

## Life on a small farm

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My Grandparents lived on a 64-acre farm in southwestern Iowa. My earliest memories include the annual summer visit. The change from a quiet residential community in St. Louis was complete. In stark contrast to homes that were fifteen feet from each other, there were sheep, pigs, corn, and potatoes in Iowa. Later on, when I was thirteen or so, my parents purchased their own place in the country. At forty-seven acres, it was not as large as the farm in Iowa. Instead of row crops and livestock, my parents' place was about half forested and half pasture, which we used for the horses. At first, they weren't our horses. We boarded them for others. Eventually, both my brother and I purchased our own horses and fancied ourselves to be ranchers, or at least country gentlemen.

When I was in Iowa, I didn't drive and had no concept of distance and time. I was too young. But back at my parents' place in Missouri, as a teenager, I was responsible for many of the chores that were required to keep the place in good shape. Mending fences and twice daily feeding and watering of the horses were not to be disregarded. During my last two years there, I bought three sheep and tried my hand at some real work. I fed them and, once a year, I sheared the wool and sent it off to Iowa where Grandma made it into quilts. All these chores required some forethought and some creativity. To mow the pasture, mowers had to be oiled, gasoline had to be purchased, hay-rakes had to be greased. At other times, things had to be handled as they arose. The hardware store was thirty minutes down the road and some tasks wouldn't wait an hour to be started, much less completed.

There were no handy-men in the neighborhood. In fact, the term neighborhood didn't really apply. Our closest neighbor was about a quarter mile away. When things happened, for the most part, we handled them right then and there.

Later on in life, as I reflected on some of the differences I see in people, I concluded that, for the most part, people who had a rural upbringing were a tad more self-reliant. They were a bit more do-it-yourself types of people and less likely to rely on others except in the more critical situations. Now, in my city life, I see people, grown-ups, who can't cross a street without pushing a button and getting the protective permission

from flashing yellow lights and an LED image of a walking man. And I believe that these attitudes often bleed over into the political leanings of city folk and red necks.

I attribute these differences to the fundamental fact that on the Farm, nothing is someone else's job.

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