



## WN2 (Waste Not, Want Not)

by Robert Riley, Jr., Chairman of the Board



This phrase was used in formulating the original strategic plan of Feed Energy in the 1990's. It reflected my philosophy as the owner of Feed Energy, and my upbringing in Iowa. It was probably learned from my grandfather, Harry Warren, who had 25 years of Readers Digest magazines in his basement and 100 cigar boxes. Harry thought there would be a use for everything. **He was FRUGAL.**

So, **frugality** is “space” – containers - jars, boxes, sacks (why throw away all those grocery bags?) My mother in law saved the margarine containers... she had 200 of them in her basement.

When it comes to food I consider “use by dates” as just suggestions. And you can tell by my waist size that I don't like to throw food away. I use this philosophy to help the Iowa Food Bank – finding food that might be **wasted** to give to those where it is very much **wanted**.

I had a job one summer pulling nails from thousands of floor boards. I still have jars of the ones that came out pretty straight when I pulled them. I wrap all my Christmas presents in last Sunday's newspaper. I use the comics for the kid's presents and the opinion page for my wife's.

I am most fragile when it comes to time. Remember the story of the advertisement in the paper under “lost and found”? “Lost, one golden minute, studded with 60 diamond seconds. No reward is offered, for I fear it is gone forever.” As I get older, it seems time is more valuable than ever, and I wished I valued it even more when I was younger.

I spent 13 years in the rendering industry, where there was no such thing as a “waste” product. We were the original recyclers, and **I wore my frugality like a fine suit**. I was the first in the industry to use our “wastewater” as fertilizer and irrigation for the corn field next door. That's

where I learned to repair everything instead of tossing it out and buying new. That's where I learned that you can pay more for quality if the quality is essential to the operation. I pride myself in being frugal, but that doesn't mean I'm cheap.

When it comes to our natural resources I am concerned that we are not doing a very good job of practicing **Waste Not Want Not**. "Tragedy of the commons" is the squandering and over-use of common resources like air, water, soil, energy, mined material, harvested forests and public grasslands. Natural resources that are owned by society, but used up or polluted by those who are not required to pay much for, or preserve, for a future generation. **Truly a tragedy.**

We need look no further than the recent floods in the Midwest to see the devastating impact they had to our farms, soil and communities. Huge sections of farms under water. Soil that took 12,000 years to make washed away - gone forever. Communities destroyed. We are "spending our grandchildren's inheritance" through the wasteful use of what were seen as "free" resources, but which were actually externalities owned in common by all members of society.

Our natural resources are under tremendous threat from global warming. We need to do a better job of harvesting the unlimited energy potential from the sun and the winds and become less dependent upon carbon produced energy. We must do a better job of managing our rivers to protect our farms and communities from the 500 year floods that happen every ten years or so. We must do a better job of protecting our irreplaceable soil from erosion because the more it is wasted the more we will be left wanting in generations to come.

We show responsibility and stewardship by taking care of our resources and investing back into our family, our business, our community and our world. We use the phrase "**waste not, want not**" to remind ourselves to manage resources well.

So, the end result is if you don't waste something today it will be around to use it tomorrow, when you might need it more. Whether that is time or money or natural resources or material goods – they are all precious, limited and worthy of not wasting, but spending wisely.



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