

Tobacco Christmas



Times Remembered
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My Dad was born in 1915 on a farm in Estill County; on Crooked Creek. After he grew up and married he and Mom bought their first farm in 1949 next to my Grandfather's farm on what is now Avery Hollow Road where they remained until their passing nine years ago.

As with many Kentucky farmers in the early 20th century, tobacco was our only cash crop. Dad's tobacco base was about an acre on his farm, but approximately eight to ten acres on rented tobacco bases. Much to Dad's disapproval, men came every year to measure the tobacco patch and cut down any plants that were over the allotment.

Tobacco growing season began after the last spring freeze. Dad would gather wood, tree limbs and other debris to burn the tobacco beds to rid the soil of weeds.

Later on, farmers started using special chemicals instead of burning to kill the weeds. It was called gassing the beds.

Tobacco was a cradle-to-grave job. Once the plants came up in the beds there was weeding and watering to do. Carefully weeding the beds without stepping on tender plants was tedious work and painful to our backs.

Finally, when the plants were big enough it was time to set tobacco; usually in late May; about the time school was out, close to Memorial Day. We pulled the plants and placed them in folded burlap bags and fasten the bags to load in the tobacco setter trays. I spent many a Memorial Day setting tobacco.

When the plants hit the dirt; almost immediately the insects began, cut worms, horn worms, and tobacco worms attacked the plants; either by cutting them down or eating holes in the tobacco leaves. We also had to deal with black shank, blue mold, wind, hail, drought and flooding. Tobacco farmers had to watch the weather closely. Therefore, we used pesticides in those days. We didn't know the hazards of pesticides back then. Thankfully, by the second or third week of July; the crop could be "laid by."

The next phase was topping and removing the suckers from the tobacco. By this time, the tobacco was over our heads and about ready to cut near the last of August. Guess what? No Labor Day

holiday. It was labor alright. After topping and suckering tobacco my hands would be covered with sticky tobacco gum. Only rubbing ripe tomatoes, then Lava soap would remove the gum. It was so smelly; I am sure that was why I never smoked; I can still smell the tobacco and it makes me almost so sick.

Housing tobacco required dirty labor with very hot conditions. It was hazardous, whether it was cutting and spearing the tobacco on the stick or hanging it on the top rail of the barn. Swatting wasps and one-hundred degrees temperatures were no picnic either.

By late October-early November time frame, when the rains came, the tobacco had cured and would come "in case." (To become pliable so the leaves would not crumble), and could be booked down and stripped from the stalks. The leaves were stripped off the stalks and put in grades and when each grade was enough to make a hand it was held tightly and wound another leave around the top, tucking the leave securely into the middle, and it was tied into a hand of tobacco.

I thought stripping tobacco was more fun because we listened to the radio and the crew of men that worked for Dad was always telling some kind of funny stories. Mom always had a pot of soup beans or vegetable soup cooking on the pot-bellied stove in the stripping room for lunch too that smelled mighty good.

The most delightful time came when the tobacco was ready for market and was taken to the warehouse to be

sold. Dad always stayed with his tobacco and watched it sale. He felt his presence got him a better price. I loved walking around with Dad and listening to the auctioneers.

Payment was made immediately; but Dad always made sure the bills were paid and there was enough money left over for next year's tobacco seeds and fertilizer, so he could begin again.

Our Christmas depended on the tobacco crop; if it was a good year, more could be expected, if not; Christmas was lean. But I always remember receiving numerous toys and dolls. I also received clothes every year along with candy, nuts and fruit.

Many a farm was paid for with tobacco money. With God's blessings Dad acquired two other farms growing tobacco. He seemed to always make money. Tobacco was phased out in early 2000. It's sort of like what has happened to coal. Farmers had to grow other marketable crops like fruits and vegetables or acquire more training in another field. Life is about change and we have to adapt.

In closing, one of my most memorable Christmas treats was when Dad would take a coconut and pierce the coconut eyes with his pocket knife and drain the coconut milk into a glass, and then crack the coconut with a hammer. We would get a sip of the coconut milk that was so good. Then he would cut pieces of the coconut meat for us to enjoy. To me, I love coconut better than candy.

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!!

What Makes The Miracle of Christmas?

What makes the miracle of Christmas? Is it a wreath that adorns a door, is it the Christmas presents we buy in the store? Is it that single, lighted tree we came to love so much, is that candle that burns so bright for us, or is it that dear Old Saint Nick?

What makes the miracle of Christmas? Is it in a child's eye, a light or joy, a sign of hope, a baby's face that's all aglow when it sees the first snow? It's a long ago story most ever told of a Saviour born in Bethlehem, lying in a manger? They all follow the shining star on that special night.

We take this day once a year to celebrate that Christmas miracle. The star they followed that long-ago night was a sign of our Saviour's everlasting love and hope. That night they lay him in a manger, our Saviour was born.

The children's eyes are aglow even when the smallest ones sing "Glory to God in the Highest, Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward all Men!" The miracle of Christmas doesn't just come in a box with a ribbon or bow, it comes from a child-like heart. The bells will be ringing in the church yard. Snow flakes of fresh white snow, little faces and hearts all aglow.

We used to go to the woods to cut a pretty Christmas tree; take it home and decorate it with homemade ornaments. We trimmed it with popcorn, paper chains, tinsel, a star. It was so beautiful when I reflect on Christmases past, the love we had for each other, our neighbors, our family and friends gathering around to enjoy the Holidays. That's a Christmas miracle, memories that last forever.

Christmases of long ago, I think of cold, frosty nights, stars so bright,

families trimming the tree, lighted candles, Christmas feasts, a fireplace, singing Christmas carols, going back home in memory and mind; thinking of long ago, brothers and sisters, moms and dads.

Snow sleighing over the hills and valleys. I look up on the old homeplace, the fields covered with fresh, white snow; the old barn, cows in the fields, oil lights in the windows of our neighbor's house. We love and cherish it so much.

Christmas services and Christmas plays. We are all in church, praying for every one, giving thanks for all our blessings. What makes up a miracle of Christmas . . . this and so much more.

"Hark the Herald Angels Sing, Glory to God in the Highest," they sing. "Glory to the new-born King. God and Sinners Reconciled." I think of Christmas as being the most beautiful time of the year.

Frost on the meadows, wreaths on the door, Christmas trees lighted up in all the stores. Take to heart the simple things in life most of all. Believe in God. Cherish the moment, be grateful, give thanks, let's all have a blessed Christmas, have a child-like heart, love one another. Let every day be like Christmas. Give thanks to God for all your blessings. Give a gift of love, peace and joy.

Please don't let no one feel alone or go hungry or be cold or homeless. Give a gift, it could be a blanket, gloves, coat, dish of food, a card; go visit nursing homes, hospital. Give a gift that only comes from the heart, an act of kindness that lasts all year long. Merry Christmas. Bless every one.

Author:
Frieda Holliman

If you love your duck, keep his head out of the vise



America's Heartland
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If you love your duck, keep his head out of the vise. Perhaps you heard about the pet duck that had stopped eating and was growing weaker by the day.

The duck's owner called the veterinarian to explain the problem.

"Old ducks can have trouble eating," the veterinarian explained. "Their upper beaks grow too long, and they're unable to pick up their food. All you need to do is carefully file away some of its beak, but not too much. If you file back to his nostrils, he'll drown when he drinks."

A few days later, the veterinarian happened into the fellow in town and asked how the duck was doing.

"He's dead," the fellow replied.

"I warned you about filing too much of his beak and causing him to drown," the veterinarian said.

"No, that wasn't it," the fellow responded. "He was dead before I got his head out of the vise."

Not to state the obvious, but the last place a duck's head ought to be is in a vise. Nothing good could possibly come of it. The same can be said for people who poke their heads into places they ought not to get themselves into situations they

should have avoided.

To that point, I was reading the other day about Sampson, the strongman of the Old Testament who killed a lion one time with his bare hands. He happened to be passing by the rotting, stinking carcass some time later and found that honeybees had made their home inside it.

Now, I'm one of those fellows who loves honey mixed with some butter and swabbed on hot biscuits. And I've spent many a time as a kid with a jaw full of bees' wax, chewing it like gum. But I wouldn't have wanted any part of Sampson's honey.

Honeybees, in my opinion, should make their homes in those clean, tidy square hives that we see in the rural countryside, or inside a hollow beech tree where an enterprising fellow can harvest the sweet, clean honey.

You, like me, might think the last place honeybees should be making honey is inside the foul-smelling chest cavity of a dead lion. Something as sweet as honey just seems so out of place amid such nastiness.

By the same token, someone as sweet as Jesus might seem very out of place in this sin-cursed world with all its unpleasantness. Yet, God sent his Son into the world "that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17).

Now, I wouldn't recommend putting your duck's head in a vise to file down its beak. And I wouldn't recommend eating honey from inside a dead animal. But I certainly do recommend Jesus who is not of this world but who came into the world to bring cleansing, forgiveness, and the sweet, sweet gift of salvation.

Roger Alford offers words of encouragement to residents of America's heartland. Reach him at rogeralford1@gmail.com.

The Provocating Preacher

by **BOB CASEY**, preacher
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In **Hebrews 10:24**, it is written: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works." Within this text it says that all should be provocateurs of love and good works. Nowhere in the world should this be more prevalent than among preachers of the gospel. The root work of provoking literally means to annoy, to make angry, to arouse, or to call forth. So as for me, I will choose a provocative preacher over a story teller every time. We are presently living in a world where it seems that sin is more rampant than ever before. For a fact, it seems that most of society do not have their eyes upon reality (death and judgment to come) but upon the things of this world. Most are seeking happiness, joy, pleasures of this life more than striving to live Godly lives. (**I John 2:15-17**), we are thoroughly warned not to do this, but sadly most are anyway.

So today we need preachers to be more provocative than ever before. I believe that we may be standing upon the threshold of Christ's return to judge us all, so we need to stimulate. This can, and must be accomplished by preaching the messages like **Mark 16:15-16** and **Acts 2:37-39**. Preach the gospel, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be damned. Paul wrote in **I Corinthians 1:17-18**, here he says that the preaching of the cross to some is foolishness, but to the saved, it is the power of God. So to some when the gospel is preached that makes men aware of their sin, many do not like it, so if it annoys them, or makes them angry, preach it anyway, because this will arouse them, stimulate them to realize that there is no hope except through Jesus our Savior. **I Corinthians 2:14** says that the nature of unsaved man receiveth not the things of God, so preachers have their jobs assigned for them to attempt to get them to hear the gospel, believe, and obey its commands, so they can be brought out of sin into the forgiveness of our Lord. This is His mission to use preaching to persuade all men to obey before it is too late. Paul says in **II Corinthians 5:11** "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men." Yes, our Lord is a vengeful God upon disobedient sinners and it says He is coming to do just that. **Notice II Thessalonians 1:6-8**, "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled next with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

So all preachers be provocateurs, preach, annoy, arouse, make angry, stimulate them into really considering the alternative if they will not hear and obey. Nothing else will do the job!

Visit with us this weekend at **70 Bond Street, West Irvine.**

Sincerely, Bob Casey 1-859-369-4165

BIBLE TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. The main Christmas story is paraphrased from what two New Testament books? Mark/John, Acts/Romans, Matthew/Luke, Jude/Revelation
2. Approximately how old was Jesus when the wise men (Magi) arrived with their gifts? 1 day, 2 weeks, 2 months, 2 years

3. Where did the angel Gabriel appear to Mary saying, "Blessed art thou among women"? Nazareth, Tyre, Ninevah, Gazi
4. In what city of Judaea was Jesus born? Damascus, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Gezer
5. Who plotted to kill the baby Jesus? Archelaus, Herod, Pontius Pilot, Caesar Augustus
6. How many times does the word "Christmas" appear in the Bible (KJV)? Zero, 1, 2, 7

Answers on bottom of Page 13
Wilson Casey's mainstream UFO book, "Swamp Gas & High Hopes 101," is now available from TouchPointPress.com



And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great

joy to all people. The Saviour—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph, and there was the baby, lying in the manger.

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