Cybercolumn by Berry Simpson: Workover

July 7, 2006
Posted: 7/07/06

CYBER COLUMN: Workover

By Berry Simpson

When I opened my mail I found an ID, card and an invitation to join AARP, the American Association of Retired Persons.

So, it's finally come to that.

Not that this was a big surprise. I know how old I almost am, and I know AARP keeps track of people like me and would eventually find me. And besides, maybe I'll even join their club, since I hear they have good discounts. I wonder if they have accounts with New Balance or REI? That would be a real asset.

Berry D. Simpson

The thing is, I never expected to feel like a newbie in my AARP years. I thought I'd be more settled in by now—doing things that were familiar to me.

The day I received the invitation to join AARP, I was working on several last-minute details for an oil well workover near Tatum, N.M. As I worked

on the project timeline and tried to arrange all my equipment, I kept uncovering more things I should've remembered but apparently forgot. It feels like I'm starting over as a production engineer. I used to do a lot of this sort of thing, but it's been 10 years since my last hands-on workover.

I used to enjoy sitting on workovers. I found that focusing on one single project was relaxing. The isolation was relaxing as well. But in the past years, I think, I've lost my grip on field work and wellsite work, and now I find it tedious and draining rather than focusing and energizing. Maybe I'll grow back into it.

Well, two days later, while sitting on location and watching the pulling-unit crew run tubing, I was reading a book by Calvin Miller *Into the Depths of God*. Miller observes: "It is amazing that we take our individual schedules so seriously that we never wonder if God has anything else for us to do."

It occurred to me that maybe I needed more unplanned, even forced, intrusions into my tightly scheduled life to remind me to listen to God and rely on other people who want to help me. When my schedule clicks along the way I planned it, I don't need help from anyone. I can handle everything myself.

Is that a good way to find God?

So, the first night in the drilling trailer—the company I'm working with also is drilling an oil well in the same field and has a trailer on the drill site where I could spend the night instead of driving three hours home every night and three hours back to the well each morning—I prayed: "Lord, come to me in this workover; speak to my insecurities; speak to my loneliness; speak to my frustrations; speak to my fears of doing the wrong things; speak to my fears of being able to pay all my drilling and workover bills this summer." It's a new thing for me to pray and ask God to speak to me through a situation rather than praying for God to calm me or lessen

the stress.

Miller writes: “We cringe when we think of letting other people gain control of our lives. Yet the time when we best develop character is when we are no longer in charge of our circumstances.” That cringing Miller writes about came from me. I like controlling my own schedule, and I don’t like having someone else control me. And I don’t like having situations control me, either.

So, maybe Miller was speaking to my situation here on this workover. Sitting on this well is certainly not something I’d have chosen for myself at this time. And even though I am technically the wellsite supervisor here, it doesn’t feel like I’m in charge at all. It feels more like the well itself is in charge. It feels like the earth is making all the decisions, and all I can do is respond. And when I do get to be in charge and make decisions, it feels like I’m in over my head and making expensive decisions based on little experience and limited insight. Maybe the problem isn’t that well work is so tedious, but that it is so unpredictable.

Sitting in my pickup trying to escape the 100-degree heat, I wonder: Is this more about finding God than about relearning old skills? I think so. I think if finding God is a priority, then everything we do becomes a portal. Especially things that make us uncomfortable, things that intrude on our schedule, things that make us feel vulnerable and at risk.

If we pay attention, it all points toward God.

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