



A friend of mine, Jerry Nelson, a retired dairy farmer from Volga, South Dakota, is now a writer. He writes a weekly column for Dairy Star magazine. In 2017, his first book was published and perhaps you've seen it in a library or book store. It's called Dear County Agent Guy. I've known Jerry for about a dozen years or so now and I've told him we were twin cousins separated at birth. His recollections of growing up on a dairy farm near Volga are very identical to my growing up on a grain and beef farm near West Concord. We have the same kind of sense of humor that can sometimes be described as sarcastic, cynical, observational and farmer like. We have those memories of things that happened on the farm that maybe weren't funny then, but they sure are now. My parents would always bring up two stories that I vaguely remember because I was all of 4 or maybe 5 years old.

The one story involved water being down at the bottom of our well pit which was located in the garage. It was about 12 feet to the bottom of it and evidently had about a foot and a half of water standing in it. Well I noticed that if you drop something in the water, it made a splash. The bigger the object dropped in the water, the bigger the splash. I think Einstein was the first to discover this theory. And I wanted to prove him right so I started with a piece of gravel. Then some of my dad's tools became part of the science experiment. I found that a pair of pliers, a couple of screwdrivers and a hammer really make a splash. A short two by four also made a good splash but it ends up floating in the water. I think that was my undoing as one day several weeks later, my dad discovered the two by four in the pit. The water had receded quite a bit by this time and he noticed what looked like a hammer handle. Pretty soon he discovered half his tool box was down there. My only excuse was I wanted to see them splash. Suffice to say, that story never got old being retold over and over, especially by my sisters. My dad would grunt a little and my mom would say 'uffda' or something like that. It was like Bill Murray in Groundhog Day as I had to relive it many times.

The other story that gets retold also involved water and one of the out buildings on the farm. This time it was the hog house. This was a year when we did not have hogs so my dad decided to use the hog house to store soybeans. It was a nicely cemented floor that would work well for storage. He split the entire building into 3 bins using plywood and two by fours for walls to divide the entire floor into 3 separate storage bins. The floor was washed, swept, dried and all ready for soybeans to be augured in through the side windows. Well the evening before soybeans were going to be put into the building, I decided for some unknown reason, that the water hydrant in the corner should be turned on and be left on for an inordinate amount of time. Long enough to get the entire floor covered in inches of water. I don't know how many inches but I do know it was enough to delay putting beans in there for a while. And like Groundhog Day, this story got retold.

Years later, I was probably 14 when another incident happened. It was spring time on the farm. The oats were seeded along with the alfalfa seed. We had a nice rain that evening. Again this story involves water. That seems to be a recurring theme. Well at 14 years of age, I slept thru any rain and when I was up and about my day, I didn't see anything different than the day before. So I am driving down by the cow pasture in the turquoise-green colored early 1960's Ford pickup. I decided to turn around off of the grass pathway into the field to head back to the building site. Now remember this field was just seeded to oats. The ground was all dry and fluffy but then the rain had made it into a not quite as fluffy mud. That old two wheel drive pickup with three in the tree sunk



like a hammer in a well pit, only this time without the splash. Well it wasn't a long walk back to the house but I walked it real slow because I knew this was a two man job to get it out and since my brother Harv was not around, it was going to be my dad. That's when I heard about the rain the previous night. Not knowing it had rained the night before I come to find out, was not an excuse for this blunder. This is a story that did not get retold near as much as washing the hog house floor but I heard it enough. And every morning after a nightly rain for a few years after that, this would be the first thing I was told at the breakfast table. It rained last night so don't drive in the oats. That's a motto I live by yet today.