



Field Notes

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Cotton infrastructure may need a change.

Cotton is a hot topic of discussion for quite a few people these days because it seems to be holding its own in the market as well or better than other crops. This crop always seems to find its way back into the mix even though at times it has offered little encouragement. The yields that were achieved last year have put stars in a few eyes, but that’s OK too. It’s good to be optimistic even if we know the ice we’re walking on may be thin sometimes.

The idea that I pick up from a few present and former cotton growers is that the move away from the “three-piece” harvesting system is an issue for them. The most common point that comes up is that it’s difficult to find people to make it that system work smoothly. Other negatives include aging equipment, waste, susceptibility to damage for the older system, and transportation since farmers may be many miles from the nearest gin.

The cotton industry has undergone many changes through the centuries, but it may be getting close to another change, especially in the case of the small to medium size farming operations that are still fairly common in the Hills of Mississippi. The first change of major significance was of course the invention of the cotton gin. The cotton gin has now evolved well beyond Eli Whitney’s dreams with single gin stands turning out between twenty and thirty bales per hour, and the quality they are producing is respected in the global textile industry.

The next big change, or what one might say was a “paradigm” shift in cotton production was the invention of the mechanical cotton picker. While several ideas were tried with varying success the ones that worked best did not arrive until after WWII. Even then a lot of cotton was hand harvested into the early 1960’s in some areas.

Then the changes started coming fast with the 2, 4, and 6 row pickers, big trailers that would hold as much as the big modules do today, then the ricker which was the forerunner of the module builder, and the boll buggy that allowed the picker to stay in the field rather than ferrying to the builder. Innovative growers and ginners developed module

trailers and trucks in several variations to transport the crop to the gin. A big advantage too was that the harvest could continue even if the gin got behind or shut down for repairs.

Then came the module pickers in both colors, one producing a rectangular unit and the other a round module. At present it appears that the round bale system may be the winner of the module war. The problem is the cost of these machines which is almost as much as a gin used to cost. The small to medium size farmer can’t justify this cost for a machine that can do only one thing unlike a combine which can be used for several different crops.



Living With Children

By John Rosemond
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One of the biggest problems among today’s parents—especially mothers—concerns their tendency to think in psychological terms about their children’s behavior problems. Mothers are more prone to this intellectual wandering than fathers not because of some gender-related characteristic but simply because mothers are the primary consumers of parenting material.

Unfortunately, the stuff mothers (and some fathers) read is largely baloney, written by professional parenting babblers who come, mostly, from various mental health fields. Consequently, they wind up believing (among other equally unhelpful things) that their children’s behavior problems have arcane psychological meaning. (The alternative is to think of these problems as simply the inevitable consequence of raising offspring who, unlike those of any other species, are naturally inclined toward believing that what they want, they are entitled to have and that no one is qualified to tell them what to do.)

Take, for example, the parents I recently spoke with concerning the wild tantrums their seven-year-old son let fly when things—just about anything—didn’t go his way. The parents were worried sick. They’d read all sorts of stuff that had led

It may be time for custom or contract harvesters to serve producers who want to grow cotton but can’t justify the harvester. A few gins are already offering harvesting services. This may be one way to accomplish the task, but there may be an opening for the independent custom harvester to expand and offer services to growers with cotton acreage in the hundreds of acres rather than the thousands.

I feel that we should return to growing cotton as part of our cropping mix and that growers may do so if they don’t have to own this major piece of equipment. I realize there are stumbling blocks including row spacing, weather and tillage practices, distance, and as many others as there are individual growers. However, it could be made to work IF growers want to grow cotton. It would require cooperation and patience which are scarce during the harvest.

Thanks for your time.

them to believe he was bipolar, autistic (or on the “spectrum”), manic-depressive, and/or maybe even a touch schizophrenic. They imagined him locked up in a mental institution by age 20, in a stainless-steel straitjacket. (It is significant to note that he functioned reasonably well outside the home with other adults and playmates.)

All this worry and apocalyptic thinking had induced what I term “disciplinary paralysis.” This little brat’s (my diagnosis) parents were afraid of him and also fearful that any firm discipline on their part would make matters worse and hasten his admission to the aforementioned looney bin. So instead of disciplining, they talked, reasoned, and explained...and got nowhere.

Not surprisingly, the more they talked, reasoned, and explained, the worse said brat’s brattishness became. And the worse he became, the more his parents worried and the more paralyzed they became, and the more they talked, reasoned, and explained, and around and around and around they went. That describes the almost inevitable consequence of psychological thinking. To mix my metaphors, such thinking leads one down rabbit hole after rabbit hole.



Three S.V. Marshall footballers earned the chance to play in the Mississippi Prospects All State Gridiron Classic on December 31 at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. Pictured above (from left): Larry Moore, defensive linebacker, and Theo Hudson, defensive end, both played on the camp’s red team with Shon Mason (at right), running back, playing for gray.

(Photo by Deborah Mason)

bit hole.

The brat was in complete control of the family. Lacking insight, he had no idea that he wielded such power; therefore, he was not—as several therapists had naively suggested—being manipulative. Nonetheless, everyone in the family was dancing to his tune.

By the time I spoke with the parents, he was out of control. And when a person of any age feels they are losing or have lost control, one response (of several) is to try desperately and obsessively to control—other people, usually. This is not mental illness, but it sure looks crazy.

The parents needed to stop thinking psychologically and apocalyptically and take firm, resolute control of their son’s life. They stopped talking and began teaching him—with calm purpose—that one bad thing deserves another.

Being reasonably intelligent, the little fellow learned this fundamental life principle fairly quickly. Begrudgingly, he began to accept that he was but a little

fish in a big pond. Best of all perhaps, his parents reclaimed that which psycho-babble had stolen from them: common

sense and a sense of humor. Family psychologist John Rosemond: johnrosemond.com, parentguru.com.

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