



The Cornfields after the harvest

The cornfields lay barren now, except for the dried stalks of the corn, which during the spring and summer, were green with the bounty that the plants provided. The trees, once lush with their foliage, and their showy fall colors, now blanket the ground to return nutrient riches to the soil. The gardens are now plowed under, ready for their winter sleep before the next growing cycle. All the fall harvests are over, their fruits preserved for the long winter that will be arriving soon.

This should be the days of looking forward to the winter festivities and time with family, but winters have their own challenges, especially this year. The fear of visiting with family members for worry of spreading an unrelenting enemy, a virus, to them is on my mind, but the fear of never seeing them again is there too. As I age, my parents do also, and spending time with them this past Thanksgiving reminded me of the things we did growing up.

When garden season was over, it was time to look forward to Christmas. As a child, we were just glad that the long days of working in the garden were over with. Time to enjoy being freed from the work involved with raising and preserving that years harvest, but with winter came new chores and cold, dark, snowy days. Dad worked in the coal mines and would come home with a load of lump coal in the bed of the truck to be unloaded into the coal



A family day, visiting with granny

bin in the basement to warm the house with a coal furnace. Wood was chopped and stacked in the basement also to be kept dry. The time for the other harvest was upon us. The hogs and chickens we had fed and fattened up were harvested for their meat also. Dad would also take his yearly trip to harvest a deer for the freezer. The land and the woods always provided enough food to sustain us, we only had to put in the work to harvest it.

The times were so much simpler back then, yes the work was harder, but it was a slower paced life then than we live in now. As a child, I spent time in the woods, the creek, catching crawdads and minnows, we played tag, and never mentioned the word "bored", because my parents would find us a chore to do. We were carefree in our childhoods while our parents worked to make sure we were fed and clothed. We would go to my grandparents' house on Atwell Mountain in West Virginia, usually every weekend. She still lived in the old house that Mom and her 10 brothers and sisters grew up in. A small house for that many kids by today's standards. The outhouse was still in use and water was drawn from a well with a bucket and pulley system,

as kids, this was a new, fun and exciting thing for us. She would still sweep the top layer of dust off the ground to keep the yard neat and not pack the fine dust into the house. Granny would cook on the wood cookstove, a simple but delicious meal. Mostly vegetables from the garden and the best chicken and dumplings a small child could wish for. I often wonder if it was the old cookstove that gave the food she prepared the best flavor or where we were "starving" from playing until we were tired.

Fall is coming to an end and all the leaves are disappearing

Thinking back on those days, those weekly outings were the highlights of my childhood, the manic rush of adulthood was far from my mind. We had chores that we had to do, the laundry, accomplished with a wringer washer and rinse tubs, then hanging the clothes out on the line to dry even in the winter. When Mom got a new washer and dryer, it was a novelty to us, as was indoor plumbing, our first black and white television, and the hot water heater. Television time was limited to the evenings, when the chores were done, supper ate and everyone settled in for the early night. Mom would make popcorn, not the microwave type, but popped in a big kettle on the stove, and Dad would get the big bowl. Everyone would gather in the living room, grabbing popcorn out of Dad's bowl with our little bowls and settle in for watching tv for an hour or so. Sometimes we would get a treat of ice cream, Dad's favorite, butter pecan.

The anticipation of Christmas would start when the first of the catalogs would arrive at the house. Sears and Roebuck and Montgomery Ward were the two that never failed to arrive. Those catalogs would be the highlight of the evenings as we dreamed of what would show up under the tree that year. We would get one toy and of course clothes. When the call came that the packages from mail order would arrive, Mom would lock the bedroom door to wrap them, and we would try to sneak peeks under the door. The Christmas tree was always a live tree. Dad would bring it in and put it in the stand with water. Mom would decorate it with the ornaments, garland and tinsel and the countdown would begin. The year of the rollerskates comes to mind. Dad had just put new linoleum down in the long hallway and what a great place for my sister and I to learn how to skate. Needless to say, our rollerskates were banned from the house after a few days and we had to wait til spring to use them outside on the concrete slabs. For years our skate wheels had marks down the hallway as they put grooves in the flooring that were there until Dad replaced it a few years ago. My childhood home is still almost the same as it was forty years ago with a few adjustments.



A family christmas

Memories of sneaking peeks at presents, decorating the tree, planning and cooking Christmas dinner for the family to enjoy all sneak into my mind this time of year. We always had different family members stopping by at different times to watch the kids open the presents. Family that we only saw once or twice a year, would come and spend a few days with us. Sleepovers with cousins from different states, staying up all night playing games and listening for Santa's sleigh bells, were huge in a child's mind. It was just a time to spend with family and friends. In these days of technology and internet access, nothing can replace the excitement and anticipation of visits with the people we are closest to.

Going home to spend the holidays with my parents and family is even more important to me now than before, just like my parents used to do when I was younger. As I age, my parents get older and have more health problems, and I want to spend with them before they are no longer here. Over the last few years, I have lost my eldest sister and this year, my eldest brother. The restrictions from the covid crisis have limited what time I can spend with my family, but with the loss of my brother this year, I realize how important it is to keep in contact with everyone. My parents lived through epidemics and the rations of WWII, but this is the first time our government has set limits on travel and visiting our family members, but with the holidays upon us, now is a good time to remember the trials and tribulations that the generations before us endured, and how they made it through with resiliency and pride.

Hope everyone has a Happy Holiday and until next time...
Keep Preserving The Past

