

Live Well Lifestyle Webinar Recap & Recording

October 13, 2016 - [Click Here for the Recording](#) (requires [Windows Media Player](#)) or [download mp3](#)



Perry A~

Topic: Diversity is Everywhere or The Morning the Cowboy's Came to Breakfast

Other people don't disappoint you. What disappoints you is you have an expectation about how other people should live their lives. Rather controlling and conditional don't you think. Who could you be without that thought other people should live my way? We all have our own journeys filled with learning experiences. It is the experiences that are our best teachers.

You don't have to go far to experience cultural diversity. You can just get in a relationship and you will learn we all have different holiday traditions, our mommas fixed turkey and dressing differently, and that is only the beginning. It is little things that aggravate, like squeezing the tube of tooth paste or rolling the tube.

I had my experience in learning to cope with differences as a Houston 'City Girl' to life as a newlywed on a Texas ranch 3 miles west of Box 4 Red Springs, TX which consisted of a wheat elevator, a church, a Post office combined with a gas station and a few grocery items. The closest town was 13 miles to the east. Seymour,

Texas, where you see less. It is fifty miles south of Wichita Falls and considered a flat land, tumble weed infested, red sand area often called the 'big empty' Where you can see the sun set flat on the horizon with nary a tree insight and where we trade top soil with Oklahoma on a daily basis. Small towns have an unwritten code of the cultural ethics and they don't volunteer them as advice. They sort of enjoy watching you trip over them and ending up with egg on your face.

It didn't take long realize I need to make a list of what was acceptable and not in a small farming community. Let me describe a small town. We lived on a ranch 17 miles from Seymour, TX at the end of the trail. Seventeen miles from the nearest greasy spoon café, a grocery store with what I called limited necessities. We were 60 miles from the nearest McDonald's. Seymour had one signal light that went red, green and yellow and 2 blinking yellow lights.

The sweetest words a stay at home ranch housewife who fixes 3 hot meals a day could ever hear are, "Come on Honey, we're going to the Rock Inn Café." Now the Rock Inn Café was not the Ritz Carlton of dining. The linoleum floor was worn to the concrete below where cowboy in dirty boots had pivoted as the turn to claim their orange covered booth with splits in the back with stuffing coming out. But they had chicken fried steaks that would over lap the platter and batter fried onion rings that made your mouth water and homemade yeast rolls that kept customers faithful. Plus they had mile high meringue pies with real flakey crust and cooked custard filling.

Lesson #1. The first lesson learned was 'Everyone in Seymour is related to everyone else but you!' One morning I went to the local grocery store for my weekly shopping and a lady stopped me in the aisle and said 'you must be William Henry's new wife?' People in small towns go by double first names whether they are in trouble or not. "I am Bertha Mae Wages and I have the beauty shop around the corner. She quickly engaged me in a round of questions as my watched my lettuce wilt.

Lesson #2. Anything said at 9:00 a.m. will be around town by 5 p.m. Be careful what you say! Now my mother-in-law as an excellent cook so I learned from her my husband's favorite dishes and fried chicken was at the top of the list.

Lesson #3. Grocery stores in small town are not like city grocery stores. There are no cut and cellophane wrapped meats to select from. You have to ask the butcher for what you want and he goes to the cooler gets it and wraps in white butcher paper below the counter and hands it to you. Naturally he thinks you should know

how many pounds for a roast and the difference between a fryer and a baking hen. So you can imagine my surprise when I got home and found I had a whole chicken with a long neck looking at me. I frantically called my mother-in-law and said, "Ruby Pearl, how do you cut a chicken?" As she described the cuts I balance the black dial up phone on my shoulder, took the butcher knife and started hacking. After about 15 minutes I stopped to ask her how many pieces should I have. She said 8-10. I started counting. 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10, 11,12,13,14,15. I had just created bone in chicken pieces.

Lesson #11. If you want a cut fryer you have to ask the butcher to cut it for you and tolerate his look of disgust or learn to do it yourself. I now know how to but a fryer but have not had too since leaving Seymour. As my list of lessons grew I determined that I may have to get a larger journal. I learned 'reckon' and 'yonder' are socially acceptable words if you want to be one of the real wives of Seymour, TX. I learned you only make homemade biscuits and store bought pie crust is an insult to the receiver.

One day my husband, Pinky, his short name, came in to inform me that we would be delivering cattle bright and early on Wed. morning about day break and five neighbors, Joe Bob and Charlie Bill Porter, Tiny and his son Ralph Malone and our good Bohemian neighbor, Otto Smajistrla, would be coming over to help gather the pastures and pen the cattle for weighing and loading and it is traditional that the wives cook them a good country breakfast. Well I was thrilled. My first time to entertain at our small home on the ranch would be for 6 hungry cowboys. My husband left and I ran to get my new Houston Junior League Cookbook to find the perfect breakfast menu. I found it! A ham, egg and cheese casserole and it fed 6-8 people. Perfect I thought. That with Ruby Pearl's homemade fluffy biscuits and wild plum jam, a pot of coffee.

As Pinky left that morning he instructed me to listen for the third truck to 'leave-out', (another Seymour proper word) and to be ready as they would be walking up to the house for breakfast. After he left, I set the kitchen table and decide to make it special. I got the pink linen table cloth with the matching pink lace trimmed linen napkins we had gotten for a wedding present. Then I decided to use our new china with the pink and gray rose pattern and cups and saucers to match the table cloth. I had a crystal platter for the biscuits and a silver bowl for the jam. To finish it off I added the silver candle stick holders with pink candles.

I begin listening for the sounds of the cattle reaching the pens and started on the meal. I had just set the casserole and a mile high pile of buttery dripping biscuits on the table as I heard the third truck leave out. I lit the candles, took off my apron and dusted the flour off my black polyester paint suit, straightened the white lace collar and cuffs on my blouse and went to the door to greet my guests.

There, coming down the road were six of the dirtiest, scroungiest looking cowboys I have even seen, their hats were sweat stained and covered in dirt. They drug the heels of their spurs on the dirt road kicking up a cloud of dust knee high. The closer they got the more my smile faded as my thoughts went to my pink linen lace napkins.

Tiny Malone wasn't tiny. He was six foot four and his barrel chest sagged and nearly covered his salad plate size belt buckle. The pearl snaps on his cowboy shirt were pulled tight over his broad belly so thought that one sneeze and we would have had a half cowboy full Monty right there. His son Ralph was his spittin' imagine of him. Jim Bob and Charlie Bill Porter were 2 long tall skinny drinks of water like bottomless pits and Otto Smajistrla was a short, stocky built guy who would need to hold his hand up to see if the was rolling or walking. The closer they got the smaller my casserole seemed. I felt a tightness in my throat and realized I had quit breathing.

Pinky strolled past me giving me a peck on the cheek and leaving me to greet my neighbors. As he reached the kitchen door I think I heard him suck wind. I glanced over my shoulder his direction and saw him planted with one hand on one door frame and the other on the opposite side. He seemed frozen in space for a time. Then he turned around and I heard the sweetest words a Seymour house wife can hear. He said, "Come on boys, were going to the Rock Inn Café and breakfast is on me!"

Lesson #23. Casseroles are for funerals, church dinners, sick people and bridge clubs.

Lesson 24. A cowboy breakfast consists of bacon, sausage, ham steaks, hash browns and cheesy scrambled eggs, a side of jalapenos with salsa and homemade biscuits with homemade jellies or jams and coffee is served black in a mug.

When I left Seymour 27 years later, my journal was full I and talked with that slow country drawl and said reckon' and 'yonder frequently'. I settled into a new culture and now have the best of both worlds because I learned to accept a new way of doing things. I call myself a country/city girl and I can cut up chicken, pickle okra, make jellies and jams and talk about the weather and still have my knowledge of city life and taste for art museums, little theater, and fine dining. Cultural diversity is respect for how others do things, open-mindedness for new ways of doing things and broadening your horizons. Be it other people ways of cooking, dressing, their religion or holidays, it is a learning experience. I am grateful for my years as a country girl and some of my best recipes came from the good cooks of Seymour, Texas.

If it were not for the divorce, I might be still in Seymour shelling black-eyed peas, pickling okra and talking about the weather. I probably never would have become a motivational speaker. I really need to be grateful for the other woman who turned my life upside down because I did know I had a stories to tell, books to write, places to go and people to meet.

Some points from Andrew Matthews, *Follow Your Heart*, to summarize:

"We are here to learn lessons and the world is our teacher." That pretty much sums up embracing our differences.

WHEN YOU FIGHT LIFE, LIFE LWAYS WINS. If you want peace of mind stop labeling things as "good" or "bad".

"HOW DO YOU LOVE PEOPLE? JUST ACCEPT THEM. Complete acceptance is unconditional love."

Suggested Reading:

Follow Your Heart by Matthew Andrews

Being happy by Matthew Andrews

Law of Attraction by Esther and Jerry Hicks

To contact Perry A~ Arledge: perrya@austin.rr.com