

THE IDLE AMERICAN

Mort and the Rumor Mill....

Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury

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Uncle Mort doesn't own a smartphone, and only recently found a well-worn flip phone for \$10 on eBay. Neither does my ancient uncle own a computer, claiming he'd never remember where the off/on switch is, or how to use it should the screen magically light.

Still, he claims to be a "follower of social media," but his sources are second-hand at best, and often third, fourth and fifth, be they fact, fiction or fantasy. One of his "sources" is the guy who delivers bread to the general store a few miles up the lane from his spread in the thicket. The man usually drops off more than bread.

He is full of rumors, jokes and stories, leaving smiles--and sometimes thigh-slapping laughter--in his wake. The other day, he asked, "Do you know what I 'herd'?" ... "A small HERD of cattle and a few goats and sheep."...

Recently, Mort and his buddies jumped to attention when the breadman mentioned that a friend of his second cousin (on his dad's side) lives in New York City, where his wife works daily in Manhattan. (Mort always clarifies with "where them tallest buildings are.")

She swears she saw President Donald Trump and his sidekick ("almost-equal-kick?") entering the CBS President's office. (She admits that the pair may have been AI versions of the President and of Elon Musk.) Anyways, she thinks she heard President Trump campaigning to get the name of a popular weekly TV program changed from *Face the Nation* to *The Nation Faces Me*. And Musk was promoting the Big Dipper and the Little Dipper to become our 52nd and 53rd states, assuming that Canada will become #51."

That sounded "about right" To Mort, who spent the rest of the day informing others of the Trump-Musk sightings....

All the agency shake-ups in DeeCee remind a longtime friend, John Nickols, of his brief tenure almost 50 years ago when he and another Quantico-trained FBI rookie were agents in the Albuquerque, NM, field office. Well-armed and well-trained, the pair received word about a federal fugitive believed to be holed up in Ruidoso, NM, where he had formerly lived and his family still resided. So, they headed for Ruidoso in hot pursuit, finding nary a fugitive after disturbing both nooks and crannies. After all, they reasoned, the "tip" came from a usually reliable FBI source. Whatever, it was a pretty lousy way to spend Christmas Eve.

Later, the "source" admitted innocently sharing flawed information. The fugitive was in Reynosa, Mexico, NOT Ruidoso. Soon, the fugitive was arrested by other agents. "Many people had goose for Christmas," Nickols remembers. "My partner and I had a wild goose chase." Cool Hand Luke would have said there was a definite failure to communicate.

An avowed Christian, he spent most of his career as a highly successful high school and college basketball coach and as a respected university teacher. He was a pace-setter in everything, except perhaps as a guitarist, where maybe “hobby” is a better fit. However, he befits the description “Bum” Phillips, longtime Houston Oiler Coach, once offered when asked if star running back Earl Campbell was in a class by himself. “If he’s not,” Bum drawled, “It don’t take long to call the roll.”...

In this space two weeks ago, I wrote about the recent collision of aircrafts resulting in their crashing into the Potomac River. In the five paragraphs reflecting on earlier crashes involving Braniff International, I relied on memory for details, and failed miserably, perhaps committing more “goofs” than any other in my 22 years of weekly meanderings.

I erred in several references to Braniff, and persons who want to learn accurate details of this airline’s remarkable history may Google Braniff Airways Foundation.

The Foundation allows Braniff’s rich heritage to live into perpetuity. I am sincerely sorry for my mistakes--all of them of the head and not the heart--and offer deepest apologies....

Dr. Newbury, longtime university president, continues to speak and write. The Idle American, begun in 2003, is one of the longest-running syndicated columns. Contact: 817-447-3872. Email: newbury@speakerdoc.com. Website: www.speakerdoc.com.