

# THE HIGH PLAINS PREACHER

Welcome to the High Plains Preacher, stories about the Bible, high wind, fast horses, lack of moisture and other elements of life in the Texas Panhandle.

## Socks on a Rooster?

by Fr. Jim Schmitmeyer

People in Texas speak English in a more colorful way than any place I've ever lived. I'm not sure why this is the case, but I enjoy the benefits of living in a region of the country where waitresses routinely call me Honey, where precipitation is measured in the distance between raindrops on a sidewalk and where bank tellers refer to over drafts as nothing more than a slight breeze wafting in from a feedlot.

I'll never forget the wind-blown day when a friend described a calm day in Texas as "a day when you're not leaning!"

After moving to the Panhandle, it didn't take me long to notice the way the unique qualities of the High Plains soaked into local speech patterns. If you're in the country, for instance, and your dog runs off, you can spot him for at least two weeks. Out here on the plains, wind turbines spin like giant pinwheels in a Dr. Seuss children's book. At night, their lights blink like a string of Christmas tree bulbs with a loose connection.

Texans view life through frames that other folks wouldn't bother to pick up at a garage sale. Not long ago I went to the dentist for my regular checkup. I needed work on one of my molars and the dentist proceeded to fit me with a temporary crown. I returned two weeks later. He asked how I got along with the temporary crown and I told him it left a large gap between my teeth. "That's normal. The permanent one will fit nice and snug. He paused, then looked me in the eye. "Those temporary crowns fit like socks on a rooster."

"Socks on a rooster?" Picture the image in your mind: Socks. On a rooster. Who would ever come up with such an idea?

Not a bad saying. And kind of practical. If I forget to brush my teeth in the morning, I now remember to do so while pulling on my socks.

When friends and relatives visit me from parts of the country that are blessed with things like trees and mountains and rivers that actually flow with water, they sometimes ask, "What do you see in Texas?" I smile and remind them of the solace of open space, the rugged beauty of the canyons and the clear, blue sky. And then I add that, unlike some other parts of the county, in Texas, life is more than what you see. It's also what you hear.