



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

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Focus. It's one of the most important things we do in today's business world. Whether you are a farmer, a retail store owner, or an accountant, when you are self employed, focus could be the difference between making it or not making it.

That said, the one thing that I miss the most about farming is the occasional opportunity to be free from focus, to dream, to let your mind wander, or even fantasize a little if you will. I recently watched a documentary on TV with my wife about eating habits and food myths. According to the show, there is absolutely no evidence that high cholesterol is in any way shape or form a contributing factor to heart disease. Rather, the effect of stress on the human body is the culprit.

I think my first effective non focusing experience started with my first official machinery operation task on the farm, raking hay. Not a hard job, but still a necessary one. Part of my mind would have to focus on maintaining a straight row and making sure that I was picking up all of the flat hay on the ground, but the other 99 percent of my multitasking brain was free. All of the elements were perfect to just drift off into my own little dream world. The sound of the tractor running was like soothing music, the sweet fragrance of the now dried hay was like incense, and the breeze blowing in my face with the warmth of that beautiful summer sun was story book. What a life. Now I knew what I wanted to be when I grew up...not just a farmer, but a Professional Hay Raker.

Another of my favorite escapes from reality jobs was plowing. We didn't have a chisel plow or an offset disc, we just mole board plowed. Once again, I had found a new adventure in my own little escape from reality. The tractor played a different, more powerful song than when I was raking hay. It's kind of like changing the radio station from soft rock to hard rock. The music was different, but still inspiring and pleasing. The smell of freshly disturbed black dirt was wonderful and the weather was usually warm but with that little bit of crispness left behind after a long winter. I was like Superman in complete control and powerful.

Cultivating tobacco offered me one of those "escape from reality" jobs on the farm, too. I liked to cultivate at night when the tobacco would fold it's leaves straight up just as if it were saying , please fold this fresh soil close around me so I can over power the bad weeds and grow tall and strong.

In those days, I found these times to be priceless. No cell phones, no radio, no one to interrupt you or disturb you. You were just left alone with your own thoughts, which happens to be the perfect medicine for everything that ails you.

To find this same freedom from focus today is a job by itself. My cell phone never leaves my side, the radio, TV, or computer is always on, my hands always seem to have a snack, soda, or cup of coffee in them, and my head, well, it hurts way more often than it ever did in my farming days. If I do find any time to dream now, it's not about what I want to do going forward, but instead more about the way it was, those amazing never to be forgotten days on the farm.

These stories for me are so vivid some days that if I just stop typing for one second and take a deep breath through my nose, I can smell that drying hay and that freshly plowed soil just as if I were there.

If you want to live longer and be happier, this is my advice to you: find a little time to be free from focus. Let yourself dream. Let your mind wander and forget about smelling the roses, but instead smell the hay, smell the dirt, and listen to the tractor music on both the soft and hard rock stations.