

Barn-Raising Tuesday

One Tuesday morning, Arthur woke up with the first rays of the sun—a rare event! This particular Tuesday was no ordinary Tuesday. It was barn-raising Tuesday.

For weeks, everyone in Peakview Valley had been preparing and gathering materials to build a barn on Sunset Hill! Everyone was going—the blacksmith, the tinker, the storekeepers, the ranchers, and all of their families. They were bringing all the wood, hay, hammers, and nails needed to make the best barn the valley had ever seen. Afterwards there would be eating, drinking, and dancing until the sun set.

For the first time Arthur was old enough to help!

In a matter of minutes, Arthur managed to get dressed and dash out the door. Already wagons were rattling up the nearby hill, and families carrying picnic baskets strolled merrily along. By running his fastest, Arthur beat most of the wagons to the top of the hill.

Right away the food table caught his eye.

The women of the village had no doubt been baking for days in advance, for Arthur could smell a veritable feast beneath the pretty checkered cloth that was hiding these delicacies. He imagined that there would be dozens of casseroles, breads, cheeses,



pies, and pastries. And he especially hoped for Mrs. Ansom's famous double-decker raspberry brownie. He squinted his eyes and scrunched his nose, trying to imagine a barn raising without the appearance of this famous brownie. He did not succeed.

Sidling closer to the food table, Arthur's hand stretched toward the cloth covering—when the familiar voice of the village baker sounded behind him.

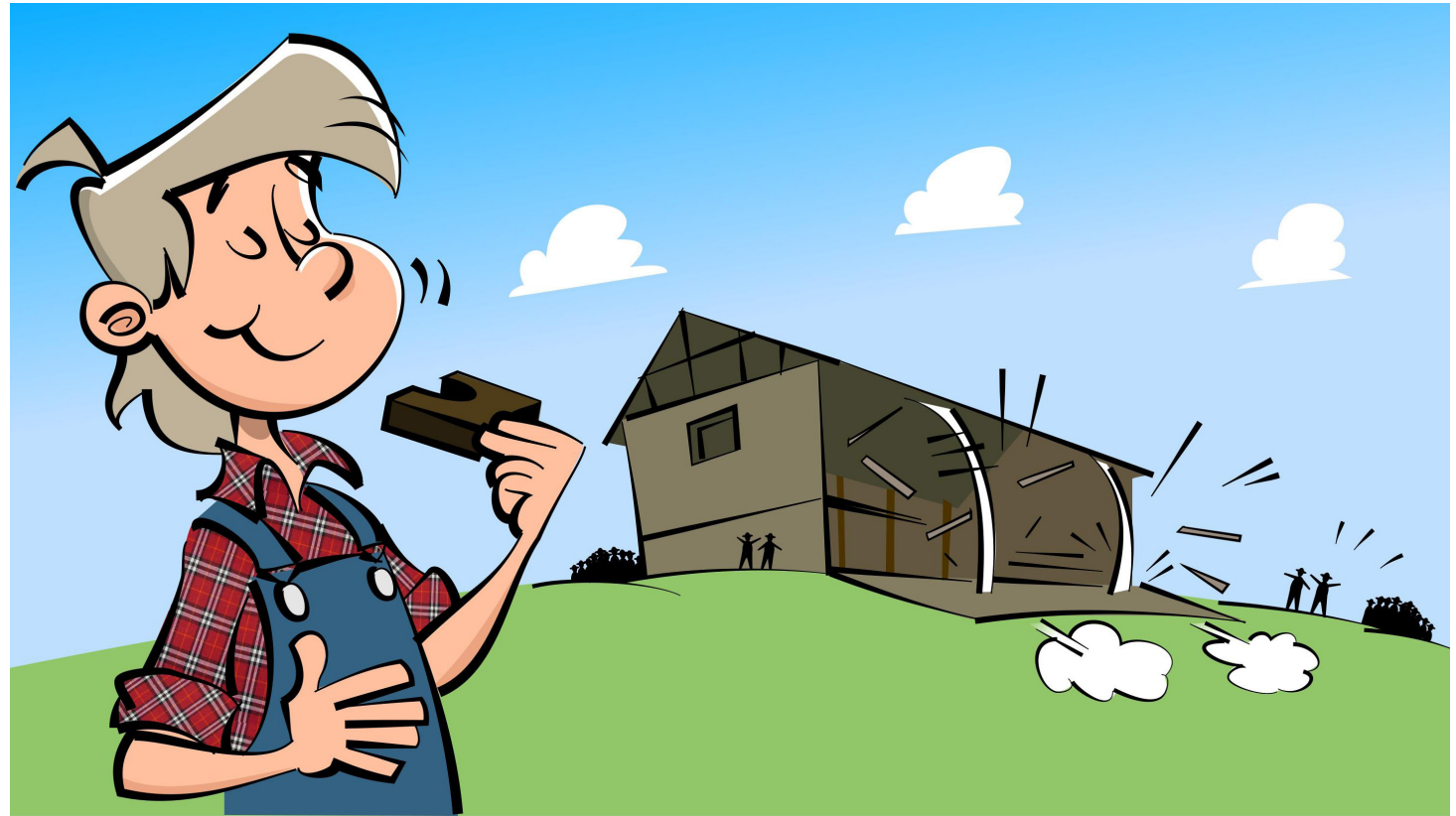
The village baker wagged his finger and said in his deepest, most serious voice (the one he usually reserved for children foolhardy enough to dash through his lawn), "You'll have to wait on eating, young Arthur. We all have a job to do today—first you finish raising your part of the barn, then you may raise your fork. ... And not a moment before."

Soon everyone arrived and the men began building. Arthur watched as they raised the barn frame. Each man knew exactly what his job was, and did it well. It seemed only a few minutes until the entire framework was standing.

Then it was Arthur's turn. He went to his side of the barn and started nailing. At first he hammered with gusto, pounding nail after nail into the wood. It may not have been the most fun he had ever had, but it felt good to be a part of something important.

Glancing around while resting his arm, he happened to look over his shoulder. All the men who had raised the framework were gathered around the food tables—*eating*! He watched openmouthed as plate after plate was filled and then emptied! The men were working their way along the table, enjoying cheeses, munching meat pies, swigging refreshments—and edging ever closer to the dessert table and Mrs. Ansom's brownies!

Arthur looked at the portion of the barn wall that he had been assigned to and realized he was



only half done. He thought about how long it would take to finish. "I can't wait that long!" he whispered.

Without a second thought and hardly even a first one, Arthur turned on the speed. He hammered a haphazard nail here, a sloppy nail there, and quite a few bent ones in between. He soon completed his assigned portion, and bee-lined toward the brownies. Within a few minutes of biting into his favorite delicacy, he forgot all about the extra nails and the poorly done job. In fact, he hardly remembered there was a barn, until the mayor stood up and shouted, "And now, the grand finale of the barn raising—the roof!"

Heavy ladders were leaned up against the barn walls, and the strongest men began lugging huge oak timbers up to the top. Suddenly, the far end of the east wall gave a mighty crack! The men scrambled off the building every which way, making it safely to the ground just before the wall went crashing down. A great cloud of dust shot high into the air.

It took several hours to fix the damage, and those few hours gave Arthur a lot of time to think. Mrs. Ansom's famous double-decker raspberry brownies suddenly didn't seem so important.

After the barn had been finished and the celebrations had restarted, Arthur spotted the mayor making his way toward him. The pastry tables formed a barrier between Arthur and a quick escape.

The mayor came up beside him and put one of his great big hands on Arthur's shoulder.

"You know, Arthur," he said, not sounding at all mad, "this isn't the first mishap we've had on Barn-raising Tuesday."

"Really?"

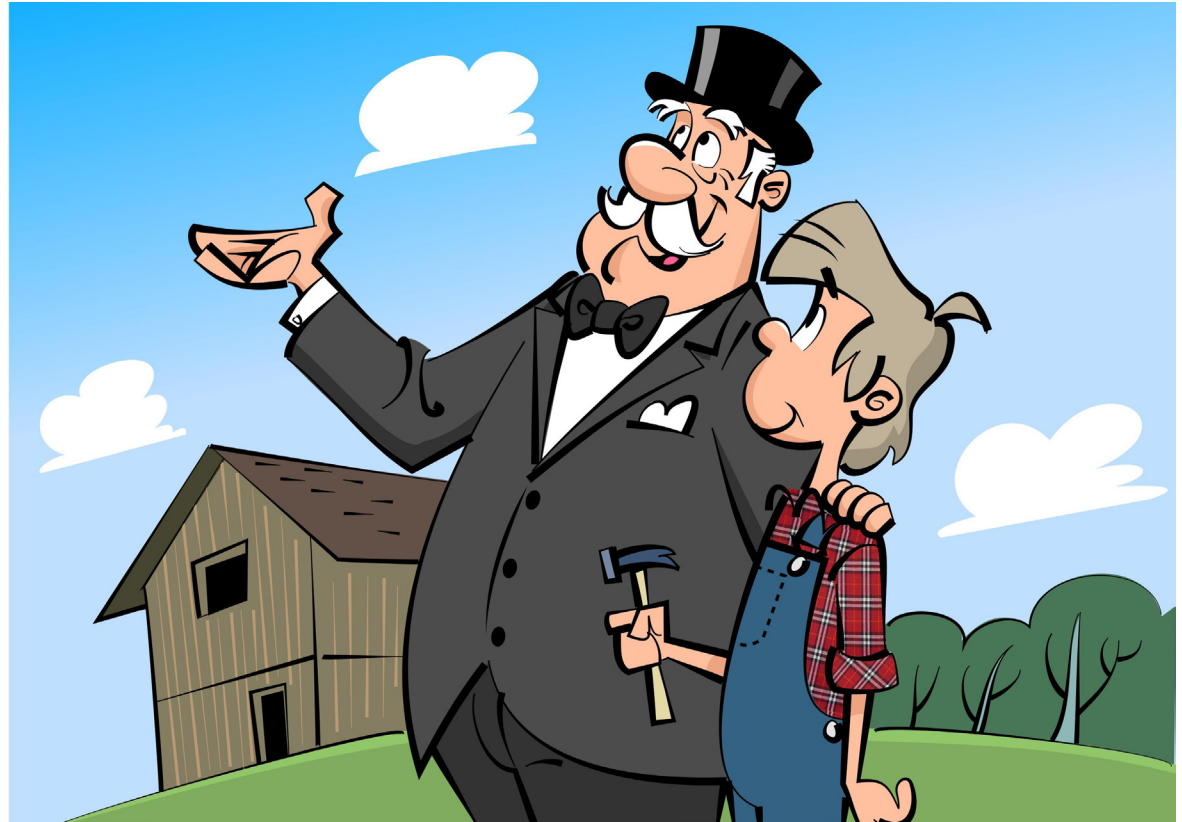
"Oh yes," he nodded, a twinkle appearing in his eye. "A long time ago, quite a bit before you came around, a very similar thing happened with me. Except, the whole barn went up in smoke that time!"

Arthur scrunched his nose, trying to imagine how the wise mayor could have been involved in something like that.

Again, his imagination came up short.

"We've all 'brought down the barn' at some time or another," said the mayor. "And I think you know a lot more about responsibility than you did before. That's why I'm formally inviting you to our next barn-raising Tuesday. I think those nails will go in a lot better next time around."

Arthur nodded enthusiastically. "Yes, sir! Don't worry a bit! I'll work till it's done and won't stop a moment earlier!"



"I know you will!" said the mayor as he turned toward the happy crowd, his great big face wrinkled in smiles. "And someday, you can tell this story to somebody else."

Arthur jumped two feet into the air, and landed with a grin at least as big as the mayor's. He imagined himself much older, much taller, and with a great big beard, retelling the day he brought down the barn. "Now *that* I can imagine."

Think about it:

Do you give each job your very best? Excellence is giving your best to any task that is before you. The reward of excellence is satisfaction in a job well done.