

Grandpa and Poison Ivy



When I was a young boy in the mid 1930s my grandfather Garlock (1877 to 1971) had a job that as I recall it proved that we lived in a distinctly different day and age. It was not yet a time of mechanized roadside mowers. Grandpa after many years of practice was an expert with a grass scythe. He was one of the men who mowed the roadside with his scythe. Not only grass but weeds, brush and various vines invaded the right of way. I remember grandpa coming home after encountering his old enemy—poison ivy. Something was always on hand to treat the rash he received from its encounter. He was violently allergic to the fast growing vine and getting anywhere near it. I will now take you fast forward by quite a few years. The location on a summer day was a horse show staged by the Silver Spur Riding Club near our family home at Marshville, NY. Mother was a dedicated horse lover and belonged to the Silver Spur. We stood with grandpa watching the show. Adjoining the club grounds was a golf course. As grandpa stood there that day he could not help but remember that the golf course was located on his old farm. A farm where he and several preceding generations had been born and resided at least from the 1790s. It just happened that one particular area of the Silver Spur land always caught many misdirected golf balls. A friend, Paul, joined grandpa and I as spectators of the horse show. Paul and I decided it would be a chance to go and retrieve some golf balls which sometimes I sold back to their losers or other players. Paul and I pushed the vegetation aside in quest of these little white balls. About then I discovered we were in a large patch of poison ivy. I was to some extent allergic to the dreaded ivy. Upon pointing it out to Paul he doubly assured me he was immune to its effects. I told him if he was sure and wanted to have some fun he should pick a piece. We went back where grandpa was standing and Paul said to him: “Ben, what is that?” as he held it up to him. Grandpa was in his mid eighties and still very alert. He jumped back about six feet and said: “My God! That is poison ivy.” I won’t soon forget that day even though it was a half a century ago.

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