

RACOONS, POSSUMS AND RATS (AND A PIG IN A POKE)

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'Writer's Corner'

I was looking at Facebook a couple of days ago and noticed a post by a young woman with whom we are friends through church. She is from Gainesboro and all of us Jackson county folks hang together to avoid the obvious outcome of hanging separately. Tammy



posted that she had done approximately \$1,500 worth of damages to her car by hitting a big, fat possum crossing the road. Someone else chimed in by telling that they had torn up the radiator on their car by hitting a raccoon. It is obvious that the shortage of coon and possum hunters these days are allowing for overpopulation which is manifesting itself in increased road kill.

Every year RBJ Farms buys two-ton a bin full of feed for our cattle, which provides them with high protein content during these cold winter months. Otherwise they would be forced to subsist on hay, salt and water. It is the byproduct of processing corn to create corn oil and other corn products and contains 22% protein. They absolutely love the stuff and we must be careful when feeding, that in their exuberance to get to the feed, they do not run one of us down.

Apparently, they are not the only animals that love this byproduct of producing corn oil, for two years ago we began to notice that the bin filled with feed had begun to go down noticeably, even though we had not as yet started to feed the cattle from the bin. Upon closer inspection, we found that some type of animal had chewed its way through the plywood floor of the bin and the food was pouring down through the hole created. Randy (my partner/cousin) went to the local Farmer's Coop and bought some traps which we set nightly around the obvious runways. Over the next few weeks we sent 23 possums and raccoons to varmint heaven and put a stop to the poaching of our feed bin. Corn is too high to share with the woodland creatures just now.

Speaking of possums reminds me of a friend's father who had some rental houses in the Detroit area and rented one of the houses to a young couple who had been raised in the city. One morning he received a distressed call from the young man who informed him that he needed to get over there right away. It seems a giant rat had invaded the garbage can in the alley behind the house. The frightened city fellow had capped the lid on the can and was calling Mr Maberry, the landlord, to come and dispose of the critter. Mr. Maberry shook his head slowly and pulled on his coat then drove over to check out the situation straight away. There in the alley, he found a huge fat possum hunkered down in the garbage, probably somewhat ashamed of having been accused of being a rat.

Further, speaking of rats reminds me of a story my cousin Barney Smith shared with me about a rat.

Barney warmed up to his story like this, “My son Ronnie lives in a nice new Houston neighborhood of cul-de-sac streets full of kids skateboarding, riding bicycles and is an altogether pleasant place to live. Ronnie may have a few run-of-the mill faults, but I don’t believe that I ever caught Ronnie in a blatant lie. I know that sounds far-fetched but he has many good qualities, truthfulness among them. Now I do admit that he has been unduly evasive a time or two, but overall has been a most satisfactory offspring. One bright Saturday afternoon, I pulled up in his driveway to find him sitting in a lawn chair by the garage and he motioned me to pull up a chair. He seemed excited in an agitated kin of way. ‘What’s up’ I asked him. ‘Well,’ he said, ‘I just killed a big rat.’

That sounded passably interesting so I encouraged him to tell me about it. ‘I was upstairs when Toni (his wife) started hollering and I quickly went to investigate. She was in the kitchen with the door to the garage locked. ‘There’s a filthy rodent in the garage,’ she screamed. I slipped into the garage and peered around but I didn’t see anything. I had almost given up when I heard a rattling noise. Under a small table, there was the biggest rat I have ever seen and he was eating Boo’s food (Boudreaux the dog). I quickly shut the door and locked it, then went upstairs after my pellet gun. When I came back to the garage, I looked around until I finally, cornered the nasty thing after stalking him all over the garage. It took only one shot and he was no more. I carried his sorry carcass to the woods. He was a fearsome looking rat alright but he didn’t look like your average Norway rat. He was awfully big and had brown & white splotches on him.’

We leaned back in our lawn chairs with a glass of iced tea and were contemplating the law of the jungle when a 10-year-old neighbor kid from up the street walked up. He was a pleasant kid and gratefully took the Coke that Ronnie offered. He stood around for a couple minutes, shifting his eyes from corner to corner in the garage. Finally he ask, ‘Ya’ll didn’t happen to see my big spotted rat scooting around here did you? There was a long drawn out silence and finally Ronnie lowered his eyes and said with all the empathy he could muster, “No, son, I didn’t.”

The term we hear today from the television is ‘profiling’ – that is, making a determination about someone based upon the external, observable, evidence. There is much talk and lots of opinion about its appropriateness in security and police work, and obvious room for disagreement. But we are given some instruction by Jesus’ brother James concerning spiritual profiling: “suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes. And suppose a poor man in worn-out clothes also comes in. Would you show special attention to the one who is wearing fine clothes? Would you say, ‘Here’s a good seat for you’? Would you say to the poor person, ‘You stand there’ or ‘Sit on the floor by my feet’? If you would, aren’t you treating some people better than others? Aren’t you like judges who have evil thought?” NIVRS James 2:2-4.

James’ instructions leave little room for personal opinion for, you see we, in our fallible judgment, are often apt to confuse a possum with a rat, or a pet with a purveyor of pestilence, or prosperity with pity.

Have a blessed day, and remember a pig in a poke could be a possum.

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*Read more about Robert Rogers Chaffin in the Chaffin files and read more Writer's corner stories at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>