

Farm Girl Field Notes

June 30, 2014



There is something about a farm lane that brings me back to my childhood. Last week, we took our Sunday morning gator ride with the boys before church. We went our usual route along the edge of the soybean field, up the hill by the pivot irrigation and then along the hedgerow where the mama hawk has been crying at us when we enter her nesting territory. Lately, Dudley has been disappointed because we don't hear her anymore. We've tried to explain that her babies have probably fledged the nest, but he still asks to see the hawk.

So, we moved on to the next adventurous part of the excursion, through Otter Creek. Alan always asks, "Are we going to make it?" Dudley gets this expectant look; then we splash through and up the other side of the creek bank. "We made it!" Dudley exclaims.

After the excitement of fording the creek, we ventured off our normal path and crossed the green bean field so that we could move a tractor. Dudley rode with Alan, while Grady and I followed on the gator. As the tractor and chisel plow made quite a bit of dust, I had to stay back a bit. This gave me a larger view of the farm lane and I was overwhelmed with a feeling of nostalgia and contentment. I consider myself fortunate to have been raised on a farm and now get to raise my family this way. Out in farm lane the sunshine, my husband and boy in the tractor ahead and my other boy on my lap... what simple joy.

It was the simple things growing up on a farm too. Riding my bike through the orchard, wind in my hair, peddling faster and faster so I could coast down the hill with speed.

My memories are along the lanes and the landmarks that became our language for certain

spots on the farm. "Let's ride to the hill out back," or "to the big mud puddle." "The second box pile, middle lawn, old blacksmith shop, and rock pile by the walnut tree" are the phrases we used. I can still smell the damp earth and feel the cool air of the path that wound along the south side of our property. It was always shaded and cooler with lots of fun turns. Dips in the road that made going fast all the more



fun, the sweet, sweet aroma of the apple trees in bloom, the satisfying crunch of the lane when the ground was cracked and dry in late August. These I can remember and I can still experience on early morning walks and gator rides with my children. As they grow up, it is my hope that they can talk together of riding to the "waterfall on the creek", to Uncle Pete's house through the back fields, and to "the hill by the pivot." Simple, yet abundant joy found along familiar farm lanes.

-Guin Panek