

# A SKUNK IN THE EQUIPMENT SHED

*There are always going to be challenges in life, no matter where you live. The challenge presented here is rarely experienced by city dwellers.*

*Pastor Arnold Schmidt*

Abraham Lincoln once said, “What kills a skunk is the publicity it gives itself.”

That thought firmly came to mind last Saturday when I went into the equipment shed at church to get the tractor out for an afternoon of mowing. Three steps into the shed, and I came face-to-face with an adventurous skunk. As we stared at each other, I took some comfort in the fact that as long as he was facing me, there was no need to panic. I talked to the critter in a hushed voice so he would remain calm.

“Come on, fella. Why don’t you just come on outside and enjoy the fresh air. There’s no need to stay in this stuffy old shed. A shed can be a very dangerous place. There are big machines that could

hurt a little skunk like you. I'm sure you have a family that needs you, so if you're done snooping around, it would be best if you just went on about your way."

The one-sided conversation continued for a little while longer until he grew tired with what I had to say. He turned his back to me, and I quickly retreated behind the shed door because I couldn't remember the effective range of a skunk. Fortunately, he wasn't angry or scared, just bored. As I peered around the protective barrier of the door, I considered trying the Ernest T. Bass method of tossing rocks at him to chase him out, but I didn't want to provoke him into something I might have to live with the rest of the afternoon while on the tractor.

I walked down the path to the fellowship hall to let my wife know what was going on with my strange behavior. When I opened the door and walked inside, I found seven ladies working on a quilting project.

Taking a gamble, I bellowed, "Ladies, I need a volunteer."

"With what?" they asked in unison.

“I have a little problem with something in the equipment shed,” I stated in fading volume.

Their blank stares required me to elaborate further. I mumbled, “I need a volunteer to come get the skunk out of the equipment shed.”

They continued to stare at me blankly, so I raised my voice and said, “I need someone to come get the skunk out of the equipment shed.”

It certainly does not require deep thought to grasp the fact that not a single one of those ladies accompanied me out the door. The most I got was a suggestion that I get my gun and shoot him. A fine suggestion, indeed. But they weren't out in that shed, talking to a cute little face that, up to that point, had done me no harm. Besides, I might miss and blow a hole in the shed. So, I once again peered out from behind the shed door to catch a glimpse of him still checking out the many nooks that held appeal to a skunk.

I would like to say that the next ten minutes behind the door provided me with ample time to conceive a successful plan, but I cannot make such a claim. Instead, I spent that time contemplating why God created the skunk as He did. Then I drifted into awe at all the critters on this marvelous planet. My thoughts were interrupted by a sandhill

crane who walked right by me and entered the shed. I suppose I could have advised him of the other party, but the sandhill cranes seldom listen to me either. A minute later the bird came strolling back out without any sign of a confrontation.

Retreating to the church office where I could keep an eye on the entrance to the shed, I worked on folding bulletins as part of a waiting strategy. Eventually, the little skunk meandered out the door and went on his merry way. I meandered into the equipment shed, started up the tractor, and went about my merry way of mowing.

While the situation came to a peaceful conclusion, there had to be consideration for the future. I thought about posting a sign at the shed door that said, "No skunks, please", but what if a future visitor couldn't read, or what if a future visitor read the sign but paid it no heed, or what if Cousin Virgil came out there and thought the sign referred to him? Posting such a sign could also leave me susceptible to prosecution for the violation of some unknown or underutilized federal law. No, in the end, I would be relegated to the simple and anticlimactic act of closing the shed door behind me.

