

Dad and I built the “Plaid Pad” as a clubhouse for me from aged oak planks that we obtained by tearing down our old fence. It was to be a fun thing, but it turned out to be a learning experience for both of us; we bent more nails than we drove in because the wood was so very hard. Our plan exceeded our materials<sup>1</sup>, and we ran out of wood, so Dad had to go get some plywood sheets to finish. We called it the “Plaid Pad” because of the remnant vinyl floor tiles that we somehow obtained that gave the floor a multi-colored appearance. But we built it well and even ran electricity underground to it.

I had a few sleep-overs there with various friends, and it was my place to get away even though it was only in the back of our yard. I wasn’t old enough to have a “man-cave”, so I guess it was my “boy-cave”.

During the time I was growing up, my Dad (and Mom) helped a poor family nearby, taking them to church and that sort of thing. Later on, Dad used another generation of the same family to help around the yard and house (raking, painting, etc.). I eventually “inherited” them when Dad died. I tried to help as well<sup>2</sup>.

One winter, two brothers that had been helping us were in need of a place to stay and get some protection from the near-zero temperatures. I was afraid to let them use the house I grew up in (one member of the family had burned down their house), but I consented to let them use the Plaid Pad. They had a heater, and we checked to make sure it was working. After that, I left them on their own.

A few nights later, one of the brothers came for help and knocked on our door. He had cut his finger, so I gave him some bandaids and antibiotic cream. As he shuffled off in the snow I realized that I should drive him over to the other house. I walked with him to the back yard, and as I approached the clubhouse and saw the light on, it suddenly struck me that my Dad would have approved of this use of our clubhouse. In fact, I thought he could probably see us there, and it warmed my heart even though the temperature was frigid.

My Dad had prepared the place for me, originally, but I had outgrown it. It played a part in my growing up, but I was just using it for storage. But now it was being used productively by someone who really needed it. And in doing so I thought that we were possibly “entertaining angels unawares<sup>3</sup>.”

1. “A man’s reach should exceed his grasp, or what’s a heaven for?” Robert Browning
2. see story “Your own Personal Lazarus” from Stories of the Second Swordsman.
3. Hebrews 13:1-2