

Lying in Stone

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Now I don't condone going around lying to people. But if there was ever a good time for a lie it was here. I had gone to my parents' house and they had their friends over. The friends were talking about how they had their new prefab house brought in, and it needed the foundation built so it could be approved for them to live in. Henry and June are penny pinchers and will try anything to save money, because had they paid a professional company to come in and do it, it would have cost thousands. So Henry was asking people if they knew how to lay block and foundations, and telling them they would pay well for doing it. I was desperate for money, so I lied and told them that I had done it before, even though I never laid a block in my life. I had seen it done but had never physically done it.

After getting the job, I was getting everything ready to do the job, and I was getting very worried because the house was 80x30 foot base, and the more I looked at, the more it just kept looking bigger. I kept saying to myself, "Why am I doing this?" I knew the answer, and it was that I desperately needed the paycheck. Still, looking at the house and the job I had bid for was overwhelming. It didn't help looking at who I had to help me. They just made it worse, and I had to make a team out of them. I'll just say, on the dirt roads near Jackson, Ohio there are not a lot of jobs. Many of the people have minimal education, and these are the people that spoke up to do the job.

If you would have asked any of us if we'd done this work before, we all would have lied and said, "Oh ya, I've done this many of times," and none of us had. I asked each one of them if they had done this, and David, who was a neighbor across the road, said "oh ya, I did this I was a supervisor for ten years of a company who did this work."

If you knew David for very long, you knew he lied about everything. David is the kind of guy who always had or did something better than you but lives in a camper on the side of hill. The other guy who was helping was a guy named Stevie. He was nice kid that lived down at the end of the dirt road. I asked Stevie if he had done this kind of work before and he said, "Ya I worked for a brick laying company one time as a tender but I never laid any blocks or brick." Then I asked if he remembered how to mix the mortar very well, and he told me "yeah, I was pretty good at it, I haven't done it in awhile but I'm sure I'll get it figured out."

I was then a little relieved regarding the mixing of the mortar. So now I knew what the roster was: Stevie was mixing and tending with Henry, the owner of the house, I was the guy laying block, and David was bringing me blocks and starting the next row.

Now that everything was laid out and all the machines were set up, we made sure it was all hooked up and ready to go. I measured and laid out the base with string and stakes so I had a line to go by for the base to be straight. We decided to start up and run till dusk, to see if we had any complications that we would need to fix before the next day would start. Everything seemed to go smoothly, and the sun began to go down slowly, so we shut everything down and cleaned up to get ready for the next day. As I laid down that night thinking about the job that I had started, I thought about how sore I was starting to feel from the little bit that we did but very relieved that the job was going pretty smooth. I was also very anxious about how well

tomorrow would go because we had made it a quarter of the way down the house and it looked very professional to me.

Henry woke me up for breakfast the next day. He made me eggs, bacon, toast, and coffee and we talked about how good it was turning out so far. We also talked over breakfast how we could change a few things to make it easier and go faster. Henry was a good host, always asking me if I needed anything or if I was thirsty and did I need any water, which made me feel like he was thankful for my work. If we all started to get hungry, he would tell us to shut down and would go get us dinner. As we started up that morning and got moving at a good pace, I started to get in my happy spot and would be yelling "I'm running out of block," or "I need some more mortar." Surprisingly, I only heard a couple arguments throughout the day, and there was no work stoppage that lasted very long. I didn't have any time to argue with anyone and no one wanted me to run out of anything. I just kept laying block after block after block, and before I knew it the sun was going down. As we shut down for the night I noticed again how sore my arms were, and I mean I was really sore this time; I could barely move them. Then I stood back and looked at how far we had gotten that night and noticed we had made it all the way down one side of the house, and it looked so good to me that I couldn't believe it. As I went to bed for my second night, I felt very confident about what I was doing, but man did I hurt. I couldn't get comfortable. But my tired body took over and fell right to sleep.

It was a new day and Henry had woken me up again for breakfast. I couldn't move very well, and I lay there for a minute and had to pump myself up just to crawl out of bed, thinking that I couldn't wait for this to be over. I sat at the table with Henry and we talked a little more of some other things we could do and also had some things coming up that we needed parts for. As Henry took off to get parts, I was getting things ready as I waited for my crew to show up for work that morning. The guys must have felt like I did that morning, because they were running late.

Everyone finally showed up and we started all the machines and started on laying block. The soreness went away pretty fast, and I found my sweet spot again. I was just cooking along, laying mortar, then a block, mortar then a block, mortar then a block; I felt like a robot after a while. It wasn't too long we were half way down the other side of the house. It was different this day: there was an audience. Henry's daughter and her children, also Henry's wife, there were about ten people sitting on the hill watching us work away on their house. The closer we got to the end, the more some people would help out and get stuff for us, so no one had to stop what they were doing. As we came to the end of the house and turned the corner, I could see the end in sight. I was so relieved because I knew in one more hour I would be done and I could drive home and see my family with a nice check in my hand.

As I finished the last couple of blocks, I let the other guys finish the straight edge and went up on the hill and looked at what I accomplished. No one beside me could see what I saw. All they could see was a built foundation. What I saw was a fear that I had gotten over and an accomplishment that for the life of me I never thought I could do. I was glowing and beside myself with pride of my accomplishment.

It was my first and it was great. I loved it, and every time I go to visit them now, I feel like I have to pay a visit to my work and go outside and look at the whole thing, just to see how it's holding up. I very much enjoyed the payoff I got from doing this, and when I say payoff I don't mean the money part of it.