

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 63 - An Old Fashioned Barn Raising

Having great neighbors is a true blessing. Around here, we go to them for advice, as well as just an opportunity to sit and visit. All of our neighbors know they are welcome to stop by here for help or a visit as well.

There was a time when being a part of a community was taken very seriously. Folks helped each other with things that took time, strong backs, or projects that would otherwise take weeks or months to complete.

This is where barn raisings come into play. Although often thought of as an Amish tradition, in the 18th and 19th century it was common for any farmer to host a barn raising. It is called a 'raising' because one of the tasks involved raising the upper beams and frames in place by using ropes and poles to lift them into place.

Barns weren't just a home for animals. It also stored grain and hay. They were an integral and necessary building for any farmer. However, barns were such large structures they were costly to build to begin with. And considering the large number of people it took to build a barn, very few farmers could afford to hire outside help to get the job done.

And that's where the community came into play. Neighbors would gather together to help a farmer build his barn. In some cases, the sign of a barn raising meant that more people were moving into a community, which could give it strength as a whole. At other times, a barn raising was done to replace one that was destroyed by weather or fire. By assisting with one barn raising, you were mostly assured that you would be helped in your own time of need.

Barn raisings weren't just all work. They were also considered a Community Get Together with almost a festival-like quality to the gathering. The women would gather to prepare meals to feed the workers. The workers would have friendly competitions to see who could work bigger, better, faster.

The children would either help the adults or fashion their own games. Barn raisings were a perfect break to visit with others in the community, and most everyone looked forward to helping and enjoying a break in their otherwise almost isolating lifestyles.

Not many people actively participate in an old-fashioned barn raising any longer. Most of them are prefabricated and can be built in a matter of just one weekend by only a few men. But the spirit of a barn raising doesn't need to be lost in the ether of modern technology.

I often think we need to take that spirit of an old-fashioned barn raising and redesign it somewhat to include other things. We could easily gather together and help repair or rebuild a neighbor's fence. That neighbor could, in turn help another neighbor build a chicken coop or other structure on their farm. Then that neighbor could share the workload for a project on another farm.

And at the same time, other neighbors could join forces to make sandwiches, cookies, or other goodies to feed the workers. You can guarantee the food would be delicious. Plus, you would have a chance to visit with each other, catch up on the latest news, and possibly even plan the next 'barn raising'.

Just recently, a tornado swept through parts of Oklahoma. And it wasn't the first one, nor will it be the last. Tornadoes and other natural disasters occur all too often across our country – and even throughout the world.

And the aftermath is devastating. If there was ever a time for the spirit of a barn raising to be 'lifted', that would be it. There is debris to be removed. Roofs to be installed. And in some places, an actual barn will need to be rebuilt. And with no power, food, fresh water, supplies, and even laundry are needed.

But the spirit of barn raising doesn't have to be limited to heavy physical labor. You could also extend 'raising a barn' to caring for a neighbor who is sick or struggling. Gather a group of people and schedule times to take them meals, mow their yard, or even feed animals. For others, you could also offer services such as preparing a resume or occasional childcare.

Raise a barn by having a canning party. When it's time for the harvest to come in, those who have gardens spend long, hot days in the kitchen trying to can, dehydrate, and preserve those fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Instead of food preservation being a solitary chore, create a Canning Party schedule. Invite some friends who are willing to help each other. Each day choose one person's home to meet, and start peeling, blanching, chopping, dicing, and ladling. Your canning will go much faster, and you will have fun in the process!

Another way to raise a barn is to create a Volunteer Collective. This would be a group of friends who enjoy helping others. It can be designed to focus on one neighbor a month, or an overall 'drive' to help many at the same time. An example of this would be a Winter Weather focus, where you collected coats, and possibly knit or crochet hats, scarves, and mittens for those in your area who struggle to feed their family, much less provide warm clothing for those cold winter months.

Another Volunteer Collective could be a Holiday focus. Collections of purchased or handmade items can be gathered along with food baskets for the Thanksgiving or Christmas holidays.

One thing I will say about this – times are difficult right now, and it can be hard for some to make ends meet. In addition to a Holiday focus, consider doing a 'Non-Holiday' activity. Secretly deliver food baskets and other necessary items to those who need help at times other than the holidays.

We may not literally raise barns too much anymore, but that doesn't mean we can't raise a stronger community. All it takes is a willing heart to help, a little ingenuity, and a few tools, skills, and a plate of sandwiches. Think about it. If you truly want to be a part of a stronger community, maybe it's time for us to raise a few barns.

If you want to learn more about the topic at hand just visit my website at www.thefarmwife.com.

If you have questions or just want to stop in for a visit, you can do that through email at thevirtualporch@gmail.com. And be sure to subscribe – you don't want to miss a single conversation. 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 for the next episode, grab that glass of refreshment, pull up a rocker, and sit back for a while. It's time to

Relax & Enjoy!

Julie