

Repairmen at the gate



Owning a home is one of the most powerful and rewarding experiences in life. I can still recall the overwhelming feeling of pride I had when entering this house, 20 years ago, and inhaling that fresh sense of accomplishment. And in just 2 more years, I'll actually own

it!

A little over seven years ago, I spent more than half the original cost of the house remodeling it. That wasn't something I had ever envisioned, but I had encouragement from Mother Nature (in the form of Hurricane Wilma).

Since I was going to have to spend more than my insurance check on the home, I decided to go all the way and fix all the curious (read: hideous) design decisions by the original builders.

That large sum of cash has kept me in relative peace in my "new" home. New furniture, new appliances, new flooring and new fixtures all accompanied the makeover and my home and I settled into a blissful relationship.

The honeymoon is finally over.

Over the course of the last half-year or so, I've been forced to call on an ever-increasing number of repairmen for a variety of reasons. Screens, toilets, drain spouts and other miscellaneous. It adds up, but I still consider it a relative bargain, since nothing structurally has needed repair.

One constantly bedeviling issue is my front gate. Technically, it's a side gate or an adjacent gate. Basically it's

perpendicular to the front door and encloses my a/c unit and small front patio (and storage room).

The gate has had a rotating door (I wish) of repairmen trying to make it child safe, as in me.

I try to allow some leeway to the workmen owing to the sad construction decisions made by those aforementioned original builders (they didn't just make weird choices on the inside).

The walkway to the front door slopes upward, which is logical in a rainy state like Florida. The problem is the original slab/fence construction follows that slope.

The slope creates two problems: (1) When opening the gate (towards the front door), it will jam against the higher sloped walkway, which (2) increases the stresses on the gate hinges.

After several tries, my last repairman seemed to successfully buttress the gate/hinges. Unfortunately, he installed a simple latching mechanism on the gate.

It's the type of latch that hooks the door closed when the gate swings shut. Which the gate has regularly done when I'm inside the bloody gated area.

Occasionally I am able to squeeze my fingers into the gap and click up the latch, losing only a little skin on my lucky days. On other days, I've had to wait to flag down joggers or passerby's. Finally, I reached a point even my procrastination powers could not overcome.

I spent a good while in both Lowe's and Home Depot (after I was dissatisfied with the Lowe's selection) contemplating gate latches and the types that would not leave me trapped. Smartly (for a change), I brought measurements of the gap the latch would have to bridge and finally made my decision.

Then I headed back to Lowe's when I got home and found my

rarely used drill had a dead battery (as in unchargeable). Finally, finally, I drew my little holes and drilled through the wood and power-screwed the latch into place and...

...it's awesome! Not only will I never get trapped inside the gate anymore, I don't have to swing the gate all the way open, thus saving those hinges for a while longer.

I'm nowhere near a handyman when it comes to my home, my previous finest achievement a toss-up between hanging track lighting in the kitchen or verticals on my sliding doors. Still, in my occasional moments, I get a thrill of satisfaction for having done something myself – that actually works.

As far as I can tell, it should be some time before I need any more repairmen at my gate.