

# *Living a Simple Life* with a Back Porch View

Dear Listener:

Thank you for stopping by for a visit at Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View podcast! To make it easy, you will find a transcript of each episode. I hope you enjoy the visit!

## **Episode 16- Country Roads & Directions**

*Welcome to Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View. Thanks for stopping by! Grab a glass of Lemonade, pull up a rocker and join me for conversations about living the Simple Life. Go ahead. Get comfortable and settle in for a good visit. It's time to relax and enjoy!*

Country roads. Ah, the romantic image that comes to mind with just two little words. Songs have been written about them. People have dreamed of these roads leading them home. They've been immortalized as the epitome of beauty, peace, and contentment. At least, until you've actually driven on them. Or needed directions on how to get somewhere that requires you to traverse them.

When we first moved down here, it was like being in a foreign country. I was completely unfamiliar with the area. Since we lived less than a couple of miles off a main road, finding it wasn't difficult. But when you live in the country, there are still places that are 'tucked back', so to speak. To get there, you have to travel down the backroads, most of which are gravel and dirt, with a few that aren't much more than overgrown paths.

Several years ago, I offered to fill in for a friend who worked at a close by gravel pit. To get there, it meant driving the backroads. Although these roads are often thought to be rather picturesque, the truth of the matter is they are a bit scary. They aren't two lane. Most of these backroads barely have one, and if you are really lucky, one and a half. If you aren't careful, you will find yourself facing an oncoming car, truck and trailer, or a tractor while both of you are trying to cross over a half-lane bridge. It's about that time you figure out you should have already learned the skill of ditch driving, without tearing out the oil pan.

Driving 10 miles an hour down one of these backroads feels like you are doing 110 on a straight paved highway. These roads are paved, gravel, dirt, and grass, all within a two-hundred-yard stretch. They are designed exactly like one of those old timey washboards. They have short curves, long curves, fat curves, skinny curves. There are sharp curves, soft curves, smooth curves, and slippery curves. Add in the hills, the dips, the holes, and the debris, and you feel like you're in an amusement park designed by Dr. Suess.

One of the more interesting aspects of country roads is that you really have no idea where they will lead. You can follow one, thinking you are headed North, only to find out you are actually headed South. They twist. They turn. They go from blacktop, to dirt, to gravel, to barely a grassy track, and then back again. It just depends on which one you take. You could be driving in circles, or you might just actually get home again. Three hours later.

To add to the excitement of traveling those backroads, the Police Jury had been laying gravel on the roads I needed to travel every morning before 5:00 a.m. In all honesty, it was a vast improvement, and they did a great job. However, there is nothing more 'fun' than having a Mama possum and ten of her babies crossing this freshly laid road and slamming on your brakes trying to avoid a full-family massacre. In the dark. Even at a slow rate of speed, the fishtailing I did probably made somebody think some idiot decided to use the road as their canvas and drew a whole lot of whorls, circles and squiggly lines then called it Art.

At one point I had to cross parish lines. The neighboring Parish had decided it was time to fill a few holes with hot mix on their side of the line. Great job, guys, but, oh, the joys of hearing all that tar hitting the underside and lower portion of my car. It meant spending quite a bit of time trying to figure out how to get my car to go back to a subtle champagne color, instead of polka-dotted.

Regardless of the conditions of the road, or the direction they take, there truly is nothing like taking a leisurely drive down a country road early in the morning and seeing the sun filter through the trees. To drive them in the early autumn with all the colors surrounding you makes you feel more alive than any other time of the year. It truly is a thing of beauty, peace and contentment.

And you need to hang on to this attitude long before you ask someone for directions.

Shortly after we moved out here, the Country Boy and I headed to a friend's house for a bartering session. Cindy had chickens we could use, we had jams, jellies, and a few other items she needed. Since the Country Boy knew the backroads a little better than I did, I handed the phone to him to get directions. When he finished, I asked him if it was easy to find, and he said 'yes'. Just so you know, here is a partial of the directions:

"You gonna go to Taylortown?"

"No. I'm gonna go over the Big Bridge."

"Oh. Okay. Go down to Dick Johnson's and hang a right. Go on down to Four Corners and take a left."

Now, let me see if I can explain those directions. Taylortown is not much more than an old store and the remains of a bell tower. Back in the day, it was a small town/stopgap, but not anymore. If you don't know about Taylortown, you'll pass right through it none the wiser. The Big Bridge? As opposed to the smaller ones we have around here, the Big Bridge is known as the one that crosses over Lake Bisteneau. Four Corners is literally just that - a four-way stop with a gas station on one corner. And Heaven help you if you're going to turn right at Dick Johnson's, and don't know who that is. Actually, I never met the man, but I do know what they meant.

They weren't talking about a person so much. 'Dick Johnson's' is the common reference to an old General Store that used to sit at the intersection of Highways 157 & 154. Now? Even if you look closely, you can't see any reference to Mr. Johnson as the sign has long since disappeared. The store and everything else that was once there has been leveled and the land cleared, but folks around here know exactly where you are talking about.

I can't help but laugh sometimes. When I lived in the city, the main streets were Youree Drive, Mansfield Road, Hearne Avenue, and 70th Street. Most people familiar with Shreveport could get anywhere else in the city if that was one of the roads you had to take. Out here in the country, road names don't mean a whole lot. It took me quite a while to figure out where folks were talking about when they would say there was a huge deer on the side of 7. Come to find out, Hwy. 371 was at one time Hwy. 7.

The Federal Highway Department changed the number back in the early 1990s, and come to find out, assigning a new number at all was barely an afterthought. Even though the numbers changed, it is and will always be 7 to those who grew up around here. Not Highway 7. Just 7.

We do have a few roads that are named, but in most cases, they are named after someone who once lived down that dirt road. Bill Smith actually died somewhere around 1898, but there is still a road named after him. Even though the road has a name, the signpost may not be there. If it is, it's half buried in the dirt and debris. When referring to the road, the old timers will give you directions that include "go on past old Ratchett Hound's place; make that curve by Jack's old deer stand, and it's down yonder on the right."

Be forewarned. Ratchett Hound was Bill Smith's nickname. And keep in mind, you can't drive 30 feet around here without seeing a deer stand. But Jack's deer stand? It rotted down years ago, but there's still a piece of wood nailed to the tree, which means that, to the old folks, it is still there, and that space still belongs to Jack. It doesn't matter that Jack died 45 years ago. It's still his hunting spot, and no one would dare take it over.

And down yonder? It could be anywhere from ¼ mile to five miles. But wherever you are going will definitely be there. That is, if you took the correct fork in the road that the old timer failed to mention. If you took the wrong one and asked about it, the response will probably be "Now why would I tell you about that fork? The left fork is where that crazy ol' coot Dooley lived. No one in their right mind ever goes down thataway!") It doesn't matter that you are new around here and have no idea of Dooley's one time existence, much less anything about his personality. In the old folks' minds, you should know this stuff.

On our journey to Cindy's, the Country Boy got most of the directions right the first time. He told me he was looking for 'Smallwood', as we passed Silverwood. But the way we were headed must be right because she said it would turn into a pot-holed dirt road. Just watch for the deer stand. We hit the pot-holed dirt road and passed several deer stands. We drove down that dirt road for a couple of miles before it turned back into 154, which was right by Four Corners, only we were approaching it from the opposite direction we had just come from. Yep. We got to lick that calf again.

As we turned back around, I picked up the directions, and proceeded to tell him how to get there. The right way. And it involved turning down Silverwood. Yep. There was the deer stand. Yep. It turned into a pot-holed dirt road.

I guess the city girl is finally being weaned out of me, because I can now quickly translate the location of "the old tree that got hit by lightning back in the 40's, down the road from Cal Hoover's old place." Old Cal died about two years before Bill Smith, but I know exactly where they mean. If I get any better, I'll have almost gotten to the point

where Old Bill, Jack, and Cal will be getting a place set at the table for Thanksgiving. I'm not so sure about inviting Dooley. I may just take a plate down to him. At least I have a good chance at not getting lost if I ask that bunch for directions.

Country Roads. They really do finally lead you home. You just need to be very careful in trying to get there and have an exceptional sense of direction. And make sure you pack a lunch, just in case.



If you want to learn more about the topic at hand or get a transcript for this episode, just visit my website at [www.thefarmwife.com/podcast](http://www.thefarmwife.com/podcast). That is the Resource page for this podcast and I have it set up by episodes to make things easier to find. To help you out, this is Episode 16.

And while you're there, you can leave your comments at the end of the page. Be sure to tell me what you think and share your own thoughts and ideas. I would love to hear from you!

If you have questions or need some help with directions on the backroads of life, you can stop by for an email visit at [thevirtualporch@gmail.com](mailto:thevirtualporch@gmail.com). And be sure to subscribe – you don't want to miss a single conversation. I'd also appreciate it if you would rate, review, and leave a comment on this episode. And tell your friends to join us. I'll be sitting on the porch every Monday morning waiting for your visit!

Thanks again for stopping in. I will see you next week on Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View. And while you are waiting on the next episode, grab that glass of refreshment, pull up a rocker, and sit back for a while. It's time to relax and enjoy.

Relax & Enjoy!

*julie*