

I Will Never Marry A Pig Farmer!

"I Will Never Marry a Pig Farmer!"

Yes, those are the words that came out of my mouth. Mind you, I was probably about 15 or 16 years old. But I admit, I did say them. It's a story I will remember always . . .

First things first. I never grew up on a farm. I literally knew nothing about farming. Growing up, it didn't matter to me if it rained, if it was too windy, or if it was too hot or too cold. I was only concerned about weather when school was canceled because of a blizzard. And that would be a time to celebrate!



But . . . my high school best friend did live on a farm and her family raised pigs. Because she lived on the farm, it was expected that she help with pig chores on the farm. Her job? To help clean the hog barn **EVERY** Saturday morning. And it didn't matter if she had a friend stay overnight or not. Pigs still pooped. How was the hog barn cleaned? Simply put . . . use a well-worn pitch fork and scoop out the manure-laden straw and throw it out the door into a manure spreader. No technology. No automatic cleaners. Nada. None. Just old-fashioned manual labor. After the spreader was full, the manure was spread on cropland fields behind their house and used as soil nutrients.

One particular Friday night, I stayed overnight at her house. And being the friend I was, I chose to go out with her that Saturday morning as she cleaned the hog barn. I had no intention on helping, but I would watch because I was the "city" girl who was not exposed to the realities of pig farming. After "seeing and smelling" what was required to clean the barn, I outright exclaimed, "***I will never marry a hog farmer!***"

Well guess what . . . *I married a hog farmer.* Don't you just love God's sense of humor?

Funny how things you say come back to bite you. And it's funny what love does. I remember before we married (which is now 38 years), I asked him how much money he makes farming. And for those of you that understand farming, you know that question is laughable and absurd. How do you answer a question like that? (I soon learned the answer was always "it depends" . . .) So believe me, I was going into this whole married thing pretty much blind and not using a lot of common sense. I mean, let's face it, why would you marry someone who couldn't tell you how much money they make? But as they say, love is blind and I was going to experience "love blindness" wholeheartedly!

And I am glad I did. . .

But I had to find out what this farming thing was about. My husband was so passionate about what he did everyday and you know what? He hasn't lost any of that passion yet today. ***And passion is contagious.***

Shortly after we were married, I soon started to learn "this farming thing." The first thing I learned was to drive a tractor (with no cab) which raked hay for the dairy cows. Not only did my husband raise a few pigs for a local veterinarian, but his family needed hay for the dairy cows. So I quickly learned what hay (alfalfa) was and why it was needed. I am telling you - I was starting at "square one."

And I also believe there are people that are born to farm. And my husband is definitely one of them. His mother told me a story (actually many, many times) about my husband when he was a little boy. One Sunday, during a Christmas Sunday School church practice, the pastor asked him if he would like to be a wiseman. He immediately started crying and said, "No, I do not want to be a wiseman, I want to be a farmer!" He was worried the pastor was telling him he could not be a farmer!

My husband continued to slowly teach me, step-by-step, what it means to farm. He showed me what being a farmer meant through his eyes. He showed me his compassion, passion and his drive to make things better on our farm and in this world. He was patient in teaching me the things I wanted and needed to know. He taught me how to drive a tractor. He then taught me to drive and operate the combine. And to this day, combining is my favorite farming activity to do on the farm.



And we work well together (Well, most of the time). The first year we were married and had our first income tax appointment, we showed up with a shoe box (literally) that contained all the invoices and receipts for the year. I knew this could not continue. **So that's where I stepped in.** That was the last year we showed up with a shoe box of receipts. Initially, the entries were entered in a paper journal, but now, all of our accounting records are computerized.

God watched over us as he paired the two of us together. Even though we are opposites, we complement each other. Each of us have strengths the other doesn't. I am thankful for his family. It takes a lot (and I mean a lot!) of patience when the daughter-in-law plows up part of their front lawn because the plow wasn't completely out of the ground! Oh, the laughs God must not have on our behalf! But I am so thankful and appreciative of my life now. It's because of my life's experiences and God's hand that I am so passionate about agriculture. And some days it just takes my breath away . . .



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Happy Valentine's Day!