



The Way I See it

By
Doug Ponder

Next Thursday is Thanksgiving Day in the United States. The national holiday is celebrated each year by Americans as they spend the day with family and give thanks for all the blessings in their lives. Many people often share their reflections with others as well as in a group setting.

This was the case in my Sunday school group this past Sunday where we were asked by our teacher to share what we were thankful for in our lives and why we were thankful for those things. Our teacher gave us time to reflect and gather our thoughts before we shared them with the rest of the group.

There were eight of us in and luckily our teacher started on the other side of the room which made me the seventh person to share my reflections, which at the time was actually a blessing. I was thankful for since it gave me more time to collect my thoughts.

I'm ashamed to admit it but I really struggled with this simple exercise. I didn't struggle because I had a fear of speaking in front of a group of people. The scary truth is I struggled because I had a hard time trying to think about what I was thankful for in my life.

A lot of the common answers shared by others in the group consisted of being thankful for God, family, friends, church family, job, etc. However, a couple of people gave very detailed answers. One girl was glad that she would be student teaching in Pulaski County next semester which meant she would be closer to home. One guy said he was thankful for his health as he explained how he recently recovered from a leg injury.

After all of those great answers it was finally my turn and my answers were far from spectacular. I gave very generic answers that were eerily similar to the answers we hear from a lot of politicians when they are asked about why they support Obamacare.

The answers I gave included being thankful for my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and how He died on the cross for my sins. I was thankful for family, friends and church family as words can't describe the influence they have on me and how much they have helped me in my life.

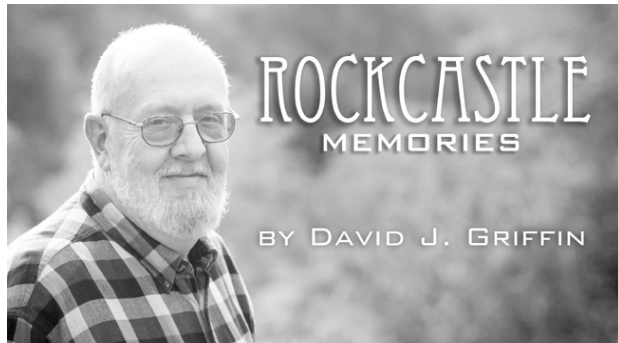
But personally, I was ashamed of the answers I gave in the class. Yeah they were good answers that came from my heart but they were vague and not specific. This bothered me for the rest of the day and continued to plague my thoughts throughout my daily activities.

Later that night, it finally dawned on me why I struggled with answering what I was thankful for and why. Lately, I have been struggling and focusing on the problems in my life which has caused me to lose focus on what I am blessed with in my life.

Every day for the past few months my mind has been consumed with the things I am struggling with, things I need to improve on in my life, the things I don't have that I want or think I need, etc.

But yet when I heard my peers' answers in Sunday school about what they were thankful for and why, it really humbled me and reminded me of a valuable lesson. The guy that had a leg

(Cont. to A4)



It All Began with Rabbit Tobacco

For nearly all my life, my Dad was a smoker. When I was a very young boy, Daddy kept a lit cigarette in his mouth most of the time, consuming what must have been more than a pack a day. He was like most men of the time, who smoked at home, at his business, and in the car. It was simply a part of who he was.

No filters for Dad. His brand was one of the strongest cigarettes on the market - Lucky Strikes. I can still see that big red circle on the package showing through his white dress shirts. Daddy wore dress shirts almost all the time. My vigilant mother (Bee) kept them washed, starched, and ironed for Daddy.

The ashtray at his desk in the service station he owned was constantly filled with cigarette butts. He kept several packages of cigarettes in his desk drawer, in the glove box of his car, and in the kitchen cabinet at home. He never wanted to run out of smokes. Because I was constantly around adults that consumed tobacco, I thought it was alright for me to try smoking.

My first attempt to smoke started when one of my older friends told me about "Rabbit Tobacco" also known as "Life Everlasting." I was probably ten-years-old. The plant grows wild in most southern states, including Kentucky. It grew in abundance in my grandfather's (Pop) fields. It was only about waist high and had a silvery leaf in the early autumn. Kenneth Hansel was the first friend to show me the plant.

If there is any one plant that represents the change of seasons from summer to fall, it is Rabbit Tobacco. Around the middle of August, it is hard to miss the silvery-green leaves of this plant dotting the hillsides of the Deep South. All the way through winter, even with snow on the ground, it appears tall and alive, seeming to gain strength as the seasons change.

When Kenneth and I decided to try it, we ran into Mommie Katie's kitchen, grabbed a grocery bag, and returned to the field. Since it was fall, the rabbit tobacco

was standing tall in the weeds. Kenneth had seen some of his older friends smoke the wild plant, so he knew exactly how to accomplish the deed. He reached down and ran his hand from the bottom to the top of a single stalk, pulling a handful of the dried leaves. He then rolled them into a piece of the paper bag. We tried our best to make it look like a normal cigarette, but to our dismay it looked like a poorly wrapped cigar. Nevertheless, out came the matches, and it was lit. You never heard two boys coughing and hacking and spitting like we did as we smoked the freshly prepared concoction.

On another occasion, Kenneth and I thought we would try smoking Catalpa beans. Pop had a large tree in his yard, so it was easy to gather a few bean pods and walk into the woods to give them a try. To this day, I can remember how my tongue felt when the smoke entered my mouth. By the time, we had puffed a few times, my tongue was burning like fire. We decided there and then that Catalpa cigars were not for us.

Sometime later, Kenneth and I (there were times when we were practically inseparable) were helping Pop gather some fall corn in order to feed our hogs. We then had another brilliant idea. At the top of each ear of corn was a small bundle of corn silks - it looked to us that all it needed was to be rolled into a cigarette and smoked. I winked at Kenneth and began to stuff several bundles of the silks into pocket of my jeans.

After we gathered enough corn for Pop, we again sneaked back into the kitchen in order to secure another brown paper bag and some kitchen matches. Then we again headed to the woods. This time we were more careful as we rolled a few corn silk cigarettes, and each of us lit one up. I was glad we were deep into the

(Cont. to A4)

Points East

By Ike Adams



It's hog killing time on Blair Branch if anyone living there still raises hogs and I'm betting that John Wayne Blair already has one or two in his smoke house and probably another one fixing to meet it's demise this weekend. Brother Keeter told me he helped John Wayne butcher one last year that was so big they had to use a bulldozer to drag it from the pen down to the scalding ramp and that the hams were so big they had to use a wheelbarrow to get each one to the house.

When I was growing up, the weekends before and after Thanksgiving were set aside for hog killing all up and down the holler. And sometimes the mines would shut down on a weekday so the work hands could take time off to kill their hogs.

And not just anybody knows how to butcher a hog. Dad always tried to get Arlie Adams to oversee ours because Mom liked the cuts he made, but he also got Arthur Adams or Buford Caudill from time to time because Arlie was kept pretty busy. All three of these men were in great demand at hog killing time and they were generally paid with cuts of meat.

As were all the other folks who helped out be-

cause butchering a hog is not a one-person job. Scalding and scraping the hair off the carcass alone, can keep four people busy for an hour or two. Water had to be packed from the well to fill two or three #2 washtubs. One of these was placed on rocks over a wood and coal fire and brought to a boil for scalding purposes. Other tubs contained cold rinse water and they had to be refilled every few minutes.

Packing the meat from the slaughter site to wherever it was going to be stored meant heavy lifting. And it didn't take long to raise a blister in the notch between your thumb and forefinger hand-sawing a back bone into pork chops.

During the weeks before and after the holiday you couldn't walk the two miles out of Blair Branch without smelling fresh bacon and taters frying at every step mingled with the sweet aroma of cornbread or biscuits ready to come out of an oven. It's no wonder why I keep having strokes. I heard someone tell Dad one time that eating all that pork was going to kill him. And Dad said, "Well you have to live on something before you can die." Dad figured

(Cont. to A4)

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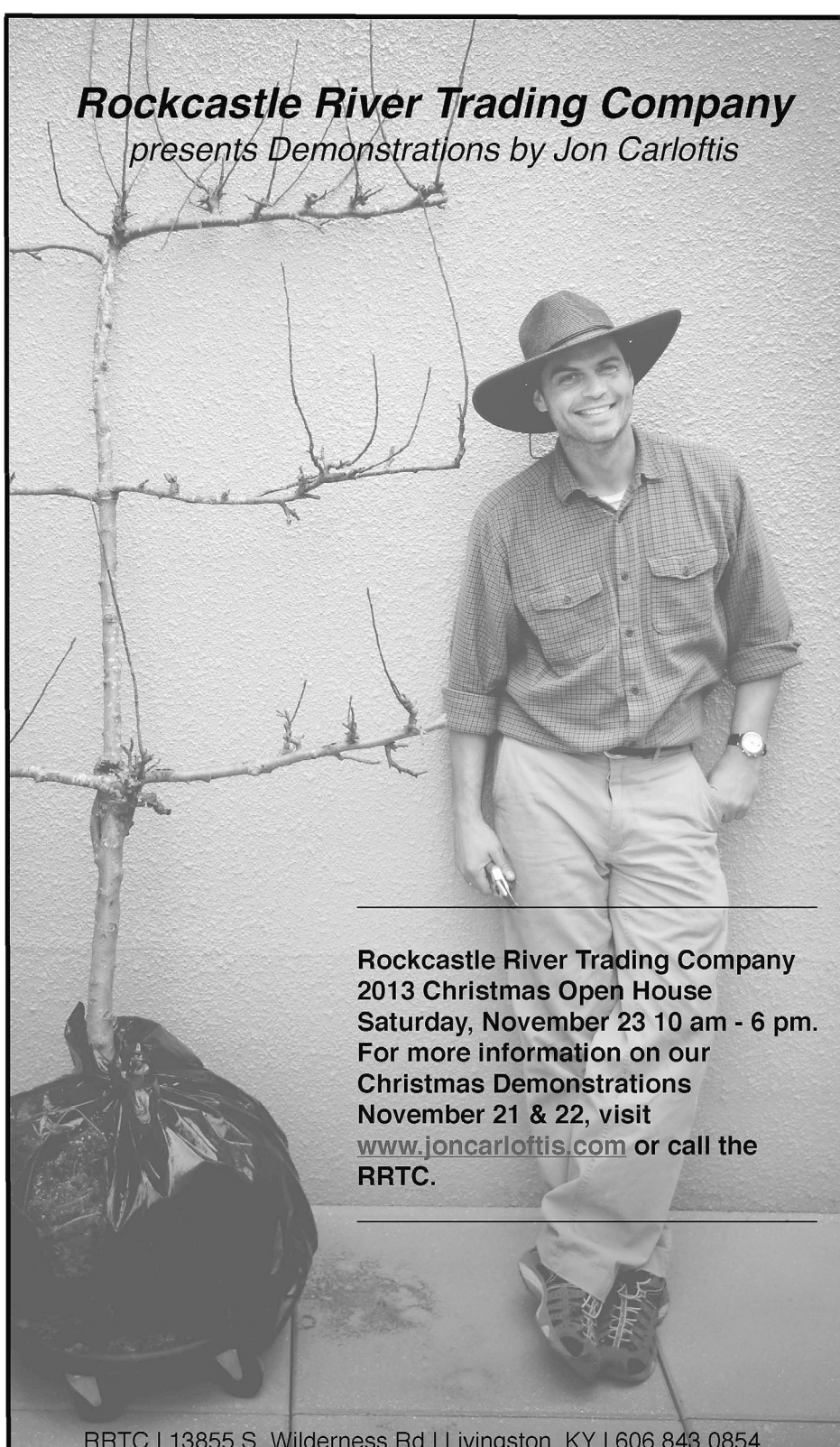
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