

Farms Raise People Too!

By Al Averitt

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Some recent events have caused me to reflect on the years and events of my life in a way I haven't taken the time to do so in a long while. I write this with hope that I can prompt you to do likewise without having the catalyst that prompted me and to show your appreciation of family while you still can. I had considered entitling this *The Worst Writing Prompt I've Ever Had*.

There is a popular oldie from the sixties by the Zombies called *Time of the Season*. The chorus went like this: "What's your name... Who's your daddy... Is he rich... Is he rich like me... Has he taken... any time... to show...to show you what you need to live..."

I can honestly say that my Daddy did just that to the very best of his ability and I am very grateful to my "Big Daddy" that he allowed my father to be my dad. My father, Alex Sr. passed away on July 29th from congestive heart failure. My wife, myself, and my Dad's wife Frances and his step-children were with him when he died.

Most folks think of farms as a place where crops and livestock are raised. While this is true...farms don't just grow crops and livestock. Farms produce extraordinary people of character too. The connection to agriculture is a choice to walk closer to nature and its Author, whether a person is conscious of it or not. If you grow up on a farm you most likely know your grandparents well—because of their tie to the land which has been bequeathed throughout the generations. Farm families realize that they (along with everyone else) depend on God, water and good weather for survival.

My father knew a lot of history about his grandparents and also of what they did on the same land that he was taught his work ethics (thankfully I had the same opportunity). When he reached adulthood he joined the Air Force for a few years and then started his family supported by a career in the textile industry in a town about 14 miles from the farm. His dad died in 1963, I was three years old, so I didn't get to know my granddaddy except through my grandmother. In 1970 he went back to the farm to live there with his mother. My father started renting grandmother's land from her in 1977 and got back into farming again as a second job. I was his number one worker as a junior in high school. I had moved to the farm to live with him and my grandma in '72.

As many farm families know there is a propensity to become a workaholic when you earn your living this way. Unlike most jobs in America, diligence, commitment, long hours, and excellent stewardship on a farm do not

guarantee success. If you make a profit this year you never know how to utilize it because you don't know that next year will also be profitable. And there is always something that needs to be done on a farm. Sorting the priorities of faith, family and livelihood are always a tremendous challenge. Faith has to be number one to stay sane, else you'd worry yourself to death.

Paul Harvey said this about a farmer: *"During planting time and harvest season, he finishes his 40-hour week by Tuesday noon; then painin' from tractor-back, he puts in another 72 hours.... Yet the only lines on a farmer's face are from grinning.... He plants in hope, cultivates in faith and ends in debt; then starts over with greater hope and stronger faith.... Heaven help the family that depends on a farmer for support. Heaven help the nation that doesn't have him to support it."*

I thank God my kids had the opportunity to be with my daddy often on the farm as I also had the opportunity to be with my grandma there. Life gets so fast and hectic for most of us that we forget to reflect on the people, things, and places that have shaped and molded who we are -- until we reach the turn that marks history in our lives and changes everything from then forward.



The Averitt family farm house (left), built in the late 1800's has been the offices of our business for five years now. Ironically, my office (below, right) is now in a room in our Averitt farm house where my grandfather died of a heart attack. It's kind of funny now...he was watching

"professional" wrestling one Saturday as was the

tradition and got a little too excited. It's also the same room in which my father and his other four siblings were born. The room at the opposite end of the house (below) is the room where my grandma died of a heart attack only five months after my daughter was born in '85.



Farmers and people who work for farmers are very lucky/blessed people...people connected to the real world and places where people have roots—generations of roots.

My dad was a great man—to me he was a genius although he never attended college due to the family need to have farm labor to feed the mules, pigs, chickens and milk the cow every day, sometimes two times a day in order to work 100 plus acres of crop land.

I have heard it said that farming gets into your blood. I truly believe that you and I and the careers we have chosen are proof of that very theory.

I wouldn't trade my experience for anything in this world. People who live on farms and/or spent their early years on a farm have a unique perspective on life. It seems that those who have been removed from the farm setting love to talk to farmers and people who are involved with farmers on every opportunity they have.

Too bad we don't have more farm families and dirt roads.

Paul Harvey said about dirt roads...

What's mainly wrong with society today is that too many Dirt Roads have been paved.

People that live at the end of Dirt Roads learn early on that life is a bumpy ride.

There was less crime in our streets before they were paved.

Criminals didn't walk two dusty miles to rob or rape, if they knew they'd be welcomed by 5 barking dogs and a double barrel shotgun.

And there were no drive by shootings.

Our values were better when our roads were worse!

People did not worship their cars more than their kids and motorists were more courteous, they didn't tailgate by riding the bumper or the guy in front would choke you with dust & bust your windshield with rocks.

Dirt Roads taught patience.

Dirt Roads were environmentally friendly, you didn't hop in your car for a quart of milk -- you walked to the barn for your milk.

What if it rained and the Dirt Road got washed out? That was the best part, then you stayed home and had some family time, roasted marshmallows and popped popcorn and pony rode on Daddy's shoulders and learned how to make prettier quilts than anybody.

At the end of Dirt Roads, you soon learned that bad words tasted like soap.

At the end of a Dirt Road, the only time we even locked our car was in August, because if we didn't some neighbor would fill it with too much zucchini.

At the end of a Dirt Road, there was always extra springtime income, from when city dudes would get stuck, you'd have to hitch up a team and pull them out. Usually you got a dollar...always you got a new friend...at the end of a Dirt Road!

Thank you to so many friends in the NAICC and agricultural community who have supported me through prayers and kind words during this time. As I have been saying, the NAICC is truly a close family.

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