

Ever' Day Things

by Tom McBeth

Change — 'Dang it'

Well, from the last time I put something in here, you know that I ain't gainfully employed yet. Got back from auction school. That was a look at the cross section of humanity!

There was a guy from Quebec that could auction in English and French. As a matter of fact, he would switch back and forth so the folks back in Quebec could understand. There was a 20-year-old kid who made everyone kind of envy his double-jointed tongue, probably a future world champion auctioneer.

There was a lady from Switzerland, originally from India, who had an antique shop. She'd probably make a killin' in the antique market in central Europe with an acquired Missouri accent to her auction-bid-callin' style. There was an attorney who had more than a hundred lawyers workin' for him in his law firm. The guy had argued cases in front of the U.S. Supreme Court, played professional baseball and was a pro baseball scout for one of the toughest owners in history.

We got to sell butcher cows at a local livestock auction, and those cow buyers scared that attorney spitless. It is not a good deal for an auctioneer to be scared spitless.

A week after I got back from auction school, a partner and I had a consignment

auction — ever'thing from bowlin' balls to hay balers, including cars, tractors, cattle chutes and go-carts that did not run. And I guarantee you I was scared spitless getting up in front of the folks I have known all my life to cry an auction.

All I need now is to get one or four lined up ever' week. That is kind of "the proof of the puddin'," so to speak. I hope the deal works out before the good ol' severance pay runs dry.

Have patience

Also got my real-estate license, and that is not goin' as well as I would like. It takes forever to get things done. I never will understand why ever'one else does not have the same sense of urgency I have about things. Daddy used to tell me to be patient, but the older I get, the less patience I have about some things.

I wish I knew what that signals other than probably becomin' an orn'ry, grouchy, old rapsallion. Anybody who's got any input on that deal should let me know.

I also went to work for a livestock auction that is starting up again in my neck of the woods. It used to be a good auction and went through some ownership changes. We have the largest beef cow population in my county,

and we don't have an auction. I am one of the fieldmen whose job is to go out and get cattle and buyers to come to the auction. Not much money at first, but it could become a good deal for several reasons.

Nothing like getting several jobs to replace the one I had. I just hope I'm smart enough to make a living and to stay at home. It is kind of nice to sleep in my own bed ever' night — even if I don't get there 'til midnight.

Look where we're heading

What has happened to me is goin' on all over the country in large companies. They don't believe that experience and past success at doin' a job are worth anything. That is kind of scary because nobody is around to let them know how to react when the market takes a turn from normal circumstances.

When you consider that "stuff outside normal circumstances" in our business is really what is normal, somebody is headed for trouble. What happened to me is the direction of our business. Likely, the face of the cattle business is going to change much more in the next few years than it has changed in the last 50 years.

Look at what has happened to the poultry and hog businesses. It will be more difficult to do it with cattle, but a significant part of the beef business may go the same way. Right now is the time of lookin' at the future and doin' some serious plannin'. If you don't, you may be lookin' for a way to make a livin' at the time in your life when you should be shiftin' to fifth gear instead of battlin' the rocks and mud of startin' over again.

Who said life was goin' to be easy?

