Hello South Carolina #4:  

The Missionary Kid Syndrome

If you were a missionary kid in the 1950s, you probably lived with 50 gallon steel barrels (AKA “drums”) which shipped goods to your country of choice, and also served as storage containers in the face of bugs, humidity and other variables.

They were a wondrous supply of interesting things. When Dad would say he needed to go look in a barrel, there were always curious eyes surrounding the enterprise.

The other facet of being a week away from the nearest hardware store was the propensity to save all sorts of odds and ends. Empty powered milk cans were pressed into service and the workshop had cabinets with rows and rows of cans that had miscellaneous stuff in them.

It was a rule that you saved every bit of hardware, but not much of a rule about putting them in the right can at the end of a project when you just wanted to go play.

QC sagged quite frequently.

I was the OCD one of the bunch. I spent many a happy afternoon dumping a can of “stuff” out in a tray, and sorting them into their appropriate categories. Then I would break out a bunch of milk cans and joyfully create new sub categories for nuts, washers, screws, bolts and anything else that I happened to be sorting.

By the time I was a teenager, Dad had been collecting stuff for a decade and a half, and his shop was a formidable resource center for someone graced with Yankee ingenuity. I cannot ever remember Dad or any of the rest of us fussing about the hardware store being in the city 200 miles away.

There was always a way to bubble gum something. Someone would confidently go to the workshop, poke around and come back triumphantly with a collection of parts that would get us going again.

Thus, as an adult, a collection of spare parts was simultaneously an essential part of legitimacy in my manhood and pragmatically a safety net for all the vagaries of life — even though there is always a Home Depot nearby.
My rarely-used stash here at the office got looked at with smug superiority many times a month, as it collected dust.

Now You See It.

Today it had to come down since the racks are coming down tomorrow. I found a buyer for them, even though they are old fashioned. They will be picked up on Monday.

But while I was packing them up, I was thinking ahead to South Carolina.

There is a two and a half car garage on the property. (And honey, that half a car is a trick to drive, lemme tell you!) When I have arrived and the immediate drama subsides, I can cover the entire back wall with peg board, buy some more of those lovely little bottles and caps and keep on collecting hardware that I will only need access to once or twice a year, since BOTH Lowe’s and Home Depot are just a mile away!

Meanwhile, the rack is sadly lacking emotional content.
I am going to enjoy that garage, but since Megan is the slalom queen, she will have to drive that half a car.

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