

Hometown Ramblings

By **Bobbie Smith Bryant**
Contributing Columnist



of tobacco production from their elders. It nurtures the young newlyweds as they begin a new life together. It provides for the growing family as children come in stair-step succession. It serves as a source of retirement for the aging farmer. It shades the same pathways that many have walked long before me and my kin.

"Each barn has a personality to them, just like we have," so says my brother, the full-time farmer.

I know it must be true. For this old tobacco barn continues to withstand as the world swirls around it. Horse and buggy has changed to automobiles and driver-less cars. We talk to our neighbors and friends through telephone lines, satellite dishes and fiber optic cables. We no longer grow gardens preferring instantly available store-bought food.

All these modern amenities have not deterred the old barns important role on our family farm. This unyielding behemoth somehow comforts this wayfaring child with its presence. It holds a tender place in my psyche for it provides the fragrance

blown from the western heartland.

A tin roof snugs up to shelter the wood, shimmering against the sapphire sky on each sun-filled day. A lever system allows for the needed ventilation when the firing process is underway. Inside the barn, thick timber beams stretch across its wide open spaces, tier above tier.

Strong and stout, the old barn is built to last.

For me, this barn is like an old friend. It remains as one perpetual aspect of an ever-changing landscape. It offers the familiar, the comfortable, the way things were, the way things are, and the way things will be.

I love to tell the story of the old barn. It has been an inaudible witness to the lives of my farming ancestors. It coddles the youngsters as they learn the craft



An old barn is pictured with hanging tobacco

of home.

Bobbie Bryant lives in Louisville and serves as a Community Development Advisor for the Kentucky League of Cities. She is passionate about western Ken-

tucky and is a freelance writer with four publications: Farming in the Black Patch, A Beautiful Star: the Life of Lois Etoile Brewer, Passions of the Black Patch: Cooking and Quilting

in Western Kentucky and Forty Acres and a Red Belly Ford: The Smith Family of Calloway County. For more information about the author, visit <http://bobbiesmithbryant.com>. ■

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I Am a Child of the Black Patch

By **Bobbie Smith Bryant**
(in response to George Ella Lyons' "Where I'm From" writing prompt)

I am from the land of dark-fired tobacco,
reared on corn bread baked in my Papaw's cast iron skillet;
patchwork quilts air out on the line.

I am led by the Holy Spirit;
enjoy Sunday dinners on the ground,
help clean the cemetery where my forefathers lie.

I am a tobacco setter and hay baler,
pick blackberries by the side of the road;
while smelling honeysuckle on the vine.

I am crispy fried chicken with sawmill gravy,
Climb trees, play ball and ride my bike;
watching Bonanza on Sunday nights.

I am a bottle feeder to baby goats,
and catch tadpoles in a blue Mason jar;
I fish, frog gig, and snipe hunt with my friends.

I celebrate my birthday with a hayride,
bob for apples, run a sack race,
and go door-to-door to trick-or-treat.

I am a front porch rocker;
a butter bean-sheller; and
I sing right along with Porter Wagoner.

I am sawdust and barn fire,
curing the tobacco;
stripping the dark leaf, preparing for market.

I am turkey and dressing at Thanksgiving,
snow cream at Christmas; and
black-eyed peas and turnip greens ring in the New Year.

I am passionate about my ancestor's,
and telling their stories,
a ten-generation farm family from western Kentucky.

Yes, I am a child of the Black Patch;
farm dirt flows through my veins,
I honor these traditions and pass them on to the next generation. ■

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