

THE IDLE AMERICAN

Long Ago Promises...

Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury

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When this weekly piece first saw the light of day in February, 2003, I promised to share stories worthy of belly laughs--or at least chuckles. I also vowed to offer occasional gems of wisdom. I wanted these "gems" to be worthy of comparison to the precious pearls of Majorca. Sadly, most more nearly resemble costume jewelry from the Dollar Store....

Here they come--in random order--to usher in a new year:

1) **We are** barraged by bank ads, each claiming to provide down home comforts for bosom-buddy customers, all of whom will be defended to the death. In my view, there's not a dime's worth of difference in most banks. I'll settle for the one whose checks can be easily torn from checkbooks without mangling. Another observation: The folks making the loans are NOT the same ones featured in TV bank ads.

2) **My friend** Judge Stephen Rogers offers a marriage tip that husbands should take to heart: "If your wife wants farm animals for Christmas, you want farm animals for Christmas."

3) **Like many** thousands of other Sunday School classes, our bunch gathers for a Christmas dinner in early December, with each couple or individual bringing a \$15 gift. The presents are stacked prominently, then lifted, shaken and/or carefully examined by potential "giftees."

Last month, Ray and Mickey West of the hostess group brought several dozen puzzles to be handed out to all guests. (They'd collected them during COVID'S worst times, completing each of them at least once. They figured it was time for others to enjoy the puzzles.)

Not knowing the party would be awash in puzzles, Lee Anne Goddard brought a two-puzzle gift for some "lucky" class member. After all the, uh, "relocation" of gifts ended, Edith Minor wound up with the puzzles Lee Anne brought. Forcing a smile, Edith admitted that she doesn't have the patience to work puzzles, considering it a victory when she finds the four corner pieces....

4) **My Uncle Mort keenly** remembers when strong campaigns for women's rights began back in the 1960s. (I do, too, entitling one of my speeches, "From Adam's Rib to Web Pages and Fibs," explaining that with this sweeping historical reference, there's no way I could get off the subject.) Anyways, Mort says he's kept a sharp eye out to see if media advertising continues to give equal time to the fairer sex. Whatever, he says he still hasn't seen or heard any commercials about cutting out the "middle woman."....

5) **Having spouted** speeches from behind lecterns for more than 60 years, I have sometimes enjoyed--but more often endured--all kinds of introductions. Some have been so generous, it has occurred--albeit briefly--that I might consider running for "sainthood," or at least for public office.

One night at a long-ago banquet, the introducer--a man I'd never met--had no bio sheet. "All I need is your date of birth," he said. I complied.

Here's how I was introduced, almost verbatim: "Our speaker was born in Brown County on September 7, 1937. This means that he's had 45 years, three months and four days to prepare his remarks, so they darned sure ought to be good." After this single statement, he sat down....

6) **About 60** years ago, one of my early bosses was the late Dr. Bryan Wildenthal, for a dozen years president of Sul Ross State University. He shocked me one day with this observation: "Don, wouldn't it be wonderful if somehow, home teams could somehow always win?"

I immediately thought him to be way off base, but the longer I live and the more times I've seen cash, compromises and "convictionless" decisions carry too many days, I'm ready to reconsider. Exhibit A is a recent announcement that ESPN will pay \$920 million for exclusive television rights to 40 NCAA championships over the next eight years. Forget NCAA setting policy; TV pulls the strings. Maybe pickleball is the only sport left standing without a huge price tag....

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