

A communion of tools

by [Gary Fincke](#) in the [November 27, 2007](#) issue

Each time I visit, my father gives me
The things that are sold from weekend driveways—
A painting, old golf clubs, assorted books.
Before it's too late, he says, repeating
That caution bimonthly for nineteen years
Because the Bible says threescore and ten.

But lately, they've been practical, these gifts,
Things requiring muscle, as if some part
Of him might enter me through communion,
Transubstantiation happening when
I take these things in my hands, receiving
His body and blood in the church of work,
Believing I will take it through my hands,
That forgiveness will follow when I fill
His role as oldest, feeling him return
In the useful things lifted one morning,
The rake and clippers, the shovel and hoe.

Beside the porch, this afternoon, his gifts
Are clustered like possibilities raised
By numbers—a sickle, a pick, a scythe.
“One last thing,” he says, waving me inside
Where I imagine vacuum cleaner, broom,
A year's-stiff mop, following his shuffle
Until, in his bedroom, he says, “Not these.
Just look,” showing me nail file and tweezers,
Cuticle scissors, the small implements
Of grooming left behind by my mother,
What he won't part with, flexing those scissors
With finger and thumb, ready to receive.