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The People News

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Porch Sittin'

The following was sent to The People News by a reader. The author is unknown.

"What are you doing?" I asked Willie as I passed by his house on my way home. "Aww, I'm just doin' some porch sittin'," he replied as he swung back and forth ever so slightly on his porch swing.

As a child, I would often see Willie out on his porch. He was an older man who still worked hard around his place, but he often took time off for some "porch sittin'."

"I got the radio on and the Cardinals will be playing ball here in a minute if you want to sit a spell," Willie said as he scooted over on the swing and patted the seat next to him as he adjusted the volume on the radio.

It was summertime and many other scenes such as the one I mention above took place everyday where I grew up. "Porch sittin'" was a common activity. Nearly everyone had a porch with a wooden swing that hung down from chains that were held by hooks on the porch ceiling. Most swings held two or three people and if neighbors showed up to sit a spell then more chairs would be brought out from inside the house. The younger folks might sit on the porch steps while children played in the yard or found a tree to climb.

The porch was like an extension of the living room because it was cooler out on the porch when the summer's heat became uncomfortable. There wasn't air conditioning so houses were often built so that they were situated where the breeze would waft across the porch and there was a roof that protected porch sitters from the sun and rain. Essentially, all the work that could possibly be done outdoors was transported to the porch where it was cooler and it seemed to make the job more enjoyable just by being outside in nature's living room.

It seems like a lot of living took place on porches in times past. At least it was that way where I grew up. Seeing a person sitting on their front porch was pretty much the same as an invitation for neighbors to stop by and pass the time of day.

Many people did part of their garden work on their porches. It didn't matter if it was snapping beans, hulling peas, or peeling apples someone was apt to sit down beside you and give you a hand with the chore.

I remember a lot of visiting, discussions, and even problems solved while snapping green beans.

Women learned from one another and often offered help for whatever need that was mentioned. "Try using a little corn starch on that baby's diaper rash," a young mother might learn from an older neighbor lady. "And next time you need to work out in the garden, just bring that little one over here and I'll watch him. I kind of miss having a baby around," the neighbor might say.

Those were good times when porches were used for many things. Women did needle work or rocked babies, men whittled or fixed things and children played "pretend."

Sometimes the porch was used to just get off alone for a time and read, meditate or just do some thinking; "woolgathering," Momma used to call it.

Even if the sun wasn't shining, there was nothing quite like the sound of rain on the porch roof. It was such a secure feeling and a perfect time to curl up on the porch swing with a quilt and a good book and listen to the soft pattering of the rain-drops.

The summer nights were also very good for "porch

sittin'." We made friends with the night sky as we enjoyed God's creation. As a child I learned about stars and constellations from my parents. I learned how to identify the Big Dipper, the Little Dipper, and then identify the North Star and the Milky Way.

There were all the different night sounds that were a little frightening at first until Momma explained the howling of the coyotes, the loud noise of the bullfrog, and the calls of hoot owls and whippoorwills. We also watched the mysterious twinkling lightning bugs flit around in the dark. A permanent picture is engraved



in my mind of my mother standing in a long white nightgown, arms outstretched above her, as she caught lightning bugs in a jar for me one hot summer's night.

Occasionally, when summer nights didn't cool off enough to be comfortable for sleeping, some folks would sleep outside on their porches. My girlfriends and I thought that sleeping on the porch was a great adventure, except for that one time when the cat decided to bring us a gift and we woke up to find half of a mouse upon our quilt!

In later years, my parents enclosed our front porch for an extra room. I hated to see the porch closed in but I was glad when my parents simply moved the old porch swing and hung it from the huge old maple tree where

the family still gathered. Daddy and my brother would often sit out there under that tree and play their guitars, usually with a dog or two stretched out beneath their feet as they played one more chorus' of "Just A Closer Walk With Thee."

I have always loved porch swings. After I was grown and married, the one thing that sold me on the house that we bought was the swing on the back porch that overlooked a pond.

I'm glad to see that some houses being built today are going back to adding porches. Yet, it isn't the porches, it's the people that make the difference. As I drive through neighborhoods these days I sometimes wonder, "Where are all the people? Are they all at Wal-Mart or inside watching television?" If so, they are missing out on a lot.

Why not shoo the kids outside and take a little time out for some "porch sittin'?" Take something along to read or work on if you like, but there's nothing wrong with just sitting and doing nothing because it really isn't doing nothing, it's "porch sittin'." If practiced enough, you can become an expert at it.

It seems like "porch sittin'" is nearly a lost art. Perhaps we can still revive it. If you don't have a porch, don't worry, a chair out under a shaded tree will do.

I don't have a porch like I once had, either, but I have a great imagination and all of God's creation is still right there to enjoy.

Well, it's been a long day so I think I'll go outside for a spell, because it's just about "porch sittin'" time.

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