

# MARK'S REMARKS

Joining 4-H was a requirement growing up on the Beernink Farm. I specifically use the word requirement for I can remember resisting and pleading with my older brother and dad as I joined other young boys at our first meeting in the basement of Coop Gas & Oil in Sioux Center. Fear, anger or stubbornness, individually or together, played a role in making it crystal clear to my family what *I* thought of this apparent blessed right of passage.

This club came complete with leaders, activities, rules, and memorization. Yes, I can still utter, without threat, the motto *I pledge my Head to clearer thinking, my Heart to greater loyalty, my Hands to larger service, and my Health to better living, for my club, my community, my country, and my world.*

Annually I raised and displayed a pen of cattle (Feeder Projects) at the county fair but I also showed individual steers. Labeled as 'lead calves' these wonderful creatures, residing way...way above hogs on my custom made hierarchy chain, required training in order that the handler could safely lead them as opposed to a 1200lb steer leading the handler. At this point one particular Black Angus comes to mind.

Absolutely stubborn, feisty, and angry was this powerful and muscular black specimen. Several weeks after putting him in a head gate and clothing him with a halter, came Day One of training. One end of a rope was attached to the halter, actually a small smooth chain running underneath their mouth that would pull tighter corresponding to the amount of resistance, and the other end of the rope fastened to the back of a hay rack, in tow behind a tractor. The training method consistently worked, but not on this one. He never gave in. He would plant all fours in the gravel and literally create furrows in our yard. Periodically, the tension under his chain would cause him to succumb but after trotting a bit to loosen the chain, he again would dig in.

In addition, upon approaching him, he would resist, snorting and tossing his head. I always thought I had a special connection to cattle, and while he connected with me through head butts and body shoves, we never connected in spirit for the entire spring and summer. Fear, anger or stubbornness, individually or together, played a role in making it crystal clear to me what *he* thought of this apparent blessed right of passage.

We battled to the point of frustration on most occasions. Today I would claim with Isaiah, "*Oh, Lord, they do not listen when you threaten. They do not see your upraised fist (Isaiah 26:11a). And why would this animal continue to 'sin?' Sin you ask? James 4:17 says "It is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it."* And he knew!

At times I still react like I did when I joined 4-H. In fact, that steer and I, at times, are not much different; stubborn, refusing to be taught or led, thinking we know what is best. Not necessarily understanding why we resist, but somehow arriving at the conclusion, resisting is better than yielding. He just resisted for months. Mine was, well let's just say, different.

Why do we resist? As we spiritually 'dig in with all fours', leaving behind us evidence of our resistance, why are we deceived into thinking the pain and struggle of defiance is better than compliance? Without this stubborn resistance to instruction would Scripture contain fewer books? Are we growing in understanding? Are we remaining teachable, knowing the *Lord will not yield his glory to another (Isaiah 48:11)*? Sadly true, sin's deception causes us to resist essential and perfect counsel. We resist to what we should consent and consent to what we should resist.

Having discussed with dad if I should even attempt to bring this steer to the County Fair, we decided to give it a try. In spite of his defiant character, he was majestically sculpted and we felt if we could keep him *in* the show ring, he would place high. Taking him off the trailer, you would be in error if you are assuming I was in control, I needed to bring him to his spot among the other lead calves. It is at this point, the second part of the story begins, and since I have committed to keep these writings to a page or less, we will have to wait until next month to hear "The rest of the story."

*"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you (Psalm 32:8,9).*