

As I rode into work on Friday evening, I was looking at the Christmas lights and listening to Andy Williams' version of "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear."

There was snow here and there and a crispness to the air. One you really can't appreciate until you have to walk a dog or stay outdoors for an extended period of time. I know; it gets way colder than this.

The little tasks that pile up around Christmas time are threatening to drag me under. I've been nursing a sore knee and many things didn't get done in a timely manner and some won't get done at all. There are no Christmas lights adorning the Spencer home this year.

How can this be?

The only thing I'm glad of is that I don't have to mess with the net lights this year. Last year, we had to replace the lights on our bushes; three of the five net lights were out. We found these battery-powered LEDs with timers that we hoped would match the rest. (What we really did was take the only LED net lights we could find and prayed they would match.)

When we got them home, the task of putting the batteries in fell to me as my husband was putting in the usual holiday hours. Sounds easy enough. I've put batteries in a lot of things: open them up, put the batteries in and you're good to go. Riiiiight.

This is how it really happened. Each battery pack had four screws. We have five bushes. That's 20 screws. The battery packs came screwed shut so you had to unscrew them to start with. (That's 40 screws. Not really but I'm using illogical math.)

These are not your average screws. They are tiny. I had to scrounge around and find one of the few pocket screwdrivers I had left from when dad had the station. We had them from the parts stores and battery manufacturers; we had a lot of them. Well, at least we did. I finally found one squirreled away in the corner of a drawer and got to work.

And the house was dark

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The screws came out easily enough and then I packed the batteries in the first case, closed it and started to put the screws back in. That's when I noticed the battery packs had to fit together just right so they would seal and water wouldn't get inside. On the third screw, I had to unscrew the first two, press the case back together until I heard the snap and then start screwing them back in.

By the time I got them all done, I really didn't care. They could match — or not; they were going up. I put them on the bushes and turned them all on as fast as I could so they would all go off close together and then come back on the next day at nearly the same time.

The only thing I have to say is that it was nice not to have to run an extension cord to the bushes. Oh, yeah. I didn't put the screws back in when I took them down and removed the batteries, either. They are in a baggy tucked in the bag.

Oh, yeah. Not going to get me again.

At least not this year; they are in the basement with the other stuff I never got around to this year.