

I have cracked my elbow. My right elbow, obvs. It is worse than it sounds.

Short story even shorter, it involved my dogs and the dado rails in my old house. Long story: my arm simply can't be trusted to do the tasks it has been doing with varying degrees of competence my entire life.

Instead, my left hand has had to step up to the plate. The word 'left', in case you don't know, comes from the Old English 'lyft', which means 'weak' or 'foolish'; historically, people believed the left hand was the weaker side.

Tell that to Barack Obama, Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey or Leonardo da Vinci; not a weak or foolish person among them. Jimi Hendrix was left-handed and he played a right-handed Fender Stratocaster turned upside down with the strings reversed. Weak or foolish? I think not.

Visits to the elbow man followed, as the orthopaedic doctor who specialises in elbows is called. 'Course he is. Ultrasounds, X-rays and manipulations later, it was announced that I had bashed off a piece of the head of the radius, where it connects with the ulna on the radial notch.

Healing is taking a while and I have dark thoughts that my left hand is making a power play here. But if there is any hope of me entertaining that, it has to get better at the job.

My thanks this festive season go to Christopher Latham Sholes, Samuel Soulé and Carlos Glidden, inventors of the typewriter and QWERTY keyboard a hundred years before I was born. I can type up Christmas lists and instructions and even press print. And hand

out my missives to all those who will share the Christmas space with me.

Yes folks, my Christmas army of one has been reinforced. I have troops now.

And not a moment too soon. Two hands are needed to make the Christmas pudding, but this year not my two hands. After emptying the entire packet of flour into the sieve, several tablespoons of cinnamon on the second try – I dare you to try to grate an orange rind with the wrong hand –

I corralled my kids and put them to work.

Wrapping presents was another exercise in futility. I tried it sitting on the floor, and used my feet to help with the folding while I managed to do inexplicable things to the sticky tape. Those things were not always about neatly sticking down the wrapping paper.

And good grief, the tying of ribbons. The only thing to be said about it is that my handsome husband gallantly rode to the rescue and now the presents all look as pretty as a picture. Turns out he's quite good at this wrapping business. He might have successfully hidden this talent, but now I know, and we both know it'll be his job forever more.

Putting up the Christmas decorations is once again also a family affair. We used to do it together, building our festive cheer, and then the children grew older and scorned the magic of Christmas.

It might have taken a cracked elbow, but we are creating it again, bauble by tinsel, pudding by cake, presents by love. Just as it should be.

I may have to drag this elbow thing out a little longer, at least until after the decorations come down.

United we stand

It's Christmas and time for cheer;
cakes must be baked, presents
wrapped and decorations put up.
This year, the family pitched in

by **LORRAINE KEARNEY**

