

Exposing the Secret

“He’s just a kid,” I heard my mom pleading as I climbed atop that big red International farm tractor. I was about to argue, but I noticed my grandpa wasn’t paying her any mind, so I decided not to either. If Papa said it was a go, it was a go. This was his farm and her complaining would likely only harden his Italian resolve. I even detected a faint hint of satisfaction in his voice as he said, “Keep it in da first gear der boy, just down to da bayou and back.”

Momma was turning red. “He can’t be trusted daddy!” she exasperated.

I feigned a conciliatory smile toward her, winked at my little brother Heath, and popped the clutch on big red; leaving them all choking in the delta dust.

Chances are mom stomped off mad, but I never turned to look. It was important Papa know I was keeping my eyes on the road. If I could muster some maturity here I might get a free run of the tractor this summer. I veered clear off the turn row just thinking about it.

It was scarcely a quarter mile to the bayou, but it didn’t take that long for me to grow extremely bored with just puttering along in first gear. I mean, even a patient man can only take so much. Besides, I was hankering to idle her up and rip through the gears. Let’s see what this baby will do! Bobbing along was putting me to sleep. By the time I reached the bayou I was asking myself, “What are rules for anyhow, just to hold a man down?”

Papa hadn’t actually specified what side of the bayou I should turn around on, so I crossed on over. While there, shielded by that thick tree line, the thought hit me, “What would it hurt if I let loose for a couple hundred yards? Shucks, it might not take but just a few seconds. They can’t see me from the barn anyhow.”

My little brother Heath, who possesses a memory like a hypnotized elephant on truth serum, still likes to tell it from his perspective.

“The moment that bone head crossed the bayou,” he recalls, “Papa started growling in Italian. Momma hollered out the window, “I told you!” Grandma dug out her rosary beads and started reciting ‘Hail Marys’. Everyone’s jaws dropped when we saw that tremendous dust cloud tearing along above the tree line akin to a space shuttle launching across the bayou.”

When I came puttering innocently back up to the barn Papa’s face was so red I thought he’d been stung by a bee. “What’s wrong with you?” I asked.

His jaw muscles worked, but nothing came out. He just pointed for me to park it. This certainly wasn’t the fanfare I had expected. Where was everyone at? Didn’t momma owe me an apology? As I drove past I noticed Papa’s big bushy eyebrows were gnarled and hanging at a strange angle. It seemed vaguely familiar, like some sort of *deja vu* all over again. When I hopped down, he yanked off his big leather belt, and it all suddenly came flooding back to me. Those were the same brows I’d seen the day I’d bonked him on the head with that big dirt clod. Uh-oh!

But anyway- Why do we always think we can get away with something when we think no one is looking? God’s always looking. I couldn’t even hide my sin from an old man a quarter of a mile away behind a tree line and a monster pair of eyebrows! What would make me think I could pull one over on God, who even discerns the thoughts and intents of our hearts? (*Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before His eyes, and He is the one to whom we are accountable. Hebrews 4:13 NLT*) We’d do well to just keep things real with the Lord. There’s really no such thing as a secret to Him. It all registers on the sowing and reaping chart.

Thanks to a praying grandmother and a fast pair of Converse, I survived the wrath of the zesty Italian that day. I never did get free run of his tractors though. Later Papa even welded a piece of metal on the gear box of his riding lawn mower to keep it in second gear so I wouldn’t cut his yard on two wheels; but of course, that’s a whole-nother story.

-Guy Sheffield 11-02-06