The magic hammer

I am not one of those purists who believe that the only two tools you need in your toolbox are WD40 and duct tape. Although I certainly do appreciate the value of those two, WD 40 to loosen anything that is stuck and duct tape to tighten anything that's loose.

It's just that I know there are many times a special tool is required to get the job done, and it's my quest in life to have one of each of them. A couple years ago I was impressed to read about a man who had acquired over 10,000 pens and pencils in his life and ever since hearing that my goal has been to acquire 10,000 tools.

I think I'm almost there. My wife says I already have the biggest hammer collection in the world, and she's counting on me selling my assortment of ball peins and claws to provide for our comfortable retirement.

I have everything from blacksmithing tools to jewelry making tools. Many are as common as a broken screwdriver, while others are as rare as Feng shue in a shop. I have the tools to straighten your fender or bind your book. I took up leather work years ago just because it requires lots of different tools. I have everything from three Foredoms (a Dremel on steroids) to a "Sax," which is a gruesome looking weapon that is used to put slate on roofs. I've never done that but if my home ever gets invaded I'll break out my my Sax and the crooks will run for their lives.

My latest big purchase is an engraving machine that's at least 50 years old. Some engraver probably used to put names on trophies, buckles, bowls and Cross pens.

I'm having a ball with it and have made name tags for my wife in 30 different colors and typefaces. I'm sure they'll come in handy when we're both old and senile and can't remember each other's name.

My most glorious days are when a friend drops by and I can try to fix whatever it is they brought with them because I happen to be the only person in three counties with the right tools to fix it. Not to brag, but I've fixed everything from a seized clock to an oil painting with a big hole in it.

I've even fixed things I can't pronounce, like a sphygmomanometer (a blood pressure machine). In the rare case I can't fix something I just use it as an excuse to buy even more specialty tools. Guys, when I die and my wife sells all my stuff in a yard sale, believe me, you won't want to miss it.

My neighbor Fred is a tool junkie too, and he's always coming over to the house with some weird looking tool he bought at a yard sale. He'll say, "I bet you don't have one of these."

Then I'll pull open a drawer in one of my three rolling tool chests and show him 18 different versions of the tool he's holding.

"What is it?" asks Fred. "What does it do?"

"I have no idea," I'll say, "but if I ever do need one I have one in every size."

Fred keeps everything in a state of disrepair so that we can use one of my rare tools to fix it. Last month his truck wouldn't start, and he thought I was a genius because I got it started for him.

A month later his truck broke down in town and instead of calling me, he called Smitty, the local mechanic. It hurt my feelings that Fred didn't call me first, but he swears that Smitty retrieved a rusty, nondescript hammer from his truck, tapped on the truck's starter one time and the truck started right up.

“I’ll give you $100 for that hammer!” said Fred immediately.

Word spread about that magic hammer like a Forest Service control burn, and it gave me an idea on how to make the wife happy by getting rid of part of my hammer collection. Fred and I have now sold over 100 Original Magic Hammers and hope to sell thousands more when our informercials start running on TV.

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