

My birthday is on May 13<sup>th</sup>, the absolute best part of Spring.

From my earliest recollection it was always a beautiful day. I especially remember warm sun, green leaves, singing birds and the smell of the earth.

My Mom always let me stay home from school on my birthday. I liked to work alone in the fields. This was the best time of year for that. Normally I could skip out on morning milking and go right to the fields as the sun was rising. The spring days are long and I loved them.

I worked into the evening, but no matter how late it was when I came home, Mom would always have a nice dinner of leftovers for me and probably a piece of something special, like cake. I generally came home after dark.

Of course, I would have to make several trips home during the day to refuel the tractor or change machines or make repairs but most of the time I could be alone in the fields.

By the time I was ten, Pa had taken a full-time job as a carpenter so he was gone during the day. Pa and brother John preferred to work with the animals anyway so no one objected to my preference for fieldwork.

I would try to work the fields farthest from home where it was easy to imagine I was all alone with the earth.

I don't recall ever having a birthday party when I was a kid. Don't recall ever wanting one either. I've had a few birthday parties in my adult life and I do really appreciate the effort people put into the parties. I am especially thankful for the times the kids came home such as on my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, but year in and year out, more than anything else, I have enjoyed the wonderful spring birthdays that I spent alone working with the land. Being a farm boy was the happiest time of my life. I knew it even then.

In more recent years I have tried to spend my birthdays in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. That reminds me of another story. I think I'll title it "Breaking in a New Canoe".