

West Virginia Road Trip

by TRACY RANDALL PATRICK

I've always hated to hear people who think that because you're from Kentucky, or another state, or a different part of Kentucky than where they're from that you must be hillbilly. To me, being referred to as a hillbilly is no different than any of the racial groups being called a slur name. I don't mind the term "redneck" so bad, because even the liberal states have rednecks.

Several years ago I had some people from Missouri that visited me after dark. They were an elderly couple that were descendants of Estill County people who migrated to Missouri in the 1800s. They were a nice couple and we corresponded with each other for many years. However, with them were some of their family including a daughter in law who said to me, "I wish we had gotten here before dark so we could see some hillbillies!" I thought at first she was joking around; then I realized that she was serious. Here was a 40-some-year-old woman who still had the perception that Kentucky was full of hillbillies like Granny and Jed from the old television show. I wish she had been needing to use my bathroom. I think I would have told her that I didn't have one and she would have to go over the hill. I told her that maybe when they came back during the daytime I would show her some. If they hadn't been in such a rush to go back home, I probably should have invited her

to go "snipe hunting," and if you're country, you know what that means.

Speaking of country, I like to think of people like us as being country. Being "country" means that you done things in your life that city folks have never experienced and never will. You've drank milk from a real cow and maybe even milked one. You've slopped hogs and you've fed chickens and gathered eggs. You've played baseball in a cow pasture where you had to look out for a bull, and you know that a cow patty is not a cookie. You've used a real toilet and maybe even peed behind a tree.

But I think the real test of whether you're really country is that you've peed in the road. Maybe you've done it behind a tree, or behind a barn, or crouched down behind a car. But it's not the same unless it's done in a dusty road or on blacktop so hot it sizzles. Now, I know all those stories about getting a sty on your eye, but admit it. If you're country, you've peed in the road. Girl or boy, you've done the evil deed and probably worried for several weeks about when you were going to get your sty. And those kids that got the sty were teased and told, "you shouldn't have peed in the road."

Now, my friend and neighbor Kenny Tuttle knows about such things. He was going home one night and topped a little hill, and there they were. Yep, six of them, three boys and three girls, all peeing in the road. Now those kids were country. The girls, they knew they were country and were peeing in the road, but the three boys were embarrassed about it. They jumped into their car and took off down the road, leaving behind those three country girls who couldn't get

their clothes up in time.

Once when I was a kid we were playing hide and seek at my uncle's house. I decided I was going to hide in the chicken house. But when I opened the door there was one of my girl cousins, peeing in the chicken house. She screamed and ran out the door while trying to pull her clothes up. I thought we were playing hide and seek, not hide and pee. Anyhow, I peed in the chicken house, too, and then waited for someone to try to find me.

A few years back we were driving through West Virginia with two pre-teen girls from Virginia Beach, Virginia. We took one of those shortcuts for which I am famously cursed. Of course we could have driven north and then east to reach our destination. But I like to try to travel in a straight line "as the crow flies," and on the map those little rural roads looked like they connected in a nearly straight line. However, once you leave the interstate, you leave any chance of seeing a rest area, a restaurant or even a convenience store with a rest room. It didn't take us long to realize that maybe we had even left civilization.

We had driven for quite a distance, and for some time we hadn't even seen a house; just a mailbox here and there. We saw a sign that said, "Don't even think of crossing this field unless you can do it in 6.8 seconds? The bull can do it in 7!" We decided not to stop there.

We were all needing to use a restroom but most of us could wait. However, one of the little girls got to needing to stop in a bad way. We finally came upon a little tiny country store in the middle of nowhere.

We asked the guy if he had a restroom. He said he didn't have one. I looked around and there were trees as far as you could see. I understood why he didn't have a restroom.

We finally decided that the girl had to go behind a tree. So, I stopped in a secluded area with lots of trees and we told her that we would wait for her. She wouldn't go. She had decided she would rather die than go behind a tree. Now, that's one dedicated city girl!

So, we continued on up the road for several more miles until we came upon a house where a store was operated out of a side room of a house. I went inside and asked the lady, "Have you got a restroom. There's a little girl out there that needs to go really bad." She said, "I don't have one in the store, but I've got one at my house." I said something like, "Are you sure?" Because I knew a girl that wouldn't go behind a tree wouldn't use an outdoor toilet, either." But, sure enough. The lady took the little girl to her house where she used the restroom. The rest of us needed to go really badly, too, but we weren't going to impose upon the lady any more.

Eventually, after about three hours of driving, we came upon a little town with a Dairy Queen where we used the restroom and then bought lunch. We were hungry, but by that time, the rest of us would have paid a motel bill just to use a restroom. I went to the men's room and all the ladies went the other way. While in there, a guy emerged from the stall wearing a cook's apron and headed straight to the grill without stopping at either sink. I raced to the counter where the others were getting ready to order and hollered out, "We're not eating here!"

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