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Memories of Brandon , The Work, The Fun

By Edwin P. Place

I believe that I was at Brandon for about 4-5 years. I had different interviews for jobs there at Brandon. I started working in the gardens, moved to the pig farm and then the dairy farm. When in the garden I pulled weeds and hewed the vegetables. It wasn't quite a year that I worked in the garden before they moved me up to the Pig farm. While working at the pig farm I got involved with the slaughtering of the pigs. There were 4 of us there at the pig farm. One day, I remember a bad fall that happened involving a farmer that had slipped on the floor and fell into a tub filled with scolding hot water. I assisted the farmer out of the hot water, laid him on the floor and covered him with my jacket. I asked the other people to stay with him, but not to touch him. I then ran to the head office, which was about half a mile away. When I got to the office I asked to speak with the Head Supervisor to report this accident. The office called the ambulance and I headed back to the farm. I reached the farm just before the ambulance got to him. The farmer was taken to Rutland Hospital for medical attention. A few days later I received a very nice Thank you card from the farmer's wife and family. It was about a year that I worked in the slaughter house of the pig farm before I was transferred to the dairy farm to assist the herdsman.

The herdsman was a very polite man that took the time to show me what was expected of me at the dairy farm. While working at the farm there were 5 of us that were assigned to work in the barn. One day I remember that a young man was missing. While looking around I looked at the 40 foot silo where we kept the corn silage stored. I told the herdsman that I would like to climb the ladder with the herdsman watching me. When I reached the top of the silage I found the young man, and he was having an epileptic seizure. The herdsman and I were able to get to him and assist him back out of the silo. When we got him to the bottom of the metal stairs there were paramedics there. They asked us how we were able to protect his head as we climbed the stairs. I had taken off my jacket and made a cushion around his head. The paramedics assisted in getting him the rest of the way out of the area and to safety. The herdsman had to fill out an incident report, but I had to also tell the head supervisor what had happened. The herdsman told me that he knew I would not get in trouble, even though a few of my peers thought that I would.

I worked in the dairy farm for the remainder of my time living at Brandon. I was responsible for getting the cows out of the pasture. This meant that at 4 a.m. I would leave the dorm that I lived in and walked about half a mile up the road to get the cows back to the barn. A lot of the residents of the dorm that I lived in often asked me why I didn't take my flashlight and just leave Brandon instead of head to the pasture. I let them know that I knew that someone would find me, and I would lose my chances of having a job at Brandon.

While working in the barn, I worked between 4 a.m. and noon. After work I would go back to the dorm in time for lunch. After having my lunch I would attend a work shop where I could make things out of wood. I also had the option of making doormats out of bailing twine. The supervisor of the " doormat work shop" watched me for about a week before approaching me about watching over the other male residents. It was my responsibility to watch them make their doormats and help them fix any mistakes.

Later the supervisor of the "doormat workshop" asked me to demonstrate how to make the doormats. I had to demonstrate this to Staff and Supervisors at Brandon. While demonstrating the process of making these doormats, there were people that were surprised to see what the tools were that I had to use to make these doormats. There were very sharp tools, so I had to explain that there was never anyone close by me as I used these tools. Once I did actually scrape myself with a sharp hook that I used to pull the bailing twine into place. As people watched me make the door mats, they became impressed with my ability to make a full doormat as they watched me. I was able to answer their questions and continue to make the doormats, so that by the end of their time with me they could actually stand on my door mat. If I remember correctly, I could make 10 in an hour, each of the mats were about 2 feet long and 1 ½ feet wide and about 3 inches thick.

While I was at Brandon I was able to join a Boy Scouts Group made up of males at Brandon. I believe we were Troop 46. This group of scouts was able to leave the property and participate in parades with other scouting groups. The parades were in Brandon, Middlebury, Rutland and other local towns.

I have a memory of a bad accident where our scout headmaster and assist headmaster were in a bad accident and ended up dying. The Scout Group was pulled to the main office and we were told what had happened. We all asked if we could go to their funerals. We were granted permission to go to the funerals, and were told that a bus would take us to the funeral. Two days after we were told about their deaths, I was called to the main office, where I was told that the Scout masters wife and family had requested that I be a pallbearer. This news was a surprise and very emotional for me. It took me a few minutes to be able to respond but I did agree to be a pallbearer. This gentleman had done a lot for us, and he was dear to me. He was a square dance instructor. He taught us males how to square dance. I remember talking with him about who we were going to dance with. He had taught females to dance as well, so he was going to let us pair up and dance. It was about 2 weeks that we danced together with his supervision, before he asked the head of Brandon if he could take us to local square dancing events. He was offering to drive the bus, and let the couples sit together as they went to the events. We were all told that we must behave ourselves if we were to do this. We were glad to hear that the head of Brandon had agreed. He told us that we would not get in trouble for kissing or anything, but if he was asked he might have to say something .



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