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## Farmer's market offers fresh produce and good advice

On summer Saturday mornings, the farmer's market in Hancock Park is the place to be. Yes, one can buy fresh produce from farmers of Lumpkin and surrounding counties. Then there are the golden veins of wisdom buried in the mind shafts of the old ones.

As I strolled from table-to-table one morning buying tomatoes, field peas, and more, I got to wondering how this year's extraordinary rain affected their crops. I spotted a couple of old ones lounging on folding lawn chairs planted away from the bustle of the tables.

The men were taking it easy in the shade, appearing as if time and motion ceased to exist. Bib overalls and leathery skin, farmer boots and rail thin, graduates from the school of hard knocks. The wise ones.



Jameson  
Gregg

Guest  
Column

I ambled, over with fistfuls of stuffed plastic bags, evidence of my good faith.

"Howdy-do."

"Howdy."

"Mind if I set my bags down a minute in the shade?"

"Not a'all."

I plopped my rear end on the ground next to my bags. "How you gentlemen doing?"

One removed the grass stalk from his mouth and said, "Fair to midlin'" He sported a straw hat with a green transparent bill.

Liver spots danced on the trembling hand of the other as he gripped his

cane. "Stove up and plum tuckered out, but I ain't give out, yet."

I looked from one to the other. "Man, all the rain this year, ya'll must'a gotten hammered."

"My early crop was purt' nigh nuthin'," said Cane, his mouth sunken, his beard stubbled.

Hat shifted in his chair. Green light filtering through the bill highlighted his slender hook nose. "My corn crop was so poor, my wife cooked some for supper the other day and we ate seven acres in one meal."

I nodded a knowing nod. "I feel for you. My grandparents were farmers. Both sides."

"Next year," Hat said to Cane, "it'll be better, what you reckon'?"

Cane shook his head, grinned and a map of wrinkles framed his blue eyes. "I quit tryin' to reckon

on that topic long time ago. You'd have better luck tryin' to baptize a cat than predict the cotton-pickin' weather."

Hat chuckled then pointed to me. I looked beyond his hooknose and the dangling white hairs of his eyebrows and into his knowing eyes. "Young man, farmin' comes down to one rule: sometimes you get, but most times you get got."

Zingers flew back and forth betwixt the wise ones. I came to learn that life is simpler when you plow around the stump and that Jimmy Carter was the only president without an accent. They started getting down to brass tacks when Cane advised Hat and me to "keep skunks, bankers and lawyers at a distance." Considering I fit into a couple of those categories, I took my cue and gathered my bags, tipped my cap and bid adieu.