

An eye for a tooth

Written by David Allinson

Sunday, 14 November 2010 19:54 -

To get to Walt and Wanda's house you have to drive a half-mile down a rocky, hilly stretch that's mostly impassible in the winter. We don't visit them often – Every now and then they stop by for a visit. When they drop in I put up a pot of coffee and pull some frozen donuts out of the freezer; Walt is fond of frozen donuts.

The other day they paid us a surprise visit - One of them "howdy-do?" type visits folks round these parts tend to do. We're not really "howdy-do?" type folks ourselves. Generally when I see a neighbor coming down the road I get a sudden case of the flu or diarrhea or some other ailment that cuts the visit short. Walt and Wanda are good folks so we don't mind them paying us a surprise visit. Walt can sow a pretty good tale, which helps to cut some of the boredom peculiar to watching chickens lay eggs

Anyhow, Walt got to talking about Obama and such. There's something about that topic that tends to light me up. Walt was talking away, not noticing me squirming or the veins in my head bulging. Which is OK since Walt can't much see past his elbows anyhow. Walt was going on and on about how Obama has done this and Obama has done that. I kept nodding my head like I was interested. Round these parts being neighborly means pretending you're dumber than other folks to avoid giving offense – It's a hillbilly thing.

Wanda walked in with a dish of frozen donuts. Walt grabbed one and proceeded to busy himself trying to bite off a chunk. All of a sudden he rose up hollering and hooting. Seems his front tooth had dislodged and was stuck solid in the donut. I guess I should say this was kind of a tragedy as it left Walt completely depleted of front teeth.

Wanda mentioned how much more becoming Walt was without his front tooth – From what I could tell that remark didn't set well with Walt. Next half hour or so we sat around trying to figure out how it was Walt was gonna be able to eat frozen donuts. The answer never did come to us but in usual Walt fashion he got back to talking about Obama – him talking, me listening, my veins bulging.

That's how folks do it around here – stick to the topic at hand. I've learned when it comes to conversation you have to be careful how far you move the outhouse – too much confuses folks, too little makes them suspicious

For instance, I'll get to telling my neighbors stories about folks in South Africa being murdered and such. Generally what I hear is, "We got our own particular problems around here." Of course, my neighbors are right. We do have our own particular problems around here. I'll keep right on telling stories; pretty soon folks get to figuring I'm pulling their legs.

"Ain't no place that bad," folks say.

Walt stays pretty focused. Even the minor distraction of losing his only front tooth couldn't distract him.

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“That fella Obama wants to put an energy tax on folks like us,” Walt mumbled.

Supposedly that tax would more than double the amount of money we pay for electricity. What's worse is Walt says Obama wants to send the money to “urban areas” - supposedly the folks that are gonna get the money ain't done a damn thing to deserve it. Walt says some folks might lose their homes because they won't be able to pay all those extra electric bills. Which is fine with Obama - He's already got it figured he'll give the empty homes to poor urban folks. About this time my veins were fixing to burst.

So Walt kept on jawing about Obama and all the bad news and such. Walt said he was tired of talking which meant it was my turn to move the outhouse.

I had to keep from laughing because Walt was trying to stick that tooth back in the hole in his mouth. I wanted to tell him that tooth wasn't gonna stay-put unless he used super glue or something.

Walt listened pretty close when I got to talking about how white South Africans were being treated like treed raccoons (Wanda makes a fine raccoon stew.) Walt asked me what the white folks were doing about their situation. I tried to tell him they were trying to be friendly and such so as to not stir up too much trouble.

“It's called politeee-cal correctness,” I said.

“Seems to me ain't nothing poleeetical or correct about being murdered,” Walt mumbled, his tooth precariously dangling in his mouth.

Walt got to talking again about how it wasn't right that folks should be getting themselves killed and such. See, folks around these parts live by the feud - You hurt one of theirs they hurt one of yours.

This reminded Walt of the families in Tehema County that got into a feud a few years back. Seems one fella took it on himself to hurt another fella and that pretty much set the whole thing off. Before it was done the fella that started the situation got himself a permanent resting place where he couldn't bother folks no more. That ended it - Justice done.

“That's how them South African folks ought to do it,” Walt said. “An eye for an eye,”

“A tooth for a tooth,” I shot back.

Walt walked away without saying a word.