

Scrapyard

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One week 'til my birthday and I still haven't decided what this year will be like. I actually like being born on June 30th. Its renown for being the one day that past civilizations have been wiped out but its also the half way point through the year. So if we are meant to be wiped out the good news is that it will probably happen next week and the bad news is troubles are still on the agenda.

Scrap yards are interesting places. They are filled with the potpourri of mans metal. When we think of men's metal we find a lineage of mans technology. We live in an age where steel is giving way to more exotic forms and plastics and fiberglass bodies. What the scrap yard of the future will look like will probably be something similar to what we have now.

Scrap yards are also like old dumps. Growing up in Michigan in the early sixties we often visited my grandfather who owned an old dump. Garbage was brought in and it became 'cool' to me because treasures were thrown out. I still remember the mechanical eagle. But I often dream of what else might lie buried in the ground. What would it be like to dig it up now? Would there be areas where newspapers would still be readable? Would there be old cereal boxes and toy cars and old bricks and pennies forgotten? What was the garbage like forty plus years ago compared to today.

We think of our age as being the age of recycling but that isn't true. My Great Aunt grew up during the depression and until her death she recycled things that drove me crazy. Saving bits and pieces of things I thought absolute junk. But it wasn't just her. My family was frugal crazy as well. We grew up recycling everything in our lives. If it was used clothing it was reused and reused until there was no one who could wear it. And then it was torn apart and made into something. A rag at the very least and sometimes a patch for a worn out knee or sock.

And while most people bragged about the new clothing, well, mom frugalized there as well. We were kids of the reject bin and pink for boys was out but cheap for us. My brother still loves pink even if I struggled to wear it. Not that there was anything

wrong with wildly patterned shirts. In a way you could say we were uniquely fashioned and ahead of the styles. And thinking of it now I wouldn't change a thing. Mom did something for us that money couldn't buy. She taught us love and taught us the value wasn't in the fashion but in the love of the heart. You see she took all those extra pennies saved and we traveled as a family.

And when we traveled we traveled cheap as well. I still remember my first trip to California via Route 66. People talk about traveling along it now as a way of remembering the past. I still do. I chuckle at mom who found us the cheapest rates and wouldn't accept any room until she had given her approval to the beds. And if they didn't rate the mom challenge we moved on to the next motel. But we traveled and we kids added up license plates and stopped at cool stores and cowboy and buffalo and corn palaces. We were kids on adventures and we traveled because of a wise mother who scrimped and saved.

This was my world. I lived in it in a way that people today who consider themselves 'Green minded' would have admired. We had our little garden in back and it did seem in those years we actually knew how to grow some of our own food. And if it was at the store we didn't just buy whatever was there. It had to be on sale, it had to be dented, torn, ripped or ready to be tossed out. There was not one thing that we needed until it had gone on sale. And then it was purchased and don't think we didn't eat some interesting food that mom found in the back discount bin. I grew up with a versatile palette as all us kids did. We grew to eat things that others turn their noses at. And when I think about it I don't mind. I really rejoice in the joy of life.

Our recycling didn't end. We lived for the K-Mart Blue Light special hanging out on Saturdays. And when it went off you have never seen kids rush with more excitement than us to see what the Blue Light lady had found to mark down on sale. I sometimes wonder what happened to us in our later years that I seemed to have lost that drive towards running to every new thing.

But we didn't stop there. We recycled our papers at a time when most tossed them away. Most people back then had no idea that recycling papers was possible so they were bundled up on top of garbage bins and my brother and I would travel with our friend Oscar collecting them. We earned a whopping 1 cent a pound and that was enough to provide us with a weeks worth of goodies. Pop, candy bars and for my brother the Hot Wheel.

Which came in at that time for .25 cents apiece. This was back in the early 70's.

Yet it was the bounty of nature that also provided for us Gods great blessings. In summer it was picking blueberries, raspberries, apples, Sugar Plums. Spring held Smelt runs and fall brought us deer venison and bear meat. Sometimes squirrel and rabbit which I helped trap and that was in the town and it was an addition. And always there was mom. I do get choked up when I think of her. The wife of a pastor. Busy as everything playing the piano twice on Sunday, often on Wednesday nights. Making bread and pasties and rolls and meals and making sure that we were properly dressed and off to school.

She taught me to be frugal. She showed me the world may be a scrap yard to some but it holds treasures and useful things to those with eyes to see. And I can't deny that I have been blessed beyond measure because I've been gifted with just a touch of her wisdom. And I try to recycle and I try to find deals on everything I buy.

And yet despite this I have often wondered why both my parents have suffered so much. Their investments usually failed. Their money was used up in the church and they made just minimum sustenance from it. They paid tithes and taught me to do the same. Yet we now are at a place where I wait. For I know that God did not intend nor desire that we be recycled beyond measure until we have grown fragile and weak and wonder if we have been thrown out.

We live in a world that is hard on the recycled and weak and disabled. We find it hard to measure our time, our strength and our moments of momentum. I look at what I did and I think "I want to do it again" because I love what God did for us. How He blessed us in ways we did not see. I know that 'now' those blessings are still there. Neighbors who bring us bags of bread, a couple who fed us lunch once a week for an entire year, a sister who provides with meals every week or two. Meals on Wheels and help from Senior groups and high school kids from the local horticulture class who cleaned up our yard.

Yet of natures produce I miss. We buy it store bought, berries and such but the things of nature are few for us. Sometimes in the fall someone brings us deer sausage. But our world in Canada has dried up and we feel dried up spiritually.

Yet like a dreamer that I am I dream of better days. And some would have given up faced with troubles our family have seen but we haven't. We talk about it yes. Death is like one of those rare uncles you speak of but hope to never see. And life is a scrap yard filled with memories of past things. And I realized I can't go back to the way things were, not exactly. I can only go forward onto the scrap yard of what once was in my life. And I try not to weep or cry or mourn but instead I hope. And I dream. And I look at the stars at night and I seek out Polaris or Cassiopeia and I wish. And in those wishes my heart goes up to God and I cry out "Father, how long 'til the rain falls again and the blessings we once knew come again."

And some might laugh and say but those blessings were ones you found lying on the ground and I would say "You are right." Right where God placed them. And we, our family, has been blessed by God above all measure to see the treasure that lies there. And I miss that. And so I pray and I wait and I long for the day when God will open my eyes once again. And I will see those great and wonderful things that God has prepared for 'OUR' family in the future.