

A CARPENTER'S GIFT - Author Unknown

Two brothers who lived on adjoining farms fell into conflict. It was the first serious rift in 40 years of farming side by side, sharing machinery, labor and goods as needed without a hitch. Then the long collaboration fell apart. It began with a small misunderstanding, grew into a major difference, which finally exploded into an exchange of bitter words followed by weeks of silence.

One morning there was a knock on John's door. He opened it to find a man with a carpenter's toolbox. "I'm looking for a few days' work" he said. "Perhaps you would have a few small jobs here and there. Could I help you?"

"Yes," said the older brother. "I do have a job for you. Look across the creek at that farm. That's my neighbor, in fact, it's my younger brother. Last week there was a meadow between us and he took his bulldozer to the river banks and now there is a creek between us. Well, he may have done this to spite me, but I'll go him one better. See that pile of lumber curing by the barn? I want you to build me a fence - an 8-foot fence - so I won't need to see his place anymore. Cool him down, anyhow."

The carpenter said, "I think I understand the situation. Show me the nails and the post-hole digger and I'll be able to do a job that pleases you."

After helping the carpenter with materials, John went down town to replenish supplies. The carpenter worked hard all that day measuring, sawing, nailing. About sunset when John returned, the carpenter had just finished his job.

John's eyes opened wide, his jaw dropped. There was no fence there at all. It was a bridge... a bridge stretching from one side of the creek to the other! A fine piece of work handrails and all - and the neighbor, his younger brother, was coming across, his hand outstretched. "You are quite a fellow to build this bridge after all I've said and done."

The two brothers stood at each end of the bridge, and then they met in the middle, taking each other's hand. They turned to see the carpenter hoist his toolbox on his shoulder. "No, wait! Stay a few days. I've a lot of other projects for you," said the older brother.

"I'd love to stay on," the carpenter said, "but, I have many more bridges to build."