

SPACE

by Mike Harris

Since the concept of space has taken on new meanings over the many years and I have not kept up, I will talk about space as I perceive it. Because I am pragmatic space is something I have dealt with in inches, feet, yards, and acres. In liquids it is ounces, pints, quarts, and gallons.

My only other understanding of space is that somehow through the laws of lift and turbulence we are able to safely fly through space and are no longer earthbound.

In my day I built structures and so became acquainted with degrees as pertains to angles of slope and pitch. The foregoing is the sum total of my concept of space.

Now for what I do not know, I never understood radio waves, to me radio is still a mystery. Someone sits in front of an instrument called a microphone and somehow disturbs the atmosphere and I in my home with the proper receiver reassemble his disturbances and listen to the sound of his voice or whatever it was that the microphone sent forth; to me that is still a miracle.

Then there are more miracles – T.V. Not only sound but pictures that show instantly what is happening in some far off place, that is even a greater miracle. But wait, I am not through. Now I understand they are using space as a warehouse to store information. They are able to categorize it retrieve it on demand and sell this information as needed. If I am correct they are working on retrieving events past that were not specifically set for storage. I am tickled pink if I can find a scrap of paper on which I have noted some information for myself.

Yes, I must admit that I am not hip, but all those hip individuals I am pretty sure would have a hard time figuring the pitch of a roof or a drain, or how to square up a structure. Yes, I can do plumbing, carpentry, electric wiring – even if I do not understand how an announcer talks into a device and I in my home can hear and see what he is reporting on T.V. I am privy to the results without having to understand the how and why of it.

In 1947 after marriage at the desire of my wife, we located on a really marginal farm in south Jersey twenty miles from Atlantic City. Here I learned with the help of a friend the skills that were necessary for survival and success. I mastered basic electricity to the point where I installed a double throw switch that gave me the option of using a public utility or my own source of electricity, a huge 10 kw war surplus generator. That was a real accomplishment! When an old farmer explained the dynamics of weight balance and I constructed an overhead door for the barn, that was something to see, especially when with just one finger I could open and close a door that weighed over 300 pounds.

It seems that these skills are outmoded so I have become an anachronism in my own time, but do you want to know something? I walk real proud knowing that most the younger people would not know how to find the square root of a given number, without the calculator in their pocket.

I also was real proud when my daughter was the only one in her sixth grade who, when the teacher asked, “Is there anyone who can parse the sentence on the blackboard?”, my daughter stepped up to the blackboard and did it. The teacher asked, “Where did you learn to do that?” She said, “My father taught me.”