

## Standing Upright Before God (Part 2)

I was somewhat satisfied I'd gotten my new purchase home without killing anybody on the interstate, but there was also a twinge of regret, since my new antique upright piano now lay splintered and face down in the bed of my pickup after the precarious journey. I'd bought the dumb thing on a whim, and you can ask anybody, 'whimpering' will always get you in trouble.

The sun was now sinking low, and I had no idea how I was going to unload the monster. It had to be removed before my drive to work the next morning. I was examining the logistics of rolling it off onto my holly bushes when my big strong neighbor Caton wandered over.

"What you got there?" he asked.

Every shred of decency in me wanted to say, "The heaviest hunk of junk you ever seen in your life. Run while you got the chance!"

Instead, however, I talked it up and rehearsed the story of how I'd practically stolen it for \$60. Poor Caton, too neighborly for his own good, naively asked if I needed help unloading it.

"Aw well," I him-hawed, "I appreciate it, but I'm sure I can get it."

He looked a little skeptical, so after a few minutes I let him talk me into it.

As we pulled it off the tailgate I sorely misjudged the old upright's center of gravity again. The weight all pretty much shifted onto poor Caton. I gasped, thinking of the law suits ahead. Yet, to both our surprise, big Caton was able to throw his legs in 'granny low' and shuck it off of him. I'd never seen a display of such raw strength, or will to live.

As I stood there in awe, Caton gulped, stuffed his eyeballs back in and attempted to straighten his back. When that failed, he feigned a smile and hunched off to his house without a word. I called out, "Thanks!" I hope he heard me. I don't know. I didn't see him for quite a while after that.

From that point I closed the garage to all automobile traffic. It became my impromptu wood restoration and refinishing facility. I nailed what I could of the old boy back together and commenced a hand sanding campaign that consumed all my free time. In fact, I spent so many hours scrubbing the hide off that monster my kids began to refer to me as 'the dusty stranger from the garage'.

About a month into the process my brother Heath came over to ridicule my work. "That's all you've got done?" he asked, eyeballing the one little panel I'd almost completed. I wanted to topple the piano over on him, but all the energy I could muster up only produced a gag, laden with about half of a lung's worth of brown dust. Still seething, I rushed down to the hardware store and purchased an electric belt sander. Within a few short hours the once dignified antique piano stood naked, trembling, and ashamed.

Heath came out from watching T.V.. He ridiculed me for sanded all its edges off. "It's completely uneven," he said wagging his head, "Why didn't you just buy a can of paint stripper dummy? You'd of been able to wipe all that old stain right off in five minutes without ruining the whole piano!" What I replied, after briefly computing the logic of his analysis, even embarrassed that naked piano.

But anyway- It's amazing how many flaws you can almost cover up with a gallon of dark cherry stain, not to mention how many naïve work buddies you can alienate by conning into to helping you move a piano. However, soon my prized project was in the house. It was a day to remember. The kids like to refer to it as "D-Day". The day daddy came home.

Of course, just because you move your killer piano into the house doesn't mean all your problems are over. I still had to tune the thing. Being too cheap to hire a professional, I opted to send off for one of those mail order piano tuning kits. How hard could it be? I changed my tune a bit when I found out the old boy boasted over 200 strings! From the way they were busting on me, I figured they hadn't been tweaked since the turn of the century; the one before last.

To sum it up, I never actually got to play that piano. I'd simply become a slave to a hunk of junk that caused me to risk innocent lives getting it home. It bowed the spine of a perfectly good neighbor, sapped my energy, clogged my lungs, and caused me to become a stranger in my own house. Worst of all, I'd had to endure Heath's criticism and hind sighted wisdom! All I had to show for it was the pleasure of tripping over the huge blight in my cramped living room.

Now, since I've gotten the beam (piano) out of my own eye, let me ask if there's something in your life that shouldn't be there, maybe a sin, a weight, or a hindrance that's sapping your energy, ruining your

relationships, and endangering your health? Don't be as hard headed as I was. Go on and strip that weight off of your life today. *(Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. Hebrews 12:1 NLT)* You'll be glad you did.

You'll also be glad to know I finally pawned off that old killer upright as part of a package deal when selling the house. I kept the tuning wrench and belt sander though, just in case I find anything else that needs to be torqued or grinded. I just hope next time it's something other than my nerves. -Guy Sheffield 10-30-07