

## **THE IDLE AMERICAN**

### **It's in the Mail...**

**Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury**

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**Folks who** may have spent too much time in the environs of hog farms perhaps came by the odor honestly, simply a result of growing up years.

Others of us may “smell of swine” by virtue of being frequent beneficiaries of “blind hog luck.”

I admit having a foot in each camp, having spent time visiting rural friends who tended hogs, but far more often, experiences of repeated good fortune generally have been results of “blind hog luck.”...

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**We used** to hope for assignment of telephone numbers and license plates that could easily be committed to memory. Sometimes we lucked out, but as the years roll on, we've pretty much accepted all numbers handed to us, with whimpering barely registering on sound meters as years stack up.

Years ago, an acquaintance moved to Beeville, TX. One of his first chores upon relocation was to visit the post office for rental of a postal box. “Try to give me a number I can remember,” he joked to the guy manning the counter that day. (Little did he know that the person immediately in front of him was planning a move to a distant town, thus giving up Box Number One that had been his for several decades.)

“Will number one be okay?” the attendant asked. After recovering from mild shock, the new resident responded that number one would be fine....

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**The postal** topic came up recently during a trip to East Texas where our granddaughter, Juliana, “pumped and circumstanced” her way down the aisle to accept her high school diploma.

Conversations buzzed about the peaks and valleys of her educational pilgrimage. Mostly listening was her brother, Kedren, four years her junior. After all, he’d reached a milestone, too, but his congratulations were limited largely to “pats on the back.”

Though no middle school ceremony marked his ascension to high school, he brightened upon acceptance of a monetary “graduation gift,” and he didn’t even have to wear a tie. Soon, he and I were discussing, of all things, the U.S. mail....

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**He laughed** about the guy getting “box number one” in Beeville, then spoke about an unlikely current experience involving the U.S. Mail.

His tale begins eight years ago, when he was a kindergartener. With assistance from his mother Jana and his sister, he printed (in large letters, of course) a request for a signed baseball card from then Texas Rangers pitcher Derek Holland.

Here’s a copy of the letter: “Dear Derek. You’re a great pitcher. I am six years old and I am playing little league. From: Kedren.” Juliana provided a colored sketch of a baseball diamond, with the name “Holland” shown prominently above the pitcher’s mound. At the bottom of the page was the long-slow-curve request for an autographed baseball card....

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**Weeks, then** months, then years rolled by. Holland has since played for the Chicago White Sox, San Francisco Giants, Chicago Cubs, Pittsburg Pirates and Detroit Tigers.

A few days ago, Kedren received in the mail what he considers a “gift,” since he thought he’d never hear from Holland, whose nickname is “The Dutch Oven.” He held in his hand the requested card, with “number 45” splashed across his uniform.

It was indeed signed, even if mechanically. Kedren can't tell for sure. He asked if this experience justifies a "blink-hog-stumbling-over-an-acorn" claim. As hard as it is for a grandfather to admit to his grandson, I responded honestly: "I don't know."....

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**Hogs came** to mind again. A high school friend raised four hogs as a project in agriculture class. Visiting him one day after school, I noticed that he was tying a rope on the hogs--one at a time--then leading each to a watering trough some 50 yards away.

"Couldn't a lot of time be saved if you placed the trough inside the pen so the hogs could drink water whenever they'd like?" I asked.

"Maybe so," he answered. "But what's time to a hog?"...

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