



Front Porch Music

I want my words on a page and my directions from Rand McNally

Well, another Christmas has come and gone and I'm stressed out by all the technogadgets, and even more so our reliance on those gadgets and acceptance of all this as inevitable and inescapable.

Several people, well apparently a whole big bunch of them, got those Kindles and Nooks or other such "e" devices on which they can read books. Me? I got the real thing...a book (and a gift card for some more at a real bookstore)...not some technowannabe. I can feel the anticipation every time I turn a page. I can empathize with the author as she describes growing up poor, but not destitute, in a large loving southern family in the 1960s. I can feel the grit and mud and skinned knees as I touch the page.

Some books move me so much I want to own them. Faulkner. Twain. Steinbeck. Harper Lee. Some amuse and entertain me so much I want them on my own bookshelves. "Busted Tractors and Rusty Knuckles: Norwegian Torque Wrench Techniques and Other Fine Points of Tractor Restoration" by Roger Welsch. "Lake Wobegon Days" by Garrison Keillor. And of course any and all books by Lewis Grizzard.

Others because their intrigue and suspense are overpowering: John Grishom's "A Time to Kill", Greg Isle's "Turning Angel", James Patterson's "Kiss the Girls", David Baldacci's "Absolute Power".

The same words on a computer screen just don't have the same effect. In fact, I feel like I'm being watched by whatever or whoever is on the other side of that screen. And, in effect, that is just what is happening. Some computer is collecting data on everything we download. After all, the companies behind all of this want to know what books to tempt you with next and limit those offerings to books their algorithms have determined to be those you're most likely to buy.

I want to browse aisles of bookshelves and make up my own mind. I want to curl up with a book. Curling up with a computer-like device is okay, I guess. But please, don't ask-don't tell if you do.

A coworker here at one of our newspapers is now on the prowl for a Garmin or Tom Tom or some such

navigational aid. Me? I've got Rand McNally. I am, however, thinking about getting a new one since they've probably added some roads since 2002.

I kind of got spooked a little when I accidentally activated the OnStar device on my Chevy Avalanche right after I got it. When you're alone in a truck and start hearing a soft female voice asking you what you want it's hard to keep your mind on the road. I actually looked in the back seat to see if I had a stowaway.

The OnStar episode just has me a little leery of taking directions from a computer voice coming out of the sky. My Rand McNally has never talked back or told me I'm lost. It also has never tried to get me to try the fettuccini and angel hair pasta combo at the nearest Italian restaurant to my current latitude and longitude coordinates.

I'm with Jimmy Buffett on this. "I don't need this much organization in my life. Give me my Junior Mints and keep your two pound Nestle Crunch bar."

Technology even sneaks in and slaps you up side the face when you're not looking. Among the stocking stuffers for all the grandkids this year were those Chinese handcuffs. You know, the kind you stick your fingers in and can't pull them back out.

Eli, our 10-year-old Nintendo expert, had slipped his fingers into one and seemed to be pleased with his tethered situation. I pointed out that he'd have a hard time playing his Nintendo with his hands restricted, but he was way ahead of me.

"No, granddad," he said. "My thumbs are still free and I can hold it just like this." Even low, low tech had to take a back seat to Nintendo.

Sometimes manufacturers try to hide technology so people like me will fall prey to them. We have a new radio/CD player that looks like an old-fashioned radio...wood cabinet, cloth covered speakers and a tuner that moves a bar across the spectrum of radio waves instead of flashing a frequency on an LED display.

We got it because it can convert LPs and cassettes to CDs. We old, lo-tech people have such things as actual records. A lot of them. As far as I'm concerned there's not a lot of good music on CDs but my vinyl is worth its weight in gold. You just can't wedge one of them in the CD player in the car though.

In this case I'll take the technology because it makes me feel like I'm winning. "Their" planned obsolescence of my LPs has failed.

Of course they had to make it look like something old so we'd buy it. And, truthfully, it's sitting in our den looking like an old radio, and all we've done with it so far is listen to its radio. A friend also has one, and he warned me to read the instructions carefully. Seems it's a techno device all right, and not as simple to operate as it looks.

Of course I still have my phonograph on which I can stack six LPs and listen to the Mamas and Pappas the way they intended. I can even do disco on the built-in eight track player.

Greener Pastures/Shelley Proffitt Eagan



Curiosity consumes the calves

As I was observing the weaned calves today the funniest thing happened. I had taken Doyle, our yellow lab, with me as I worked through the chores at all three farms. The cows are always curious about him but today they didn't hold back.

Calves are like toddlers, you never know what they might do. They can run non-sensically, chase each other and act thoroughly silly for no reason at all.

I was sitting on the 4-wheeler watching and waiting as I combined two groups of weaned calves into one group. I wanted to see the older ones showing the new ones the ropes, sort of where they graze, where the water is and such. As I was perched observing on the silent 4-wheeler with the calves surrounding me checking each other out, a few stopped and took notice of Doyle, who was sniffing about the pasture nearby us for just the right chewing stick.

Several of them walked in his direction, heads down, sniffing, approaching him cautiously but unafraid. When they were about to get their desired whiff of this non-cow strange creature, he realized he was the object of their interest!

Quickly, he came to me and I patted the back of my seat for him to jump onto the 4-wheeler out of the reach of their potentially harmful hooves. He jumped up and stood on the back of the seat, wagging his tail as if to say, "HA! Can't catch me now!"

The game did not end there. The calves are also persistent! They followed him to our perch and stood a few feet away for a bit then slowly moved closer, necks stretched out, straining to get a whiff, or taste, of him without getting too close! Finally one got her nose right up to his!

Apparently, he was not impressed with the smell of her and without so much as moving an inch to back away on our small shared seat, he snapped lightly to make his point. The calf backed up and startled the others, not hard to do with calves. No harm done.

Typically we reprimand him for snapping at cows but I could hardly blame him in this situation. The same calf came back again for a second try. Inching closer and closer, head outstretched, sniffing for something familiar, all the way to his snout and then, snap, no contact made and she backs away.

Again, she comes in, as I am making a mental note of her tag number to remember this incident when Doyle is in the pasture in the future, but this time she has a new target. My foot! I know I can easily shoo her away and wait and watch patiently as she sniffs my knee, down to my boot.

Once to the boot she starts licking the sole of my shoe. As I am wondering what it is there she could possibly find tasty about I realize she is opening her mouth and about to nibble on the thick outer rim of my insulated, \$100 galoshes!

Not a player there sister. No biting my feet! Cows only have one row of teeth with which to tear grass from the ground and grind it up, and she was moving very cautiously so I wasn't worried about her taking off my toes. But, those galoshes I got for Christmas last year and hadn't planned on buying another for some time yet. I tapped her on the chin with the tasty boot and sent her away.

I think she felt some sense of success about her experiment. Now, I'll have to keep an eye on Doyle when I am with them from now on. I don't think that curiosity has yet to be satisfied!

Guest Columnist



Shelley Eagan
Rancher at Proffitt Family Farms
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Financial Aid Night at CCC Tuesday

Financial Aid Night is coming up Tuesday, Jan. 25 at Cleveland Community College for high school seniors and their parents/guardians.

A representative from the College Foundation of North Carolina will be

on hand to answer any questions concerning financial aid for college. The event will begin at 6:30 p.m. in the Mildred H. Keeter Auditorium on the CCC campus. All high school seniors are invited to attend this informational ses-

sion regardless of college plans.

For more information on financial aid visit www.clevelandcommunitycollege.edu or call the Financial Aid office at 704-484-4028.



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Library book sale in progress

Mauney Memorial Library is hosting a Book Nook super sale. The library is filled with a new stock of videos, books and magazines for the month of January 2011. A bag of books, VHS movies, magazines and more can be purchased for \$1. Money raised from the sale will benefit the library. For more information call 704-739-2371.

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FAFSA Day in February at CCC

Any student who may need assistance applying for financial aid for college should make plans to attend FAFSA Day at Cleveland Community College on Saturday, Feb.19.

CCC Financial Aid representatives will be available to walk individuals through the steps required to apply for federal financial aid.

This workshop is geared toward high school seniors, however, anyone can attend.

This event will be held from 8 a.m. to 12 noon in the Paksy Technology Center, room 3201 on the CCC campus.


All students are invited to attend, not just those planning to attend Cleveland Community College. Parents and/ or guardians are also encouraged to attend.

For more information on FAFSA Day visit www.clevelandcommunitycollege.edu or call the Financial Aid office at 704-484-4028.

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