. Once hired, we hoped that the contractor – no matter how highly recommended - was, indeed, an expert who didn't leave a trail of grunge behind him. And hoping we wouldn't regret spending those extra dollars. Fingers crossed.

Once we hired a contractor to texture and paint our walls. After painting, our guy announced that we could clean the room. So clean the room we did, from top to bottom. It had never been so clean except maybe when we moved in our house 28 years ago. The next day, the helper sanded the walls. In. Our. Freshly. Cleaned. Room. Need I point out the obvious?

Years of projects completed. Skills mastered and a house full of memories of time spent repairing contractors' messes, updating our home, and checking off honey-do lists. I life full of memories of putting my foot down (or not), all while learning to get along with our individual quirks. Life. Life with my fix-it man. Nuttin' better.