

# Procrastination and the Honey-Do List

By Ltjg. Craig Carsten,  
VAQ-130

All four squadron aircraft were up and ready to fly east the next morning to join the ship for a training exercise. The sun was shining, and it was time to go home and cross off another item from the honey-do list. My No. 1 priority was to finish the shed my wife had been bugging me to build for months but which I had started only four days earlier.

As I pulled into the driveway, I knew it would be very late before I finished the siding and shingles. Then, I still had to pack for the boat.

After changing clothes and talking to the kids for a couple of minutes, I headed into the backyard. Earlier construction efforts had created quite a mess—one that required a quick cleanup. I also had to find all the necessary tools. Finally, I was ready to finish the siding work I had started the day before.

As I put up a stepladder next to the backside of the shed, I saw the ladder was leaning slightly because of the sloping terrain. “It’ll be all right,” I thought to myself. I went to the woodpile, pulled out a 4-foot-by-8-foot sheet of siding (weighing about 40 pounds), and returned to the backside of the shed. After placing the piece of siding against the shed, I climbed to the top rung of the ladder, which was about 10 feet high. “Top rung?” you may be asking—and with good cause.

While I pushed the sheet of siding into place, the ladder started tipping backward. I let go of the siding, but it was too late. The ladder kept going backward, and I fell between its legs, landing on a one-foot T-bar fence post I had installed several years earlier for my backyard fence.

Despite having the wind knocked out of me and suffering agonizing pain through my left, lower chest, I lifted myself off the fence post. I then climbed back into my yard and walked as fast as I could to my house. I threw open the backdoor, told my daughter to call 911, and lay down on the deck.

It took 3.5 weeks and three operations to repair a hole in my stomach, a torn diaphragm, a knick on my left lung, and a broken rib. Doctors sent me home with a stockpile of painkillers and antibiotics, and I



As the author learned, building a shed in your backyard requires more than one person.

subsequently lost 40 pounds. Three months passed, during which I had to overcome several secondary infections, before I could return to work.

What did I learn from this incident? In my haste to get things done, I attempted a job that required more than one person. I also should have paid attention to the safety sticker on the ladder, warning me to stay off the top rung. Finally, I should have made sure all four legs of the ladder were planted firmly on a level surface.

With better planning, I would have completed this job before the five-week detachment started, and I would have spent the evening with my family as I had wanted to do. ■