

## THE IDLE AMERICAN

### **L.O.P.—A Modest Proposal...**

**Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury**

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**Several years** ago, a wise guy--or perhaps a wise gal--sent an email that latched on and won't let go. It read: "In your column today, I discovered several dozen well-chosen words."

Oh, that it could have been left at that, without a second sentence: "Unfortunately, they were intermingled among 600 that weren't."

Ouch! Such could be said of most of my weekly meanderings that will have spanned 21 years come February. It's an ongoing challenge to write "well-chosen words."...

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**Most of** the time, I have sought high roads, hoping to produce a few grins that soften the impact of hurtful news.

Recent news in the world of higher education--a career I chose to follow 63 years ago--is causing sleep deprivation, so I'm going to write about it.

Too much news involves dollar marks followed by too many zeroes. Sadly, at the center of it all is what we have always called "intercollegiate athletics," usually with an addendum claiming the NCAA to be a national association of "student athletes." In a few programs around the nation, it's a stretch to conclude that some vaunted athletes deserve to have "student" in front of their names....

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**Now, finally** in the fourth paragraph, today's headline makes sense. The "L.O.P." I suggest that 15 or 20 major universities be "lopped off" to go their own way. Then, there might yet be a healthy future for true "student athletes" in the remaining institutions.

Yep, this would mean that most universities could resume their initial objectives. For these, the tails no longer would wag the dog.

I won't attempt to name universities suggested for the L.O.P.--but you, I and they know who they are. Clearly, they belong in the new L.O.P.--the League of Plenty....

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**Currently, there** are 100 or so institutions galloping along as fast as they can, trying to keep up, believing that their success, prestige, enrollment--and fund-raising, of course--hinge on big time sports.

There are many problems with such thinking. A comic strip featured more than 100 years ago in the defunct New YorkGlobe provided an observation repeated across the years.

“Just when we think we’ve caught up with the Joneses, they refinance.” The point applies here: The “almosts” who continue to seek the holy grail will fail. The golden rule still applies--them with the gold rule....

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**My head** was reeling with numbers recently during a drive to Waco as I listened to sports radio. I learned that Texas A&M was writing a \$76 million check(s) to deposed football coach Jimbo Fisher, and that at least one football player at a major university was paid MILLIONS this year under the guise of the new NCAA N.I.L. program (name-identification-likeness).

I found both bits of news sickening.

While in Waco, I called Grant Teaff--a friend of 67 years--to wish him a happy 90th birthday. He confirmed a figure that he shared with me years ago. When he arrived in Waco to SUCCESSFULLY revive Baylor’s football program in 1972, he signed on for an annual salary of \$25,000, one that had reached \$50,000 when he retired 21 seasons later. (BTW, he compiled a record of 170-151-8 and two Southwest Conference championships.) And, he didn’t even have an agent!....

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**I dream** of the “good old days,” when playing fields were more level, and competing for league championships was enough. We need more coaches like Grant Teaff, R. C. Slocum, Jess Neely and Rusty Russell, among a short list of others. Remember Rusty? He left Temple High School to coach at Fort Worth’s Masonic Home, finding out that they didn’t have a football stadium, or even a football!

For my proposal to gain traction--and I know the odds are miniscule--trustees and regents must re-examine why their institutions were founded and assume their duties to develop and defend policies.

Or, they can trudge on, allowing television to orchestrate major decisions to be carried out by its NCAA lap dog....

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