

10/20/72 Herman Rabbitt

Most city people have false notions about farmers, including the eccentrics.

Tonight's TV news reports the finding of something over \$500,000 (I didn't get the exact sum) buried in pill drums and other such containers on the farm of Herman Rabbitt in populous, urbanizing, crime-ridden Montgomery County, where we farmed and some of Lil's family did. He late Uncle Buck King farmed and had regular business dealings with Herman, who never looked as good as a self-respecting scarecrow should.

Herman, who never married (and if he had anything to do with women I never heard of it), was more than a farmer. Most of his income came from cattle dealing. A fellow cattle dealer who also farmed in a lackadaisical fashion, Carroll Burdette, had a business relationship of some kind with Herman and his brother. Carroll had the farm to the west of ours. (He called me out of the blue about three months ago from where he has lived for some years, in Florida, just to talk he said. After describing his new place and life down there he asked me if I intend to sell my place. I told him I would. He said he was uncertain if he would, probably wouldn't. Last week I went to see a real estate agent about it. I then learned that Carroll has had his farm listed there for some time, with the brother of another former partner in some deals named Hirschberger. Cattle dealers are all this honest.)

Well, Buck used to go down from his Cedar Grove place to Herman's on Sundays, after milking, to see if Herman had any stock he'd like or like to trade for. Once the subject of Herman came up, probably in laughing about some seeming eccentricity, and Buck told me this story. Whenever he got there, first thing Herman would say is "Gotta chew, Buck?" Buck always chewed, always had some and both knew that Herman always had some in his overalls (I never saw him in anything else, anywhere). Each Sunday Herman cauged a mouthful from Buck, and I do mean full. Buck was anything but stingy, but he was galled that a man everyone knew was rich would be so cheap. One Saturday he decided to put an end to it without ending their relationship. Buck also raised a bit of tobacco. He got some store-boughten, some of his own stronger leaf, mixed it all up, urinated on it and put it in a separate, empty bag of his bought brand. He also spiced it with pepper and other things before moistening.

When he got to Herman's the next day he was greeted with the same solicitation.

"This'n's a pretty rough batch, Herman", he warned. Got my own stuff in it."

"Cain't be too rough if your achewin'", Herman said, holding out his hand.

"Warmin' ay," Buck told him, but the hand stayed out and Buck got that special package.

Herman took his usual oversized cheek-filler and chew.

"Is rough, Buck", is all Herman said. He never again asked Buck for a chew.

Herman did the same kind of thing when he went to a federal office in the county seat, Rockville, probably sold conservation. "Gotta see-gah" he asked the first man he saw. He went around to each and every man in the office unabashedly asking each for a cigar. When the last said as all other said, that he had none, Herman nonchalantly said, "Well, reckon ah gotta smoke onuh mah own", and he proceeded to.

Carroll told me the story about Herman going to Indiana to buy some stock. The man he was supposed to see, figuring he'd come by train, went to the station at the time he expected Herman, there apparently not being too many trains and Herman not having telegraphed when he'd arrive. One passenger train came and went, no Herman. Then there was a freight. As it slowed down in the station, Herman tolled out of the rods.

That is one way he accumulated so much, not spending it. I imagine shady deals made most of it. And I'm by no means certain that the real reason he had the money buried has nothing to do with fear of banks and bankers or owning property (he owned much). It was most likely so that the government couldn't make him pay taxes on it.

Why he wanted so much money and worried about getting caught cheating the government I can't imagine because he had no heirs, nobody to whom to leave it. He does appear to have trusted his lawyers because after his death a week or so ago they got the paper he left for them with an account of his own graveyard.