

Manly Men Maintain Their Chainsaws

I lost 25% of my apparent masculinity last month when my chainsaw quit working. And I don't know when I'm getting it back (the masculinity, not the chainsaw).

According to the small-motor guys at Pyramid Services, it's dead (the chainsaw). I rarely used it, and after running it for five years on the same mix of ancient gasoline and oil sludge, the carburetor is now toast. It turns out that replacing it (the carburetor) on a \$250 chainsaw costs enough that it (the chainsaw) can be considered a throwaway.

It has also just occurred to me that if I was a better writer, I could probably construct sentences in such a way that it would be unnecessary to include a set of parentheses to indicate what they (the sentences) are referring to.

Back to the masculinity reference, I have a longstanding nagging fear that deep down I'm girly-man. It's a real thing, you can look it up. I suspect this because I feel compelled watch *The Sound of Music* every time it's on cable, which is a lot. And I get weepy at the end when Christopher Plummer sings "Edelweiss." Every time.

The world would never suspect this because I surround myself with the Big Four trappings of manly-men, specifically; a Jaguar XKE vintage sportscar, a kickass snow blower, a Harley-Davidson motorcycle, and (until last month) a chainsaw.

Never mind that the XKE has been under a tarp behind the repair shop for 1 ½ years, the snow-blower was fired up just once last winter to manhandle two inches of snow and the Harley gets out maybe five times per summer for a 20-mile round trip. But that's enough to justify my collection of H-D T-shirts.

Around the house, my expertise with hand tools pretty much tops out with toenail clippers. Electric hedge trimmers have proven to be above my pay grade – I avoided a trip to the ER a few years ago only because I live with a nurse. As a result, any garden pruning that can't be accomplished with the toenail clippers has been handled with the sputtering chainsaw. Until last month.

The guys at Pyramid also gave me other distressing news and advice: never run E15 blended gas in small engines or 60's era Jaguars (E10 is barely OK), not all gas

stations prominently reveal ethanol blends, run the highest-octane gas you can find (up to 93), draining a gas tank each season is far better than dosing it with STA-BIL, and gasoline begins to deteriorate immediately after it's refined – don't use last year's gas out of that can in your garage.

Finally, even when you choose the correct gas at the pump, much of the first gallon or so that comes out is what remained in the hose from whatever poor choice the last guy made. In a small gas can, that will make a difference. If you can't find pumps with dedicated nozzles you may need to casually loiter around the gas station waiting for someone to use the blend you want. Then pounce, jaguar-like.

All of this is very important to me because nothing says manly-man like power tools, especially if they run on a volatile, flammable liquid mixture of hydrocarbons. I guess I'll head back over to Pyramid to buy a commercial-grade chainsaw that I'll probably end up poisoning with old gas out of sheer laziness. With any luck, that will occur before I accidentally remove one of my more important appendages with it.

This may all sound silly to you, but it won't do to have my apparent masculinity hitting on only three out of four cylinders, so to speak.

Manly Writers Group member Dave Parsons claims he can crush a beer can with his bare hand.