

A LITTLE AUTHORITY GOES A LONG WAY

Big Todd Walker was, as the name suggests, a big man. He stood 6'9" and weighed 300 pounds. For all his size, though, he wasn't very big on conversation. Todd farmed 300 acres on the north side of Cedar Crossing and was a member of St. John. One Tuesday afternoon, while repairing his chisel plow, he saw a car pull up next to the barn. The license plate read U.S. Government and the gentleman who stepped out of the car was a small, young man. Of course, the majority of people that Todd encountered were small compared to him. The gentleman approached Todd in the barn.

"Good afternoon, sir," said the man. Pulling out his wallet, he showed Todd his identification, and continued saying, "I'm from the Environmental Protection Agency and I'm here today to conduct a farm inspection."

"Farm inspection?" asked Todd. "What exactly is that?"

“Sir, I need to go over every square foot of your farm and make sure it complies with all EPA standards.”

Looking down at the little man, Todd said, “Well, young feller, you may as well have a go at it. As the Good Book says, ‘For there is nothing hid, except to be made manifest, nor is anything secret, except to come to light.’”

The young government man looked at Todd as though he were speaking some foreign language and then nodded. He walked all over checking wet areas, manure piles, septic systems, and water drains. He then went inside the barn and checked storage of chemicals and hazardous waste drums. The countenance of his face remained stern and disciplined as he occasionally made notes on his clipboard. Coming back out of the barn, the inspector walked over to a fence area that had a locked gate.

“Is that your land?” asked the man.

“Yes, sir,” replied Todd. “It goes way back beyond that hill down to a grove of trees.”

“I’ll need to get into that area to inspect it.”

“I’m sorry, young feller, I can’t let you do that,” said Todd.

“What?” asked the inspector. “I demand that you let me in there.”

“It’s best that I don’t,” said Todd.

“Now listen here, I’m an agent with the EPA and I have the authority to inspect that area. Now open it up.”

“I reckon I know who you are,” said Todd. “But it’s still best I don’t let you in there.”

The little man got all red in the face and darn near began jumping up and down. “I have the full authority of the whole United States Government behind me, and I demand you open that gate.”

“Okay, young feller,” replied Todd. “I’ll be right here by the gate working on my tractor in case you need me.”

“I can definitely say I don’t need you to tell me how to do my job,” the young man said arrogantly.

Todd found the key on his key ring, and he opened the lock on the gate. “There you go.” He watched the man walk along the right fence line

and eventually disappear over the hill. Todd muttered to himself, “Speak not in the ears of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words.”

Todd continued working on his tractor for a good hour, periodically looking out over the fenced area. He began to get a little worried about the young man. Eventually he noticed what at first looked like one of the common little whirlies seen so often in the area. The whirlwind came up over the hill, twisting a load of dust into the air. But then Todd thought he saw a figure of a man running out ahead of the whirlwind. Now it was a far piece down over that hill and Todd could truthfully say the man was picking ‘em up and laying ‘em down. The closer the man and the whirlwind got to him; the more Todd revised his thinking. By then, it was clear that the whirlwind kicking up a dust storm behind the man consisted of a rather perturbed bull named Jethro.

Todd said a little prayer for the man, “Now, Lord, I know you said, ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’ I can’t rightly say that I know whether that little man is pure in heart, though he seemed a might on the arrogant side for a little man with authority. I know he’s been

running a long way over that hill, so if it be your will and you choose to let him see you, then so be it. Either way, I reckon he'll learn something, so if you could just let him get to the gate unharmed, I'll surely hold it open for him."

Todd held the gate open as the man and his pursuer got nearer. It looked too close to call, but Todd got himself in position to move quickly. When the man came flying through the gate, Todd slammed it shut and slid the latch over. The bull stopped short of the fence, snorting, and pawing at the dirt. The young man collapsed on the ground and leaned up against the side of the barn.

"Oh, God," exclaimed the man, gasping for air. "God ... bull ... God ... bull."

"Relax. Take a deep breath, young feller. You're safe now."

"God ... bull."

"Yeah, I know," said Todd. "Did you tell him who you were?"

"Yes ... I told him I was from the federal government ... I showed him my I.D. Card ... It just seemed to make him madder."

“Yeah, old Jethro never took much to schoolin’ and he’s got such fanatical, far right political views when it comes to those in authority.”

“God ... bull.”

“Are you gonna be alright?” asked Todd.

“Just give me a minute ... Can’t you stop that bull from snorting and raising all that dust by the fence?”

“Well, I reckon old Jethro just needs a minute or two to relax, too.”

Jumping to his feet, the young man burst out, “I can’t stand it any longer. I’ve got to get out of here.” Running to his car and jumping in, I could hear him crying out, “Oh, God ... bull.” His cries soon faded away as he left the farm with his car throwing up rocks and dust almost as high as the whirlwind he had previously run across.

Todd called out to him as loud as he could, “What about your clipboard here? Are you coming back for it?” But the young man paid him no heed. Todd looked at the clipboard with its 53 pages of checklists and comment boxes and, flipping to the

last page, he saw written in huge print, diagonally across the page ‘GOD BULL’.

The big farmer then commenced to speak with the Lord again, “Lord, I want to thank you for saving that little feller full of authority. I reckon he must have had a little time to do some thinking as he ran that long away across the field. I still don’t know for sure about how pure his heart was, cause he seemed a little confused about the difference between you and that bull, but I reckon only you would know the answer to that.”

Todd Walker has had no further communication from the Environmental Protection Agency.

I have no reason to doubt anything in this story, as Todd Walker is not prone to tall tales. For him to say as much as he did in this story is quite remarkable. I think the account is a good example of the limitations of earthly authority.

Pastor Arnold Schmidt

