



Family, Friends, Faith, and Farming: the good "F" words. *by Roddy Dull*

Finesse...here's a word that almost sounds feminine when you think of it with farming. Yet, even though we find its definition to include poise, elegance, grace, and flair, it's also defined as skill. This is where it directly relates to farming. I can remember trying to herd or coax cattle into a new area and no matter how hard I tried they would often bolt in the other direction. My grandpa would just get a scoop of ground feed and then he would lead them through the gate with no problem. I remember learning to back a four wheeled wagon into the tobacco shed and how frustrated I would get when it would jackknife and I would have to pull ahead a considerable length and just start over. Finally, with some practice and some finesse I could almost do it with my eyes closed. Little things, like milking some of the cows by hand or cultivating tobacco without digging up some of those very valuable plants, all required a little finesse.

I have been away from farming for quite a while now but have been a business owner for about the last twenty-five years. I surely wouldn't have made it for twenty-five years without a little finesse. Customers can often be challenging and at times you would just like to throw your hands in the air, but you can't. Employees don't always agree with decisions or policy, but it make things easier when you take the time to explain your position and the reasoning behind it. This is finesse.

I have found that the most rewarding and beneficial finesse works at home. I have probably hollered at the top of my lungs at those four boys of mine while they were growing up. Most times for not listening, not doing, or not caring. And where did all of that hollering get me? Nowhere. I am sure, as a result of my behavior, they knew why I was upset. But, did my lack of finesse in those instances make any positive difference in the way they will live their lives going forward? I don't think so.

Alternatively, my wife and I have never had an argument. Never had a fight. Wow! We don't always agree, though. For instance, when we are getting ready go out casually and I am slipping into my favorite jeans and t-shirt she will sometimes say, "You look so nice in that green shirt with the stripes. Are you sure you wouldn't rather wear that?" Boy is she good at that finesse thing!

Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks? I am working on my finesse as a result of her example and you know, I think it works. The soft touch... it's good for relationships and blood pressure. So, take some time to face all of life's challenges with Finesse. I think I'll start by telling my wife how nice she will look in the rider's seat of a new side by side ATV.

Roddy Dull