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“A Farmer’s Advice”

by
Tom Holbrook

My brother and I were born in Greenbrier County, WV, but moved to Belle, WV, when I was three years old. However, summers and long school breaks would always find us coming back to where it all began for my mom and dad in Slab Camp and Punkin’ Center (formerly known as Auto, WV) where they were born. My granddad, John Freeman Holbrook, farmed in Punkin’ and I was told he was well respected by all because he was a fair man and acted as an intermediary when disputes would arise. They called him Freeman and he was also the community barber and dentist. I still have the equipment he used to cut hair and pull teeth... the forceps are especially daunting. I understand he also used to win all the community spelling bees.

Because farmers are known to have a respect for the land that yields their crops they also have a great respect for the One that created the land they till, plant and harvest. Working closely with the land and dependent upon the whims of nature for a successful crop, farmers have long been known to exhibit a keen wisdom on all things logical and to give opinions on such things, even when they haven’t been asked.

The number of those still working the land for a living has dropped drastically over the last century but one thing hasn’t changed and that’s the wisdom of those who are still admitting their dependence on the land and its Creator. When sizing up a situation, or being asked their opinion on important matters farmers seem go right to the meat of the question with short, succinct sentences that leave no doubt as to the way to the challenge should be addressed. I happened upon a few of these gems of wisdom and thought I would pass them on to you. I’d like to think my granddad Holbrook spoke a few of these words of wisdom to those who came callin’ on him. Who knows, maybe they’ll speak to challenges your facing in your own life today.

- Your fences need to be horse-high, pig-tight and bull-strong
- A bumble bee is considerably faster than a John Deere tractor
- Words that soak into your ears are whispered... not yelled
- Meanness don’t jes’ happen overnight
- You cannot unsay a cruel word
- It don’t take a very big person to carry a grudge
- Don’t corner something you know is meaner than you
- The best sermons are lived, not preached
- If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop diggin’
- Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer
- Every path has a puddle or two on it
- Forgive your enemies. It messes up their heads
- Timing has a lot to do with the outcome of a rain dance
- Don’t interfere with somethin’ that ain’t botherin’ you none
- Sometimes you get, and sometimes you get not

- The biggest troublemaker you'll probably ever have to deal with, watches you from the mirror every mornin'
- Always drink upstream from the herd
- Good judgment comes from experience, and a lotta that comes from bad judgment
- Puttin' the cat back into the bag is a lot harder than lettin' it out in the first place
- Live simply. Love generously. Care deeply. Speak kindly and leave the rest to God.

Not bad advice for anyone, don't you think?

In keeping with this country West Virginia theme I would like to thank a friend of mine from WV who passed on to me the following words of truth, as well.

- 1- Only a West Virginian knows how many fish, greens, peas, beans, etc., make up a "mess."
- 2- Only a West Virginian knows and understands the difference between a "redneck," a "good ol' boy," and "po' white trash."
- 3- Only a West Virginian knows instinctively that the bet gesture of solace for a neighbor who's got trouble is a plate of hot fried chicken and a big bowl of cold potato salad. If the neighbor's trouble is a real crisis, they also know to add a large banana puddin'."
- 4- Only a West Virginian can show or point out to you the general direction of "yonder."
- 5- Only a West Virginian knows how long "d'rectly" is... as in: "Goin' to town, be back d'rectly."
- 6- Only West Virginians grow up knowing the difference between a "right near" and a "right far piece." They also know that "just down the road" can be one mile or 20.
- 7- A true West Virginian knows you don't scream obscenities at little old ladies or little old men who drive 30 mph on the freeway. You just say, "Bless their heart," and go your own way.
- 8- Only true West Virginians say "sweet tea" and "sweet milk." Sweet tea indicates the need for sugar and lots of it... we don't like our tea unsweetened. Sweet milk means you don't want buttermilk.
- 9- And, only West Virginians know the difference between a hissie fit and a conniption fit, and that you don't HAVE them, you PITCH them.

There are many more sayin's that are unique to those of us from WV but space won't allow them here so until we come this way again... bless your hearts and ya'll have a blessed day.