

Seventy-Two is Not Thirty-Five

by David Budbill

I spent seven hours yesterday at my daughter's house helping her expand their garden by at least ten times. We dug up sod by the shovelful, shook off the dirt as best we could; sod into the wheelbarrow and off to the pile at the edge of the yard. Then all that over and over again. Five hours total worktime, with time out for lunch and supper. By the time I got home I knew all too well that seventy-two is not thirty-five; I could barely move.

I got to quit earlier than Nadine. She told me I'd done enough and that I should go get a beer and lie down on the chaise lounge and cheer her on, which is what I did.

All this made me remember my father forty years ago helping me with my garden. My father's dead now, and has been dead for many years, which is how I'll be one of these days too. And then Nadine will help her child, who is not yet here, with her garden. Old Nadine, aching and sore, will be in my empty shoes, cheering on her own.

So it goes. The wheel turns, generation after generation, around and around. We ride for a little while, get off and somebody else gets on. Over and over, again and again.