

THE SPALPEENS  
*Confession*

I am sitting in front of the fireplace at the cabin with the cheerful glow and mellowing heat of the blazing log fire. The frown has disappeared from the face of my good wife, brought on by my grumblings. I had just finished bringing firewood from off the hillside back of the cabin to replenish the pile that had in some way dissolved into nothingness since we were there.

And the memory of a bit of philosophy my Dad had passed on to me when I was a teenager and he sensed that my conscience was bothering me due to having been inconsiderate or not having performed some tasks that should have been shared by me. “Son,” he said to me, “you can never expect to pay your parents back for your raising. The only way you can square the debt is by raising a family of your own.” How well he knew. Seven children have proved his point.

But he did not go far enough. He did not mention grandchildren. And twenty of them and six great grandchildren leave no doubt of the installments to be paid on the parental debt. Had I known of the debt I was piling up when I was a youngster, I’m sure that I would have been a model of honesty, politeness, obedience, charity, consideration, and all the things that go to make an angel. But no, I heard, but did not listen.

Retribution. I am now remembering the many little things I did or failed to do; that I brushed off; or thought I had. And now I find they left their mark and have come back to haunt me.

When I sat down in this easy chair, I had in mind to list the things that had caused my critical mumblings and included the protective glint to Grandma's eyes. But now I find that I am looking at myself in a looking glass, and the image is not beautiful.

And I am remembering all the things my offspring and theirs have done for me.

And how proud I am of everyone of the dom li'l Spalpeens.

RETROSPECT: I hope I have learned to sit in an easy chair in front of a blazing log fire in the peace and quiet of a log cabin and appreciate how wealthy (not in dollars) and happy I am in 1977.