



Two Shovels AND A Payback Plan

When our dog's barking left my family in the doghouse, Dad came up with a plan for dealing with our grumbling neighbors.

By Darryn Call

When I was 13, after eight years of living in a farmhouse with acres of land, my family moved into a suburban neighborhood. Our beautiful golden retriever, Tissue, didn't exactly like these new conditions. She barked the entire first night we were there. And our neighbors decided to pay us a visit.

Our parents weren't home at the time, so it was my sister who had the bad luck to answer the door. The neighbors blasted into us with their angry words. They said we'd better get our dog quiet if we knew what was good for us!

I didn't know what else to do, so I climbed into the doghouse with Tissue. I stayed there for hours with her head on my lap until she finally fell asleep.

When my parents came home, they were upset at what the neighbors had done. But after that night I never heard Mom and Dad complain about it again. So I figured they'd forgotten the whole thing. But I was wrong. A month later my dad asked me if I wanted to help him get even with the neighbors.

I nodded quickly in agreement. Payback! Dad sent me to the garage to grab two shovels. I had no idea what kind of payback he had in mind, but I walked next door with him willingly.

I should've known something was fishy right away. I saw our neighbor in his front yard struggling with a wheelbarrow and shovel. All by himself, he was trying to haul a huge pile of dirt to his backyard. With how

big that pile was and how slow he was going, it would take him forever to finish.

Without saying a word, Dad walked up to the mound, dug in his shovel, and started filling the wheelbarrow. Our neighbor stared at him in silent confusion. Following Dad's example, I pitched in and we quickly filled the wheelbarrow. We kept at it until the entire mound was gone.

I'm not sure exactly what the man thought about us helping. For me, though, I felt a healing in my soul as we served our neighbor.

That day my dad taught me a lesson he's taught me many times since: being kind is much better than getting even. **NE**

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