

## *Smoky Mountain Reflections, October 2010*

Is it really a loss? Many times we lament the loss of certain nostalgic vocations and products of days gone by, while in some cases the real sentiment is “good riddance.”

This month our community will be inundated by leaf-lookers. No one is complaining... it is a great blessing to our community to have so many tourists during the second busiest month behind July. All those people from Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and Louisiana (just to name some of the license plates we see on all the visiting cars), who are staying in our hotels and cabins and patronizing our restaurants, entertainment venues and keeping many of us employed. So if one of you visitors sees a local Sevier Countian shaking his fist in your rear-view mirror while you go down the Parkway at 5 miles an hour...that is just our way of saying thanks.

Back to my question...is it really a loss? As these leaf-lookers pass through our most visited national park, they will pass some unique stone work. Recently an elderly stone cutter came out of retirement to make some repairs to some of that stone work. He had to come out of retirement because no one builds with hand chiseled stone any more. Retaining walls that took months and years to build with thousands of hours of back-breaking labor some 50 to 75 years ago are now built in weeks with a half dozen skilled or semi-skilled construction workers, using lighter stronger materials to build longer lasting structures.

Is it really a loss? That there are not thousands of people who make their living doing manual labor that is now done better and faster with machines? So that there are no more rail road spike drivers, riveters, blacksmiths, coopers, wheel rites, leather workers, embroiders, weavers, and many other professions of days gone by? Yes, I know there are still people who do some of these things, but the bulk of the products we consume are produced in mass quantities at one half to one tenth the cost of its handmade well-crafted counterpart. Many of today's modern counterparts to old world professions like chimney sweeps and carpenters, still do the same job but with less people and better tools making for faster, better work at a lower cost....(doesn't every body win?)

The point is the Creator has blessed us with the privilege of being creative in our vocations as employees, employers, investors, homemakers, parents, or family members. All these relationships afford us the opportunity to be creative, innovative, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

So if your profession goes the way of the buggy whip, becoming obsolete like computer programming punch cards, don't cry in your milk. Thank God for a new opportunity to become creative and innovative and find new uses for what you know how to make or make things that have new uses. Either way, thank God for every opportunity to be creative. It gives us a little insight into the joy He felt when He created and continues to feel as he sustains His creation.

Have a blessed fall.

In Christ

Pastor Portier