

## **THE IDLE AMERICAN**

### **Grilling Groans....**

**Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury**

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**Texas'** prime grilling season is only weeks away. I await in the shadow of a conundrum, not knowing whether to mark off calendar days with giddy anticipation or be "gloomed" like Charlie Brown stumbling away from another setback.

There's a certain limpness accompanying the unknown. That's how I remember a sudden desire at age 30 to learn to play the organ, blowing off a warning to allot plenty of practice time. Right off, I bought a Wurlitzer transistorized model on a monthly pay-out plan. Months later, I sold it for pennies on the dollar.

The pattern started with my first and only childhood violin lesson. I didn't want to go, but parentally driven, I fumbled through it, knocking over a lamp, tracking mud into the teacher's home and finally dropping the fiddle. "If you don't shape up this minute," she said sternly, "I'm going to tell your folks that you have definite promise."....

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**This is** a new day and a new challenge. This time, I'm "locked and loaded." First off, I have a 55-gallon, custom-built steel grill that takes three strong men to move and one strong man to lift the lid. No one lives here with such attributes, so I've decided to sell it. (It is embarrassing to ask neighbors repeatedly to lift and/or lower the grill lid.)

There is hope, however, with a state-of-the-art Camp Chef, charcoal pellet-burning, WiFi-equipped grill I bought from a man who is good at grilling and desired a bigger one, perhaps to feed neighbors in all directions.

Curses! The purchase may have been ill-advised. It didn't dawn on me what "WiFi-equipped" portends. I'm afraid it means there's a good chance it involves my smartphone, and at the moment, we are not "speaking." The grill handbook says I can--with my phone--control grilling from my easy chair or from other time zones. Truth to tell, I just want to master the art in "present tense," smelling the aroma and seeing the flames that may need squirting....

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**Almost forgot** . On one end, there's a small butane burner, suggesting that I can cook two things at once. Again, a challenge looms.

I headed for Lowe's, not noticing that I parked within a few feet of the Blue Rhino display that includes dozens--if not hundreds--of cannisters of butane, or maybe it's propane, or maybe they're the same thing.

Inside the store, I asked a couple of “associates” about the location of those butane “thingamajigs,” since “cannister” was a term I’d hear later in the visit. One employee directed me to lawn/garden, and another suggested aisle eight. I decided to visit customer service for specific directions....

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The gracious woman answered, “They’re outside, since they can’t legally be brought inside the store. Pay for it at the register, and someone will accompany you to the Blue Rhino display.”

All went well. I paid, and a lady showed up with a key to unlock the bin containing stacks of cannisters, each splashed with big letters: “FLAMMABLE.” (This made me ponder whether there’s a difference between “flammable” and “inflammable,” but such discourse is for another time.)

Before leaving, I noticed that Lowe’s offers free tire inflation adjacent to the Blue Rhino display. Hmmm, maybe there’s a reason I’ve never seen anyone getting air there. Some may fear a malfunctioning air hose--or errant cars moving within a few feet of the display--could cause an explosion. Who knows? My immediate concern was mastering safe use of butane at one end of my grill and electrically-ignited charcoal pellets at the other....

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**Later**, I thought of the old joke about a parachutist whose ‘chute didn’t open and the old couple who replaced their woodstove with a butane replacement they didn’t know how to ignite.

They met in midair, him going downward as the couple soared upward. “Know anything about parachutes?” the former frantically asked.

“No,” one oldster responded, “Do you know anything about butane stoves?”....

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Dr. Newbury, longtime university president and author, writes weekly and speaks throughout Texas. Contact: 817-447-3872. Email: [newbury@speakerdoc.com](mailto:newbury@speakerdoc.com).