

Wisdom gained in the outhouse

By Mable Hastings

Although many find it hard to believe, our family still had an outhouse for a toilet in the late 70's. An outhouse, also known by many other names, is a small structure, separate from a main building, which covers one or more toilets. We had no indoor plumbing and pumped our water from a hand pump or carried it in buckets from the well that was located a good walk downhill from the house. The house resembled a shed and in truth, I think it once was. We were as many as seven at one time in that three room house located in the Vale. Five kids, two adults, a dog, a cat and any other varmint that sought refuge there. Today I got to thinking about what I learned from using an outhouse as a teen.

The lessons were plentiful and the contribution to our patience levels was abundant as well. Those out there who remember their own outhouse experience will likely do a lot of reminiscing in

reading this. Please humour me as I share my outhouse wisdom...just in case you find yourself wondering what it must have been like.

-Styrofoam makes for a warm seat cushion in the winter

-Don't knock the air holes in the winter, in summer you will be glad they are there.

-Spiders have no sense of smell

-Toilet paper is a beautiful thing

-Lime Powder (or Calcium Hydroxide) hides most scary things if used in excess

-Somewhere a sacred rule was written that bathroom trips in the middle of night are ranked for use by age. This never seemed fair as I was fourth and winter cold was no help in soothing the wait time.

-Emergencies solidified the fact that fat kids don't always run fast enough!!

-Don't drop anything valuable in the hole—ever!

-Don't seek revenge by dropping a sibling's valuable in the hole...you will regret it when your Mother finds out!

-Don't peek through the hole in the door. There is nothing beyond it that you want to see—ever!

-Bees sting!

-Skunks are real!

-Icabod Crane does not live in the woods in the Vale...likely your sibling just doesn't want to accompany you on the late night trip to use the outhouse.

-Newspaper is softer than a catalogue page.

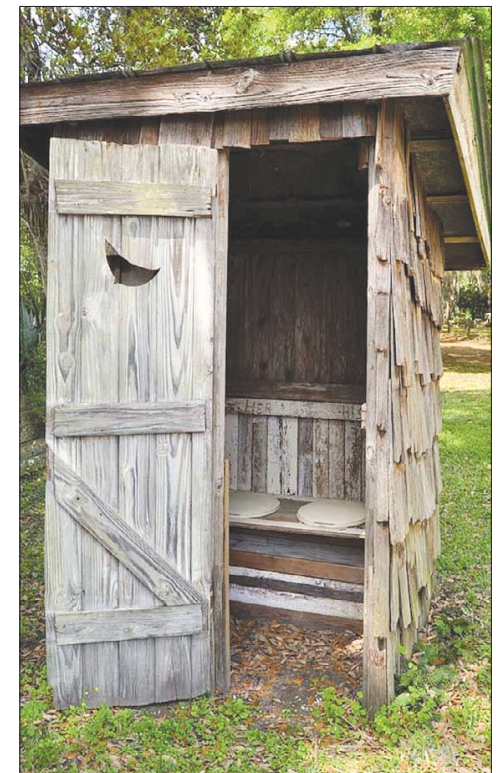
-Never tell your friends that your bathroom is "the latest thing," upon seeing it, you will lose credibility.

-Last but not least...DON'T ever yell "FIRE!" if someone is in the outhouse, likely you will regret it.

All these years later, as I reminisce myself, I find it hard to imagine most of the people I now know ever using an outhouse. The latest toilets do almost everything for you and some are even equipped with a receptionist who prioritizes your turn and gives you a lollipop when you exit.

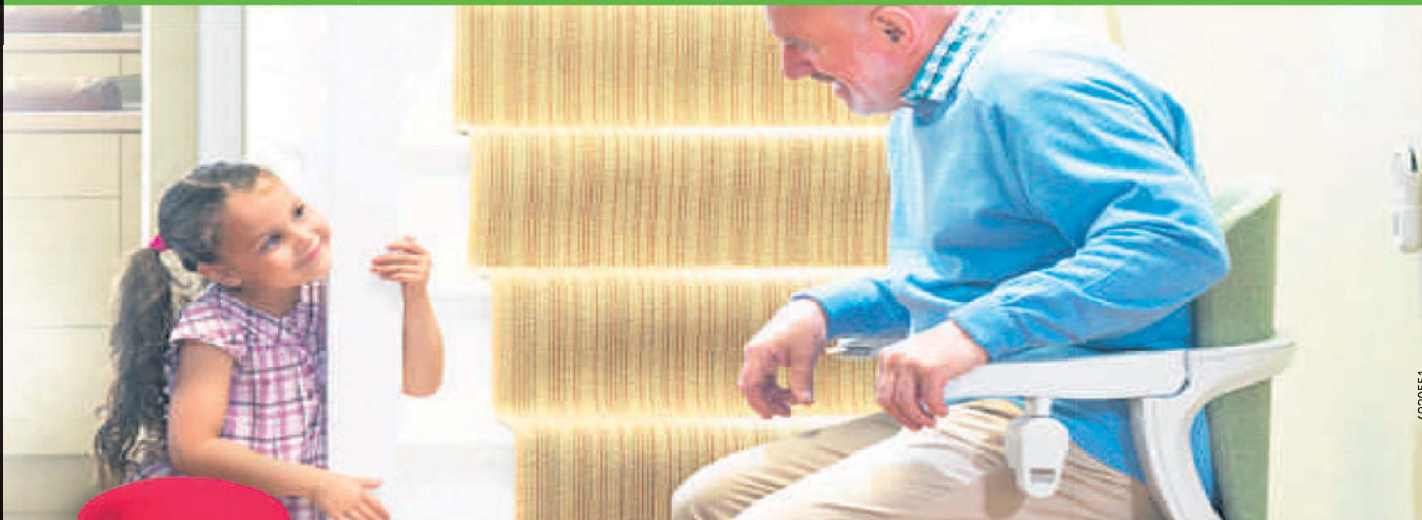
The outhouse in the Vale makes me

appreciate the little things in life and while it may be hard to understand by most, the memories still smell as sweet today as they did way back then.



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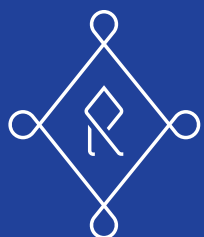
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