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### **Another Home Improvement Story**

Since I know you love hearing about my home improvement follies, I thought I'd bring you the latest tale. It involves a recent trip to the hardware store for a lawn sprinkler. While I was there, I noticed deck-staining equipment on sale. So, I peeked around the corner of the aisle and noticed they're way too many options for choosing deck stain.

With the help of a friendly employee, I learned a lot about deck stains. Apparently you can purchase stains that protect the wood, or protect the wood and let some of the natural grain show through, or protect the wood and make people forget that your deck is even made of wood. I chose the semi-transparent variety that protects the wood and reminds people that the deck is actually made of wood.

I also picked up a brush and a deck stain sprayer. Because I'm cheap, the brush I chose was about the size of a toothbrush. Remember, my deck spans half of the backside of my house. I also picked up a sprayer for \$13. It was the cheaper option compared to the larger \$23 version.

I also learned that spreading deck stain on an old, dirty deck probably isn't going to help. So, I picked up a \$20 sander the size of an S.O.S. pad and a gallon of deck cleaner. Avid readers of my column will remember that I "cleaned" my deck last year with a cleaner and protector all-in-one chemical, but it faded quickly during the winter.

Once I got home I unloaded everything from the car and proceeded to sand the deck. This took about two hours. I sanded the floor, walls, rails and base. Then I loaded up the sprayer with the cleaning solution and soon realized that it was basically water and didn't do much except make the sawdust wet. I handled the wet dust problem with a broom.

Then, I loaded up the deck stain into the sprayer by carefully opening and pouring the container. I was careful not to spill any because it appeared obvious that whatever the stain stuck to became *stained*.

I proceeded to use the sprayer by pumping air into it, waving the nozzle around board by board and using my roller to evenly distribute the cedar stain I selected.

This process worked well as I stained the floorboards. I eventually backed myself into the corner of the deck nearest the house so I pumped some more air into the

sprayer and continued my pattern of spraying. I set the sprayer behind me and began rolling out more stain. Then, I heard a strange noise.

SWOOSH! I turned around to find the sprayer shooting deck stain straight up. I grabbed the nozzle and to my surprised discovered the problem: I pumped so much air into the tank it blew the hose off the drum. I grabbed the two-gallon drum while it was shooting cedar colored deck stain into the air. I ran out into the middle of the back yard, wrestled it to the ground and tried pushing the handle down to unscrew the lid and release the pressure. Once I managed to cover myself in deck stain, the pressure was released directly into my face.

I looked back and noticed the backside of my house, part of my roof and most of the glass patio door dripping with liquid cedar. I assure you at this point that you have never seen any human being run for a garden hose so fast in your life.

I unraveled the garden hose while cursing the idiot who thought it would be a good idea to keep the garden hose rolled up in a plastic box (that idiot would be me). I turned the water on and ran around the house to immediately spray down the house, windows and roof. One bath towel, a roll of paper towels, half an hour and four Mr. Clean magic eraser sponges later, I got the stain off.

There are too funny parts to this story. First, as I was running to get the hose and frantically pulling it off the roll I thought, "Oh. This'll make for a nice read for the folks in Salem." The second part came when I realized I was actually scrubbing my roof with a sponge. Hopefully no one saw me.

In the end, my deck looks brand new and I have a greater appreciation for it. The deck sprayer made its way to the curb last Tuesday with the rest of the trash. And next year I won't be staining my deck.