

Imperfect People Can Make Perfect Memories

A few days ago, Dorothy Wilson, passed away. She and her husband, Lee Bannon, lived just over a mile from our farm. I do not recall a time before I knew them in my life. Like many in our part of the county they were a big part of my life, especially my growing up years.

I worked in the fields for Lee Bannon, hauling hay, as a teenager. He had a big truck and lifting those hay bales to that truck was work. A soft-spoken man and member of the congregation we attended; he had a calm way about him. One quality that I never understood was his ability to never get in a hurry. His work clothes were not disheveled and his shirt was always tucked in. He never raised his voice either in anger or excitement, his words were few but received respect. After his death, I discovered Lee was a decorated veteran of World War II. Involved in a number of invasions and served with valor in the Air Force. All I knew was the farmer and Christian man who baled dad's hay, and needed me to haul his hay.

Dorothy had the local store in our area. It was a general store with nails, screws, bolts, fabric, boots, work gloves and just about anything you need for farm work. It was also a grocery store complete with those old coolers full of bottled soft drinks. You would lift the lid and get your drink. She had an old cooler for her milk and meats.

Most of her meat was of the sandwich variety such as turkey, ham, and of course bologna. It came in long loaves and she would cut them by hand with a knife on her counter. I am pretty sure Dorothy lost money on those sandwiches because she would cut you off a big piece of meat to go on your sandwich. You add in the chips, moon pie or your favorite Little Debbie snack cake, and soft drink for a really good price.

There was a small room in one corner of the store, it was the local post office. Geneva Carter was the lady who ran that post office. It was open for only a few hours a day and most folks who lived nearby came to pick up their mail. Geneva's husband, Rosco, came along with her each day and sat in a chair

in the store.

There was a stove toward the back of the store for heat in the winter (there was no air conditioner by the way). People would gather around that store and talk for a while. No one was in a hurry because it was winter and cold outside. Dorothy's store was the place to congregate. I remember going there as a child then as a teenager and listening to people like Geneva, Rosco, Clem (he lived down in the holler a ways) and other folks talking about politics, gardening, a little religion, among other important things.

Dorothy did not necessarily have regular store hours. Her house was just across the road from the business, so she might be over there when you drove up. If she saw you coming, she would stick her head out the door and yell "I'll be over in a minute." Or you might have to go and knock on her door if she was busy and didn't notice your vehicle at the store. If you needed something during the night, she would open the store for you. Another oddity about Dorothy and her store was her inability to have cash on hand. A customer might get their goods and then hand Dorothy a \$10 to pay for the \$8.59 groceries. Dorothy would have to try and get enough change to give you back what she owed you. It may have been a clever marketing tool as the buyer would look to see what else they could get so Dorothy would have enough change. That fifty-cent candy bar may make your bill enough so you would get back what she owed you. Nobody seemed to mind this oddity. While we never bought anything on credit, some of the regulars would buy things and Dorothy would write them down on their tab. I dare say she lost a lot of money as folks would either die off or move away without paying her.

One last memory I want to share of Dorothy was her inviting my parents to church. It never failed on Saturday she would ask us to come. If there was a Gospel Meeting, Dorothy made sure we knew and were invited. The word "Come" is a pretty powerful word, as in Jesus' invitation. "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:28-29) Those words mean you are welcome and wanted. Dorothy never conducted a Bible Study with my parents or taught a

formal class, as far as I remember, but she knew how to say “come.” Perhaps if we all would say “come” more often we would have more people to come to services.

I don't know exactly when that old store closed its doors but it now lays dormant, a relic of the past. I drive by it on many occasions and think about Lee Bannon and Dorothy.

Those folks were not perfect but they seem to have made some perfect memories for me. I miss hearing them talk and laugh. Through the years Geneva and her husband passed away, as did Clem and others who lived down in the holler.

Now Dorothy has also left and I am glad she and those folks left me those perfect memories. – Dennis Tucker