

# The Tale of the Three-Legged Milking Stool

By Riney Jordan ©

Some have said that America can be compared to a three-legged milking stool.

And here's the part I loved.

The three legs of the milk stool are those components of our life that have been the most important: the home, a place of worship, and the public school.

Let's look at the first leg.

When any community was first being formed, people naturally built their homes. It doesn't matter whether you're talking about Muleshoe, Texas or New York City, it was always the same. Folks arrived. They built their homes. This home protected their family. It was the center of their lives.

For it was in the home that the family members were fed. Oh, not just with food, but with food for living.

Youngsters were taught morals, values, ethics, integrity, honesty, and the value of hard work. They were shown commitment, dedication, patience, and how to work together for the good of all.

And as quickly as their homes were built, these folks met together and built a place of worship. This "second leg of the milking stool" was important... and it was here that the important values and rules for living that youngsters had learned at home were reinforced.

And as quickly as the house of worship was built, the folks concentrated on the "third leg," ... the public school.

Here children came together and learned the important skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, but they also were having the lessons of values and ethics reinforced that they had been taught at home and in their place of worship.

Three legs. All vital to the welfare and support of this great nation. Three important and worthy components of every community in this nation: the home, the place of worship, the public school. Each doing its part to make our children the best they could be.

Now... let's look at our communities today. Let's face it ... for far too many youngsters, the home is practically non-existent. Countless thousands, perhaps more than we can possibly imagine, are virtually "raising" themselves.

Oh, I realize that many homes are still places of instruction, of encouragement, of nurturing ... but we are simply fooling ourselves if we don't look around at those who don't have this kind of support.

So, for many youngsters, this leg of the three-legged milking stool doesn't exist.

And if the home isn't doing its job, it's almost certain that the youngsters who live in this kind of non-supportive environment are not getting the support and benefit of the second "leg" ... that of the church or synagogue or mosque.

So for them, there remains only one leg to hold it all together ... the public school.

Oh, it's a balancing act, all right. And it's here that, in spite of the lack of training at home and in spite of the lack of spiritual training, they are sent to the public schools of this nation to be taught, to be nurtured, to be encouraged, to be cared for like no other place they know in their lives.

The public school. It's the one place where they feel safe. It's the one place where they feel compassion. It's the one place where they can, and where they should be, taught life's most important lessons.

We all know that there are those who are intent upon destroying the public school system as we know it.

We need to stand firm in our belief that the public school has been, and continues to be, the most significant and life-changing component in the lives of many of our students.

What a responsibility! What a tremendous task! What a burden to bear!

But, oh, believe me. It's worth it!

Three legs holding up our nation? Yes, for many youngsters, the home, the place of worship, and the public school work in perfect harmony.

But never forget those whose lives are so void of a nurturing home, unaware of the value of a place of worship, and who come to us as empty vessels ready to be filled.

The public school. Long may it live... and long may it continue to serve as model of decency, honesty, integrity, and strong values for youngsters who will learn it no where else.