

## **Enjoy Your Job – Whatever It Is!**

Back in the Summer of 1987, instead of going home from college, I decided to stay in Cookeville, Tennessee, and work. I got a summer job at the Cookeville Gas Department. It was one of those "do whatever we tell you" kind of jobs -- and I did a little bit of everything!

After working there a while doing everything from ditch digging to sandblasting, they gave me an interesting assignment. The boss handed me a large blueprint map of the entire city of Cookeville, a city of probably 15,000 people. The map had all the streets labeled -- but that was all. I was given a bucket of silver-aluminum colored paint, a paintbrush, and a 4'x4' piece of cardboard. I was told something like: "Your job is to paint all the gas meters in Cookeville with this silver-colored paint. Go forth and paint!" They let me drive one of their older Gas Department pickup trucks as I went forth to conquer the city.

Unfortunately for me, the blueprint map did not identify the houses and businesses that had natural gas service. I would drive the truck up to a residence or business, take out my bucket of paint, my paintbrush, and my cardboard, and approach the house. If I saw someone outside, I would ask them if they had natural gas service at their house and explain what I was doing. If I didn't see anyone, I would quietly walk around their house looking for a gas meter. Some houses had them, some houses didn't. If I found a meter, I would slip my cardboard between the meter and the wall, and I would paint the meter -- being careful not to get paint on the glass part (i.e. the meter readers needed to see those little dials). It's a wonder I didn't get bitten by a huge dog, or shot, or both! But God must have been protecting me because I had very few run-ins with vicious dogs -- or angry homeowners.

After I would finish a house -- or maybe a few houses -- I would go back to the big map of Cookeville and mark off that section with a pen. It felt good to be able to look at the huge map and see some progress. Slowly I made my way down some of the main streets around the Tennessee Tech campus. Then I went down some of the less-traveled streets. I got to know Cookeville pretty well that summer! I received a lot of strange looks as I was walking around with my "equipment," but I just sort of made a big game of it. I made up my mind to coat the city of Cookeville in aluminum paint before the summer was over!

Some funny things happened along the way. At one large house, a 7 or 8 year old girl with very curly hair came out and started talking to me as I worked. She asked a thousand questions, and she told me all about everything in the world in just a few minutes. I was sweaty and hot, and she went and got me some ice tea to drink -- all the while she was telling me about everything... she was a big talker! I also remember during this summer the Iran-Contra hearings were on television quite a bit -- Oliver North and others were testifying, and I was very interested in what was going on. As I would be painting gas meters, some of the houses would have their windows open and the TV going... so as I painted, I would watch and listen and try to pick up on any tidbits of news that might be happening in the trials. Again, it is a wonder I did not get shot!

As the summer came to a close, some of the service-men who worked at the Gas System began to notice the large number of gas meters around town that had a new coat of paint! They could

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not believe how many meters I had painted in such a short time! Unfortunately, I ran out of summer before I ran out of gas meters to paint, but looking back on it, I can take a little pride in my attempt to paint the town of Cookeville silver. I didn't completely coat the town, but I think I made a dent in it!

On my last day on the job that summer at quitting time, I looked down at my silver-speckled tennis shoes, and as a final act -- I took a paintbrush and completely painted my shoes silver! Later, some of my friends and I mounted those silver shoes on a wooden plaque and hung them on the wall in my office in the University Christian Student Center near the Tennessee Tech campus.

I learned some great lessons that summer. One thing I learned is that no matter what you are doing or what your job may be -- as long as it is honest work -- resolve to enjoy your work and to do your best. Even when it comes to working, trust in God, give Him the glory, and enjoy the adventure!

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