

Most people are aware of the "slippery slope" theory. It involves getting oneself into a position where one does something a little less adequately than usual and then more and more quickly descends--as on a slippery slope--into something approaching chaos, or at least, disorder.

This theory is very evident in my behavior. I can point to our desk as a prime example. Periodically, I clean the desk top. I remove all the items that have homes elsewhere, I wipe and dust and get everything that should be on the desk in good order. Then, I admire the results and assure myself that I will keep it in the same condition. After all, it just involves putting away what I use when I use it instead of pitching everything onto the desk.

I did such a cleanup a few weeks ago. Now, though, this is what the desk looks like, and things have not yet descended to their nadir: On the right side of the desk top is our printer. It actually looks better than sometimes. There is nothing lying on the cover, and it is not dusty. To the left of the printer, though, disorder begins to reign. Two books, one belonging to the local library--and probably overdue--and one loaned to me by a friend, lie on the desk. Our check book is on top of them. Behind them is a little zip lock plastic bag containing the pieces for a pair of felt baby shoes. I took this from its proper place a week or so ago, intending to sew the shoes, but it has not happened. Behind the bag is a device I use to wind bobbins when I weave. That does have another proper location, but I can defend myself in this case, because I have been working on the loom, and I use the little bobbin winder almost every day. I fasten it on the edge of the desk top when I use it, so I don't really feel that this is part of the "slippery slope" on which I am quickly sliding. However, if I don't move it to its proper location when I am finished with the weaving, then it will have entered a less defensible realm.

The laptop computer on which I am composing this newsletter is in the center of the desk top--just where it should be. Behind it lies a DVD Great Courses lecture series on chess. That has a place in a desk drawer. A birch bark container with coins stands at the back of the desk, but that is okay. To the left is the copy of Roget's Thesaurus I use sometimes.

Again, I am not in trouble in this case.

But, then, there are the "in and out" baskets. One should contain unpaid bills and letters that need answering. The other one has items that need attention, but not immediate action. The camera is there, too, and a whole bunch of junk that I can only identify by going through it piece by piece. I have paid bills, but the farm bookkeeping that I usually do at the same time has not been attended to for some time, and all that is lying there, plus a book I have recently reviewed for a magazine.

In front of the "in and out" baskets lies a clock that needs a battery. My knitting is also lying on the desk on that side, as well as the sweater pattern that I am using.

At this point, I am probably only halfway down that slippery slope. It could be worse, and probably will be before I get fed up with the situation and tidy it all up.

The desk is not the only area that suffers from the slippery slope problem. The kitchen cupboard is another prime example. After I clean the shelves and drawers, I am careful to put things back in their proper places. But, inevitably, I will be in a hurry while baking or cooking, and I will just shove a spice or jar of something back in its general location. Gradually, it gets worse. By the time I have to clean the cupboard again, I will find tea packages in the spice area, pasta where the salt should be, vanilla where I usually store molasses. And I find duplicates of baking powder and cornstarch. I thought I was "out" and bought more, only to realize that I had just misplaced what I had.

This time of year, when we have been both extra busy with lambing season and extra tired from lack of rest, I see evidence of the "slippery slope" in many areas of the cabin. But, I will straighten it all out during spring cleaning, and it will all be tidy again. I must say, too, that it is so much more satisfying having good order again when it is not always the case. I appreciate it more for having these periods of disorder, too. Or, maybe that is just my justification to myself for sloppy behavior?