

And so to bed

Article and illustration by Bill Naylor



I've slept in some uncomfortable places. Once on a steamer out of Papua with no money for a cabin I hung a hammock in the engine room. As the steamer hit a stretch of choppy sea, the two ends of the hammock slid together and I spent the night with my head

between my knees, imprisoned in what appeared to be a giant string bag-for-life.

That's why I appreciate my thirty-year-old king-size bed and its firm horsehair mattress. Unfortunately, like me, it's showing its age and sags in the middle. My wife hates the bed as much as she hates my football team, and rejects my explanation that top quality mattresses always sag as they mature. But I admit the sagging has increased and formed a crater, which I'm sucked into every night. On awakening, my back and neck ache, and on vacating the crater the bed groans louder than I do. The reflection in the mirror of my misshapen frame in pyjamas is what I would imagine the hunchback of Notre Dame looks like on his day off.

My wife, who now sleeps in the spare room, insists she wants a replacement. After much pleading she has agreed to let me stay providing the bed goes. Consulting Google I found you can fix a sagging mattress by placing two large wooden boards

underneath it. After rescuing two boards from a skip and surfing under the mattress to place them in situ, my thirty-year-old mattress looked as good as any thirty-year-old mattress supported by two wooden boards. Testing it in a trial kip I awoke pain-free. The bed was cured! All I had to do now was convince the wife.

Due to an allergy to frying pan scars it was essential I lie. I explained while my wife sighed.

"Stroke of luck! I mastered a bed mender's technique for eliminating the sag in a mattress by adjusting the springs in the divan base."

She smiled. "More good luck! The new bed is arriving today. At the same time your bed will be taken away."

"Away"! Away where?" I enquired anxiously.

"Not sure. Somewhere where it can be crushed or burnt to death."

I was still grieving when a box containing the new mattress arrived. It appeared far too small and on opening it the mattress couldn't wait to get out, expanding rapidly like a mutant marshmallow trapping me in the narrow hallway. I wrestled, kicked and head-butted the uncooperative mass of memory foam up the stairs, finally throwing it on the new bed. My wife never stops singing the praises of her new trendy bed with a mattress that was initially ridiculously soft. I do miss my old king-sized pal. We had grown old and out of shape together. My wife now thinks the new mattress is too firm. But it's just what you would expect with two large boards supporting it.

