

BARBWIRE

By Barb Lumley

IMAGINATION IS THE BEGINNING OF CREATION

I recently spent a few hours on a warm spring afternoon with my great-grandchildren, Emily age six and Daxton age 3. Their Dad was working on the landscaping around my house and my job was to keep a watchful eye on the children while he worked. It has been several years since any small children played at my house for several hours and especially a boy. I have gathered up a few things that Emily plays with, however I don't have much for Daxton to play with. Dad hadn't thought to bring toys along. And, of course, with Dad digging in the dirt, the kids wanted to help.

Most of my kitchen tools were yet to be unpacked so I did not have much that I could give them to use for digging and playing in the dirt. The best I could do was a small cooking pan that I had used to feed a stray cat and a couple of plastic bowls. With those things in hand and in their bare feet, they headed for the dirt pile where they filled them time and time again, dumping the dirt into the bucket on the John Deere and happily chattering away. Another favorite toy for them that day was an old calculator minus batteries. I don't think it would have worked if I had had any of the right size batteries! That didn't matter! They both played with it, punching the keys, making up games and stories to go along with it and arguing about whose turn it was to use it! They spent a happy afternoon using their imaginations and playing with what they could find.

The meager items I found to give Emily and Daxton to play with were reminiscent of the things children played with when I was a child. Very few parents had money to spend on toys. If children were lucky they might get one or two toys under the tree at Christmas time. Seldom at any other time of the year. The other holidays in the year were not celebrated by giving children toys. Birthdays were usually celebrated with a homemade cake and ice cream and a few family members or friends present.

As children, we looked for things to play with and we used our imagination to make them work, not batteries. Pieces of wood, sticks, tin cans, old broken kitchen items, string, twine, empty thread spools, cardboard boxes of all sizes, pieces of broken tools or machinery, whatever we could find and then we used our imagination to make up games, stories and ways to entertain ourselves for hours! For most boys the fun usually began with that pile of dirt!

One of my favorite toys was a farm made of cardboard that I received for Christmas. You had to fasten the barn together and the cardboard horses and cows were made with a little piece you fastened on them to make them stand up. My Dad smoked and he used matches that came in little cardboard boxes that he threw away when they were empty. I collected those boxes and they became my feed boxes and mangers for my animals to eat out of. I kept my eyes open for any small jars that would serve as my watering troughs. I was always on the lookout for items to use on my farm! I did have some dolls and I did play with dolls when I visited with my cousin Carole and her friends in the big city of Harlem Springs. However, my favorite toys were always ones that had to do with the farm.

While I will admit that I do not know very much about the many toys available for children today, I do know that almost every store of any kind has toys available for the child to want and the parent to buy. It seems to me that so many of them are just a piece of worthless plastic! Do we, parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, do the children a disservice by giving in and buying them so many toys? Would it be better for them if we just said "no" and gave them extra attention, love and hugs and allowed them to use their imagination more? I spent a very enjoyable afternoon with my great-grandchildren and their entertaining imaginations! I hope I will be spending many more with them! "Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination circles the world". (Albert Einstein)