

REJECTED HOE HANDLES

My Daddy always said, "Most things are easier to get than to get rid of."

I had a couple of hours to kill on an out of town meeting in a small town in Arkansas. There was an auctioneer shouting beautiful unknown words down the street. I walked inside a big barn to enjoy the sights and sounds.

The auctioneer was as good as any Hard-shell Baptist preacher that I had ever heard. He seemed to mesmerize everybody. People would listen to his shouting and every so often someone would throw up a hand, or wave a hat. Prices went up and the auctioneer danced.

I sort-of began to rock along with the crowd myself. It seemed like fun. No matter what the first bid, somebody raised and then somebody raised that.

After awhile, the auctioneer pointed to a little pile of wooden poles. He called them "rejected hoe handles". I leaned around a bunch of lookers to view the stack of about 50 or so poles. I didn't hear or couldn't understand all of the words coming from the auctioneer but I was ready to bid. I needed to participate, and being part of the scene was more important than just standing there.

The auctioneer shouted, "Who'll bid three dollars?" I threw my hand high in the air. Nothing to it.

The auctioneer said in a low voice (for the first time), "I have three dollars. Who'll bid five?" Nobody moved. I looked at the backside of every hat in the place. No more hands waved, and no more shouting. The auctioneer simply said, "Sold for three dollars."

Here's the problem: The part I had not heard was that this little pile of poles was just a sample of a barn full of rejected hoe handles across the street. The successful buyer had the obligation and duty to remove every hoe handle within 24 hours.

I enlisted my brother with a 1/4 ton pick-up. I hired my cousin, Ellis, with his 3/4 ton truck. I needed more help, so for \$200.00 I hired a Mayflower semi-truck to haul to my house umpteen zillion rejected hoe-handles.

Over the years, we heated the fireplace with hoe handles. Our kids grew up playing all sorts of games with hoe handles. I even tried convincing neighbors to use the slick-things for beanpoles.

When we sold our place, I assured the folks who bought it that the shed full of hoe-handles stayed with the property.