

Labor is sweeter among friends

Business meetings, by their very nature, are pretty boring, don't you think? Nevertheless, every organization, whether a business, a church, a civic organization, or a charity has to have its business meetings and its laborious aspects if it expects to function properly and thrive. Everything can't be fun and games. The *work* has to be done. But...can't we have a little fun while we are working? maybe a little laughter and horseplay? or some idle conversation with our friends in the workplace?

The "Slave-Driver" philosophy says NO! Fun and laughter and camaraderie among the workers are antithetical to progress and production. "GET TO WORK!" factory supervisors sometimes order. "You fellas are having way too much fun to be working."

Likewise, clergymen are often prompted to remind their congregations to simmer down and take their seats and get ready to be spiritually fed. "Church is not about visiting with your friends," they admonish. "It is about getting serious and worshipping God."

I recall many years ago rousting my adolescent son out of bed on a Saturday morning to join me in a work project of putting up some fence for my horses. "Eat a good breakfast and let's get going," I told him sternly. "We've got work to do today. I don't want any of this business of running back to the house every fifteen minutes for a drink of water or some cookies. We are going to learn about the value of work today. We're going to be digging post holes, stretching fence wire and hammering it in. Forget about playing and having fun today, Son. Focus on work. Hard work!"

After about 15-20 minutes into the project, my son started to get a headache. He quickly grew hungry and thirsty and tired and asked to go back to the house to rest. Disgusted with my son's poor work ethic, I excused him, not expecting to see him return after his revival. That evening, I complained to his mother, "That boy ain't worth shooting!" She suggested that consider a different approach to getting our son involved with my work projects."

The following Friday night I informed my son that I planned to finish my work project the next day. "You should have been with me last Saturday," I told him. "I had so much fun out there in the sunshine. I saw three deer out in the pasture who walked right up on me. That new fence stretcher I bought was fun too. Man, oh man, I can't think of anything more fun than digging post holes and hammering in a good tight fence. I sure wish you could join me out there tomorrow. Maybe we could take the shotgun and shoot a rabbit while we are out there."

The next morning, he was out of bed bright and early in one bound and we had a grand old time putting up my fence. He loved hammering the staples into the fence posts and stretching the wire, and we actually did see a deer or two along the edge of the woods. Hard work? As it turned out, it was all a matter how we looked at it.

Last Saturday, our VFW Post had an opportunity to feature a display at the State Line Pawn Classic Car Show on Nashville Street in Atmore. Several of us climbed wearily out of bed early Saturday morning, loaded all our gear and hauled it to the display site. We got everything set up, just as the rain started. The rain came down for most of the morning and the wind gusts threatened to blow everything down. Only a few people and only a few old cars showed up for several hours. In the meantime, the handful of VFW members who

showed up for the project huddled underneath our tent and shared war stories and family histories. A few of the fellas warned early in the day that they would need to leave early for other commitments, yet they lingered, and lingered, and lingered. One member of our group quipped, "I could sit here all day visiting like this among my my friends. Despite the rain, I have enjoyed being here and sharing this time with all of you. We should do this more often." The weather soon cleared and the entire event bloomed back into life. The wrestling matches were completely entertaining, especially the match featuring our host, State Line Pawn employee and professional wrestler and Showman Danny Rolin. A modest crowd emerged and in the end a good time was had by all.

During the worst of the rain and wind, I sought out Danny and asked him, "Is this weather going to kill the show?"

"Oh no!" replied the ever-optimistic Danny. "The rain is going to clear out in a few minutes and the cars will come pouring in. We are going to turn this lemon into lemonade." And so we did. We all waited patiently and faithfully for the change and it happened. As to our VFW display, we sold five Raffle Tickets, received five dollars in donations, and signed up one new member. This was not the level of success we had hoped for, but the camaraderie and fun we enjoyed throughout the day was more than enough to make up for our paltry sales. A few good friends spent the day huddled together in a common cause and we became even closer as friends.

Sometimes things happen that way. While seeking one treasure, we inadvertently discover another of even greater value. May I suggest to those eligible veterans who have not yet joined our VFW ranks that the hidden treasures you may find here in friendships and camaraderie may exceed any other benefit you might expect. As I continue to ponder upon the important aspects of our VFW mission, i.e., helping our fellow veterans in distress and promoting patriotism in our community, my thoughts turn to that serendipitous epiphany we discovered underneath that soggy tent on last Saturday morning. How wonderful it is to labor among friends and comrades. That is perhaps our most important mission of all.

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