

## Reminiscing & Ruminating



**Times Remembered**  
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Once again I like to indulge in reminiscence and rumination. I like to look back to a world we have sadly lost. Maybe it's just my age but I still think those were simpler times in my life a half a century ago.

I know for sure that growing up in a home with a party line phone, shared by three or more families, no cable TV, and heating with wood and coal in a Warm Morning stove until about the time I became a teenager was a blessing. Of course, like most teenagers I didn't think so at the time.

I don't think my character development was harmed by the occasional dose of "hickory tea," and there's no doubt that mowing grass with a push mower and hoeing endless rows of tobacco and corn did not hurt me at all. I had chores of feeding and milking cows, slopping hogs and feeding the chickens and any other chores assigned.

My life was enriched when I listened to my Dad and my uncles tell tales when we all got together for family reunions and picnics. I acquired many of my stories to write, just listening and remembering those stories they would tell.

My allowance started out with a dime and went to a quarter when

I was about twelve, it wasn't an automatic thing. I was expected to get in kindling, wood and coal each night after school for the next day. I was to help with washing the dishes, make my bed and sweep the house on a daily basis and also help with the garden and the flowers. I did earn some extra money sometimes when I helped my Grandmother pick blackberries.

I never had much money, but it went a long way. With my quarter I was able to go to the 5 & 10 store and purchase a paddle ball or a yo-yo or later on some nail polish. Next I would go to the Rexall Drugstore for a fountain coke and a bag of potato chips. Sometimes I would switch up and get two scoops of ice cream or head up Broadway to Miller's and purchase a 45 record for a quarter. Those were records that had been on juke boxes around town and taken off for newer records.

All this never seemed to bother me that I had very little money to spend. I was certainly shaped by aspects of my parents' characters relating to money. Both were very frugal, although Dad more so than Mom, (they never threw anything away, always figuring there would sooner or later be a use for scraps of wood, metal, or whatever). Both had grown up during the Depression and both came from poor families. They taught me with a strong belief in the sanctity of hard work, the importance of watching my pennies, making do with what I have and never, never get above my raising.

There were many summer memories like sitting on the front porch in the evening performing chores such as stringing and breaking beans, shelling peas,

peeling tomatoes and peaches, and shucking and silking corn to can or freeze. Sometimes if there wasn't any work I would just rock and enjoyed conversation with family.

We had wonderful meals of fresh vegetables. Dinner (and for those of you not familiar with this terminology in southern Appalachians, that's eating at mid-day) was the main meal. Regular items on the menu included corn on the cob or fried corn, green beans, salad peas or greens cooked with a hefty chunk piece of streaked meat (also known as fat back or salt pork), yellow squash, sliced cucumbers and onions, slaw, fresh ripe tomatoes, cornbread, and a meat dish. Usually, fried chicken if it was Sunday and other days pork chops, country ham, round steak or fried fish. Dad always killed and butchered his own beef and hogs. So meat was readily available along with the wild game Dad hunted. We sure never went hungry. Mom always had dessert, mostly cobblers and cakes. We had a large apple orchard and she canned and dried apples and made those delicious fried apple pies.

Supper would be the evening meal, which would usually be leftovers. But sometimes nothing more than cornbread crumbled in milk or a tomato sandwich, or my favorite - a piece of streaked meat tucked inside a piece of cornbread. We had iced sweet tea or milk to drink.

Although I don't eat it much now days, maybe once or twice a year, streaked meat is a salt-laden, cholesterol-laced pure sinful delight, and a big piece fried until you can crumble it with your hands brings tears of joy to a glass eye!

## Cow paths were never intended to carry modern-day traffic



**America's Heartland**  
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On the way home from church, a little boy sat in the backseat of the car sobbing. His father and mother asked him repeatedly what was wrong. Finally the little guy confided that he was bothered by something he heard in church. "The preacher said all children should be brought up in a Christian home, but I want to stay with you all."

That would certainly be a sobering statement for church-going parents to hear from their little one. Children are honest above of all else. They'll tell us things sometimes that we'd rather not hear, but are actually good for us.

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deed" (Colossians 3:9).

With that little boy's brutal honesty in mind, allow me to share a portion of a Sam Foss poem from the late 1800s that community leaders should find quite sobering.

One day, through the primeval wood,  
A calf walked home,  
as good calves should;  
But made a trail all bent askew,  
A crooked trail as all calves do.

Since then two hundred years  
have fled,  
And, I infer, the calf is dead.  
But still he left behind his trail,  
And thereby hangs my moral tale.

The trail was taken up next day  
By a lone dog that passed that way;  
And then a wise bell-wether sheep  
Pursued the trail o'er vale and steep,  
And drew the flock behind him, too,

As good bell-wethers always do.  
And from that day, o'er hill and glade,  
Through those old woods a path was made;

And many men wound in and out,  
And dodged, and turned, and bent about

And uttered words of righteous wrath  
Because 'twas such a crooked path.  
But still they followed -- do not laugh

--

The first migrations of that calf,  
And through this winding wood-way stalked,  
Because he wobbled when he walked.

This forest path became a lane,  
That bent, and turned, and turned again;

The years passed on in swiftness fleet,

The road became a village street,  
And this, before men were aware,  
A city's crowded thoroughfare;

And soon the central street was this  
Of a renowned metropolis;  
And men two centuries and a half  
Trode in the footsteps of that calf.

A hundred thousand men were led  
By one calf near three centuries dead.  
They followed still his crooked way,  
And lost one hundred years a day;  
For thus such reverence is lent  
To well-established precedent.

A moral lesson this might teach,  
Were I ordained and called to preach;  
For men are prone to go it blind  
Along the calf-paths of the mind,  
And work away from sun to sun  
To do what other men have done.  
They follow in the beaten track,  
And out and in, and forth and back,  
And still their devious course pursue,  
To keep the path that others do.

That poem caught my attention because it has a message for leaders who do the same old thing over and over and over again, even when it no longer works. It would serve us well to evaluate our longstanding programs and initiatives as to their effectiveness. And if they are no longer helpful, perhaps it's time to get off that cow path.

Insanity, someone famously said, is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome.

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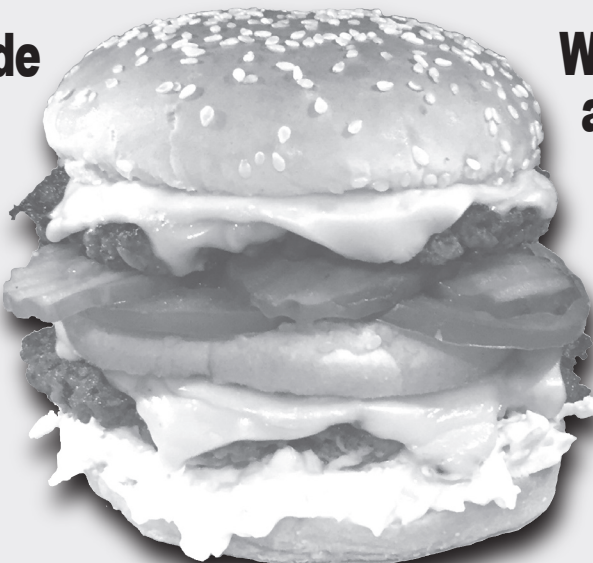
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