

Old Jim



By Dan Caldwell

(Volume Two, Chapter Twenty Two Pt.2)

Continued From Last Week

The silver haired old mule turned both ears backwards when he heard his name. This was his way. His whole attention was paid to the gray old farmer! The mule grunted, a gentle sound as he realized that the old man had not spoken directly to him. He was ready at any instant to hear the old man's commands.

With swift and without wasted movements the two quickly loaded the new sled with a huge part of the load. All the sacks were taken from the top of the big sled and placed into the new one. The old gray mule snickered louder now as he realized that he too would be pulling a load across the river.

"Are we ready? the old man asked when they had finished.

"Yeah, I think so. Old Monk should have his second wind by now" Jay answered.

"Get up then" the old man spoke softly to the silver mule. "You've nearly dug a hole in the ground ol son so pull. Get up!"

Both men laughed at that. The old mule leaned into the load, hoisting the front half of the sled off the ground with his efforts.

"He thought he had a full load I reckon" the old man laughed.

"Get up Monk" the young Stidham spoke.

Water splashed high and the young hound sounded off again as the two mules plowed one after the other into the river.

"Oww. Owwuu. Owwooo," he barked and splashed behind.

As they pulled up in front of the cabin the old farmer stopped.

"Just let me tell Elizabeth and I'll be right back out" he said.

As the old farmer stepped onto the porch of his tiny cabin he was met by young Elizabeth. They spoke in low tones....too low for the young Jay Stidham to hear.

Taking these few moments to rub the big black mule, the young man took an old cloth from the harness where he had tied it. With this he rubbed the young mule along the legs and beneath his neck. He did not rub the sweat from the mule's body. This he would leave until the job was finished....until the mule had had time to cool down on his own. Then would he rub him down thoroughly and curry him in the finest manner. This he had learned from the old farmer himself. Again, he was reminded of the old man's words. A mule, next to a hound, is a man's best friend!

"Are you ready?" the old farmer asked.

"Ben, er, Mister Hawkins? Yes. Yes, I'm ready. I didn't hear you come back. I guess I'm as ready as I can be."

"For what? Where are you going grandpa?" asked Elizabeth.

"We're taking these loads up to Jay's house for milling tomorrow."

"I see." she said

Jay looked at her and started to speak but chose not. She had not spoken to him since last evening. She looked at him and too, made as though to say something but instead turned on her heel and started towards the cabin.

The old famer looked at Jay. There was no need for the question. It was plain that there was something between the two.

Jay shrugged his shoulders. A gesture which suggested defeat. Then spoke. to the mule.

"Get up Monk. Get up!"

"Up Jim" the old farmer said in turn.

"I'll come with you" Elizabeth spoke from the darkness.

"We'll be better I think without you tonight sweetheart" the old farmer said.

"No, Jay," she said. "I'll come with you."

"Whoa Monk. Whoa boy"

A thousand thoughts went through the mind of the young man then. What should he say? What could he say to her? It pained him to be without her and yet when she was with him he was tortured. To have her so close and to love her so.

He felt then a sudden anger. Unexplained anger. Towards her? No, what then? Would she come along just to torture him? Did she after all understand how he felt, and would she play with him? Did he mean no more to her than a toy?

She was beside him then. Something had changed. Her face was different. What?

He spoke softly then to hide his feelings. "You would be better to stay here Elizabeth. This is hard work and."

"No Jay, I mean I'll come with you."

His breath caught and he could not speak. What was that in her face? Her voice? What light shone in her eyes even in the dimness of evening?

"Elizabeth."

"I mean I'll come with you through life!"

The silver old mule snickered. The old farmer chuckled!

"How does it look on the cob? the old man asked.

"It's big, straight, and long grains" the young man answered, "And none of it has weevils or any sign of damage from critters or from weather. I pulled the shucks from half a bushel or more to see what it looked like."

"Yes, then, I'll take your word for it and yes, we'll take it for milling. There's more at the barn that I'll bring later for grinding for feed for the cows and for sweet feed for old Jim here."

"Thought we'd come and lighten your load some" the old farmer said. "Jim was beating a path around the pasture. Needing something to do so we hooked him up to this new sled. That'll take a little starch out of him. Let's load it up."

"We?" Jay noticed the old man had said.

"The others are back at the house" the old man said, then said nothing more for a moment.

"I guess this load will go to my house for milling?" Jay asked.

Granny's Porch

Granny's Porch 11-10-2021

JFK Assassinated & GEDs

Well, hello Everyone! This is Granny again, back to spend some time with you.

As I sit here watching a tribute to President John F. Kennedy, my mind wanders back to that November 22nd day in 1963 when our beloved president was assassinated.

It was during the time of the Kennedy Presidency shortly before he was assassinated. A reporter from New York who was doing a story had come to Hyden and spoke to Leslie County Judge Executive George Wooton, asking about the unemployment situation in the county. George said come and go with me and I will take you to meet a man who has not been able to find work to support his wife and eight children even though he is more than qualified to do a lot of jobs. There were just none available.

George came to our house with the New York reporter and ask my husband, Foister, what kind of work he could do. Foister named several including a barber, coal miner, welder and he also told them he was a Veteran of WWII and fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

After speaking with the reporter and George for some time, Foister said, "In this place, no matter what kind of qualifications you have, you can't make enough money to support your family. Times are really hard. I would love to have a job and work as hard or as many hours as I could but there are just no jobs to have."

About three weeks passed and we were very surprised when we got a letter from a lady in Maryland who had read the reporters article which ran in a New York Paper. Included with the letter, she sent a \$30.00 check made out to Foister. Back then that was a lot of money to us, and it bought a lot of groceries to feed our family. She said in the letter that she was sure President Kennedy would have something to say about that article. It was shortly after the check and letter, that the president was assassinated. However, we soon learned he had already had in the works a program to benefit the unemployed fathers in the Appalachian area of Kentucky. After he was killed, the program was finalized. Foister was able to participate and not only the work was available to him, but he also got to go to school under the program and was able to get his GED, which he was so proud of. He had to leave school before he graduated when he was drafted into the Army during the war.

That program really helped us out and Foister was getting a paycheck every week. Things was much better for our family. Foister and I raised ten children who graduated high school and with him having his GED I always said I was going to get my GED someday. When I was getting near 80 years old, I said to myself, "I'm going to get my diploma. I better do it now." I did and at the age of 81. I was a high school graduate just like my husband and ten children.

Well, it sure has been nice visiting with you today and I want to wish all of the service men and women a Happy Veterans Day. I appreciate all of your hard work and sacrifice. I'll invite you to meet me back next week on Granny's Porch. God Bless you and yours, Love Granny.



Inspirational Thoughts Into God's Word

By Lynetta Hunter

(John 21:6) The disciples pushed their boat off the shore, as they entered onto the sea to explore and find the areas that would yield the most fish. After a long night with no results, they gave up their search. Jesus then gave them direction as to where the multitude of fish was. Ironically, their provision was right where they started their empty-handed journey. This is symbolic to someone who wastes time searching for fulfillment in areas of worldly pursuits, but only ends up right back where they started, with nothing to show for their efforts. As with the disciples, Jesus can be found at the end of the pursuit, waiting to give direction to where contentment can actually be found. They probably gave Jesus the same excuses that are so often used, such as they were tired from trying, worn out from the struggle, weak from the duration of the journey, and discouraged because of the emptiness. But it only took one simple direction from Jesus and they received more than their nets could handle.

Divine direction is sometimes needed, before enjoyment of blessings, provision, and purpose in life, can be found. Jesus encouraged His followers to ask God for what they want, (John 16:24), knowing that what they receive through Him, leads to fullness of joy and completion in Him. Divine direction is often found in the simplest decisions through the quiet voice of the Holy Spirit, in complicated times of despair, or midst of a raging storm, each producing the same result.

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