

## THE AUTUMN HARVEST

By John F. Hall

It's that time of the year, when Craig Perry, the corporate farmer who rents the widow's farm land, begins to harvest the crops. Since I own one acre of land and an old house on that farm, I have a front row seat, on my porch swing, to watch as the harvest begins. Craig had his farm workers bring in three large John Deere combines and two grain carts, to harvest about 80 acres of soybeans. Each combine can hold 300 bushels. The expected soybean yield, in spite of the dry weather, should be over 40 bushels per acre. Each combine can harvest about seven and a half acres before it has to stop to unload. Each combine was assigned to harvest a little over 26 acres. That amounts to four loads per combine to harvest. The unloading rate to the grain carriers is 3.3 bushels a second. The three combines can complete the harvest in about six hours.



I came home from a wedding in Hopkinsville on Saturday, October 22, 2022. My surrogate granddaughter, Skyler Crisp, married Kendall Lancaster. They both work at the Walmart Distribution Center located north of Oak Grove, off Highway 41-A. As I drove up Dyers Hill Road to my house, I had to drive through a large cloud of dust being generated by two of the combines. It has been so dry that the chaff and excess plant material seem to be suspended in the air. It was getting dark, and after a few hours of harvesting the soybeans, Craig's daughter, and foreman, Shannon, told the combine operators to stop combining until the next day. They returned late that morning to finish the combining.

A new combine cost about \$500,000. The average size small farm in Kentucky is about 150 acres and only corporate farmers renting a thousand acres of farm land, or more, can afford to own or lease a large John Deere combine. Going back into history, in 1801, a farmer would work 150 hours to plant and harvest one acre of wheat. This is not counting the 70 hours of work put in by either the horse, the mule, or the oxen. All this work would yield about 15 bushels per acre. The only things put in by farmer were sunshine, rain, and the exertion of muscles, both man and beast. Wheat production in 1801 was not much than it had been during Christ's time on earth.



The world's population in 1801 was almost one billion people. According to Todd Hultman, DTN lead analyst, in 2021, Kansas was the largest wheat-growing state in the US. This is due to large farm equipment, hybrid seeds, fertilizers, herbicides, and fungicides. The average yield of wheat in Kansas was 52 bushels of wheat per acre. It took less than hour of labor per acre to produce the Kansas wheat crop. Sometime in November, 2022, the world's population will reach 8 billion people.

Ruthmarie Brooks Silver wrote a short piece called, "Autumn." These are her words: "There are scientific reasons during autumn for the leaves to the changing of the colors as they rustle in the breeze. Fall has come upon us but no artist could delight with a more fantastic painting than each year it is the plight...of Mother Nature, in her glee to paint the leaves in hues with magnificence in wonders of the blend that she will use..." "So with the splendor of her breath she paints a gracious gift for all who would the scenes...Each gaze gives hearts a lift! Some would say there is no magic here; it's all by science done. Mother Nature simply winks an eye and thanks a Hand Above."

My wife, Paula and I decorate our front porch for Halloween. Our three grandchildren:



Andrea, Heather, and John-John are adults and gone. They come back for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and for their birthdays. We mainly decorate for our two great nieces, Katie and Lilly Harrison. They live just down the road from our old house. On our front porch we have eight artificial pumpkins of various sizes, and other decorations. Carl Sandburg wrote the poem, "Theme in Yellow." These are his words: "I spot the hills with yellow balls in autumn. I light the prairie cornfields orange and tawny gold clusters and I am called pumpkins. On the last of October when

dusk has fallen, children join hands and circle round me singing ghost songs and love to the harvest moon; I am Jack-o'-lantern with terrible teeth and the children know I am fooling."

The dry weather reduced the pumpkin harvest in Kentucky this autumn. One retail farm store in Murray, Kentucky was selling a regular size pumpkin for \$8.99. That to me is an outrageous price. It's more like gouging. Two of the eight pumpkins on my front porch are ceramics. One of those has been broken several times. Paula just glues it back together. I put a candle in that artificial pumpkin and light it on Halloween.

My two great nieces love to put on different costumes each Halloween. This year, the



oldest, Katie Harrison put on a spider costume. It is based on EB. White's novel ' called, "Charlotte's Web." This children's novel tells the story of a livestock pig named Wilbur and his friendship with a barn spider named Charlotte. When Wilbur is in danger of being slaughtered by the farmer, Charlotte writes messages praising Wilbur such as "Some Pig" in her web in order to persuade the farmer to let Wilbur live. When Katie and Lilly came to Trick or Treat, I had Katie take the stuffed pig out of her large candy bag and hold it while I took

her picture with Lilly.

I find it interesting that EB. White, who was paid for his articles and his novels, said: "Writing is never fun." Maybe, if had ask for Christ grace and inspiration, he might have been happy. I enjoy writing and it is fun for me. But all of my stories are based on my experiences and my observations. I can write a true story about a pig that I named, "Arnold." When I was a college student, I worked one summer for the TVA as a laborer.

One of my co-workers sold me a baby Yorkshire pig for \$25.00. He said it was an investment and that I would triple my money when I sold the pig. I kept Arnold in a small pen when I lived on Sam Armstrong's farm. He was the cleanest pig around and he only messed in one section of his pen. He was always glad to greet me when I came home from work. When he got too big for his pen, I sold him at the livestock auction in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. I was paid \$125.00 for Arnold. He was "Some Pig!"

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