

Keeping Our House (2010)

Houston Hodges, for Writer's Corner on WLRH, Huntsville, AL USA

I have found a way to make one's spouse grateful to see you come home from a trip with dirty clothes, and that is to see that she is on crutches when you come in the door.

I had about twelve minutes to unwind, and then got to explore the new frontiers of housepersonhood. I got to transform a load of clothes from soiled to clean in the washer, and learned that we treat darks different from whites. I had suspected that already from other fields of endeavor. The twin machines in the laundry room are so challenging, and so advanced in technological complexity, that it is only fitting that they should be seen as the domain of guys.

Then I got acquainted with another machine, which I had previously thought existed only to interrupt my ball games; I found, to my surprise, that it also can be used to roll over the carpet and rub the fibers with a rotating brush while sucking up a lot of debris. It is probably called a rug-sucker, and it can be shoved over the whole house, except, of course, the corners, or it would take a lot more time. It takes quite a bit as it is.

Then I got to examine the floor of the kitchen on my hands and knees with some stuff that smelled like a pine tree while it dissolved some black marks on the vinyl; moreover, I discovered that the black marks were left when my walking shoes are rubbed a certain way on the vinyl. After that I got to rub the whole floor with a wet sponge on a stick; I think that is called a "mope" which is entirely appropriate.

Now all this energy was calculated to be satisfying and rewarding and to fulfill my sense of the dignity of humble tasks performed on behalf of a person you love and to leave me smiling quietly with satisfaction. What it actually made me feel was ... ah, used. Tired, yes -- and maybe even ignored and overlooked and underappreciated. And like all of this was going to have to be done again in a few days, and like I didn't want anyone walking on that kitchen floor, and I wished they'd walk very carefully on that carpet and not spill anything while they walked.

But I probably wouldn't feel like that if I did those jobs all the time, because I'd understand what a privilege it is to do them, and how challenging and dignified they are, and what they contribute to the betterment of the galaxy and all.

Houston Hodges does this and that at the Big Cove Presbyterian Church, out on Highway 431, where his title is Parish Associate.