

## The Harvest Moon Sets The Stage For Fall



by  
Pettus Read

Read All About It

It was mid-September and we had just finished an outstanding supper prepared by Aunt Sadie in the white-frame farm house that she and Uncle Sid had shared for now on 60 years, when I noticed that the old farmer was missing from the family gathering. It was odd not to see Uncle Sid over in his cane back rocker near the fireplace. That was "his spot" in the evening and especially when family members were visiting following an evening meal. He would always get up from the supper table and make his way over to the chair that had been passed down

from generation to generation, take out his saxophone shaped pipe from his bibbed overalls and wait for an opportunity to tell a yarn or two. But, for some reason on this night he was not to be found in the house.

After asking Aunt Sadie where he may be and her suggesting outside near the barn, I made my way out into the backyard that was now showered with light from a full moon that you felt like you could reach up and touch. The large maple trees cast soft shadows across the yard and barn lot making it easy to find my way out to the barn. It was as if God's night-light had been left on for us to enjoy just a little more time in these last days of summer.

From a distance, I could see Uncle Sid standing out by the horse lot with his foot upon the bottom plank. I stopped in the shadow of a tree just to admire the scene now taking place before me. Every now and then, I could see the red glow from his pipe, as he would take a draw and then blow smoke into the night air. His old dog Sue was sitting patiently by his side also taking in the nighttime solace and the two together, along with the moon-washed landscape, looked as if an artist had just touched his brush for the last time to his canvas and painted this scene. It was a peaceful image that just didn't seem right to interrupt; but the old farmer and his dog had seen me in the shadows, and with a movement of his hand, I was invited to join their company.

"Bright moon tonight," I said as I put my foot on the fence alongside his worn brogan.

"It's the Harvest Moon," Uncle Sid answered while puffing on his pipe and staring off in the distance at the large orange-colored moon. "I've always enjoyed being outside when the Harvest Moon first appears in the fall. It reminds me of days gone by when we depended on it to give us more time to get our crops harvested. Before farm equipment had lights, your ancestors depended on this moon to give them more time to get things done.

It appears nearest the au-

tumnal equinox. I read last night in the Old Farmer's Almanac that equinox means 'equal night,' when

night and day are the same duration. It can be in October some years, but this year it is in September, with fall beginning on September 22."

He has always amazed me on his knowledge of real life and his ability to explain things in a way that anyone could understand. "Are all full moons named?" I asked.

"The Native Americans who lived around here, used the moons to keep up with the seasons," he went on to explain. "They named them all and each name had a

meaning. Like next month we will have the Hunter's Moon. That was when they would go out and hunt to prepare for the winter. After that is the Frost or Beaver's Moon and in December we will have the Long Night's or Cold Moon due to days being shorter and nights longer. But, nowadays, folks don't fool with those things. We farm when we need to, and now with tractors that operate by satellites, modern technology has taken the moon out of the farming picture."

Taking a step back from the fence and looking at me, I could see a grin on his face in the moonlight and while knocking his pipe out on the heel of his shoe with little red sparks burning quickly away into the night air, he said, "I guess us farmers are still looking to the skies for our answers on making a crop. The only difference now is NASA has got involved. But, they are not as pretty to look at as a full Harvest Moon and they sure don't bring you as close to God as golden moonlight does either. I'll still keep trusting the moon." And, you know, I think I will too.

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