

The Wooden Rake

When Calvin Coolidge was President, some of his Vermont neighbors decided to recognize his devotion to the old family farm by giving him a handmade rake.

The orator who presented the rake dwelt at length on the qualities of the hickory wood from which he believed it was made.

“Hickory,” he said, “like the President, is sturdy, strong, resilient, unbroken.” Then he handed the rake to Coolidge, and the audience settled back for his speech of acknowledgment.

Coolidge turned the rake over, looked at it carefully, and uttered one word: “Ash.”

Consider the impact of what transpired in that story. No doubt, the rake was well made; it was likely very attractive, since it was being presented to the President; and it was made of wood and had some qualities that were important.

But it was not hickory.

Is close enough what counts? Or is being precise what really matters?

In the work that we are called to do, being right, being accurate, being exact is all-important. The wellbeing of our residents is at stake.

Even beyond that reality, however, the push for perfection ought to be a personal wellspring within us.

--Beecher Hunter