

Going Home Again

**by
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While home in WV the last couple of weeks we were able to visit a lot of relatives and enjoy the rush of memories that flooded in. In Lewisburg Judy and I visited the North House Museum which, over the last 150+ years, served as the home of late 18th century lawyers; a country inn and pub along the “busy” Seneca trail East to West from Virginia to the rest of the new world; the home of the President of Greenbrier College for Women; staff members of the same College and then sat empty for a few years. A serious renovation in the last couple of years has restored the beautiful property to the grandeur it enjoyed in the past. As I would see old buildings now sitting vacant, smells of the woods after a rainstorm, and that special smell that cattle leave behind as they graze in the pastures I couldn’t help thinking about the frequent trips my family would make to the area when we were kids. My brother and I didn’t live in the country but were born there and made the three-hour trip every long weekend my dad had from work.

Every summer from early childhood into our teen years my brother Rudy and I would be brought East from Belle, WV, along US Rt. 60, over Gauley and Sewell mountains and placed in the home of one of our many cousins in Greenbrier County. We would always arrive just in time to help with the first cut of hay, doing whatever our age and abilities would allow, to help bring it in and stack one of those picturesque hay stacks, now replaced with huge round bales of hay. Even as the youngest of the bunch we could draw buckets of cool water from the well and carry them into the fields so the older workers could swig down a big dipper full without having to take a break from their important work. What would take a minimum of 10 people back then to get the job done now can be done with two, and even one at times, with the round balers and other machines.

Rudy and I would be rotated from house to house so we could stay with all our cousins during the summer, and I won’t say that each of our hosts were glad to get rid of us but it seemed there was a bigger smile on their face as we were leaving than there was when we arrived. Visiting the North House Museum brought back

even more poignant memories when I saw the chamber pots sitting beside the beds in the upstairs bedrooms. I'd bet a dollar to a doughnut many of you don't even know what a chamber pot is or have ever used one for the purpose it was intended. Some of you might know this particular object as a slop pot or night pot, or something a little more descriptive, but it's real name is a chamber pot and they've been around forever.

As a small child I was introduced to this bedroom fixture when I woke my mother up and told her I had to go to the bathroom. We were staying at a relative's house in the country and it was bitterly cold outside, so rather than take me to the edge of the back porch or the 50 yard trip to the outhouse, she told me to sit on the bed pot. This was my first experience and I really didn't know the proper procedures involved... nor did I know that others had already been there before me. It is also important to remember that with no electricity available it wasn't all that convenient to light the kerosene lamp... so we operated in the dark. I tried to make a proper three point landing on this round bottomed container but unfortunately my attempt was off course and I sat down on the edge and proceeded to roll with the pot as it turned over with all its contents spreading over the floor. Needless to say my mother and my aunt, in whose house we were staying, were not happy with me and my cousins made sure I never forgot that moment.

When we stayed with our cousins it always meant that at least four of us, sometimes more, would be sleeping together. Usually the bed was snug up against the wall and if there were four of us we would have two at the foot of the bed with our feet toward the head, and two in the normal position. Of course there was always one of the group who was known for wetting the bed so he was made to sleep on the outside edge of the bed so his "accident" wouldn't ruin the sleeping space of the rest of the bunch. Also, if it were really cold outside, those on the inside, nearest the wall, would almost always end up pulling the covers off the one on the outside edge. It would not be nice of me to tattle on the one who had to sleep on the outside but you do need to know it sure got cold out there without any covers.

Well, time to get on the road again. Hopefully, by the time you read this Judy and I will be back home in The Villages with no more trips in front of us until... let's see... oh yeh... next week. Have a great week.

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