

THE IDLE AMERICAN

God's Blessing of Branson....

Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury

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Hills are greening up, fiddlers are tuning up and visitors from around the globe are showing up as the entertainment mecca of Branson, MO, gears up for a record-breaking season in the beloved Ozarks.

It's a magical place known for musical excellence where God is honored--and where there are so many fiddlers--it's difficult to predict whether "Cotton-eyed Joe" or "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" gets more play.

Most of us can't get enough of either number, unflustered if the instruments go up in smoke as the music intensifies....

Such strains are anticipated, as are tears in the eyes of veterans, first responders, law enforcement officers, medical personnel and firefighters. They stand in response to thunderous roars of rafter-shaking thanks in the more than 100 venues at what has become what is arguably America's favorite family place. Some 11 million folks are expected to visit Branson by year's end, when Christmas shows attract masses.

I called my ancient Uncle Mort, letting him know that we had landed in Branson along with the spring-breakers, and that I was keeping count of the different types of string instruments that would include a gigantic harp. By week's end, though, I admitted that I hadn't seen a single lyre. "Well, there was at least one liar at every show you attended," Mort cackled....

The Pandemic greatly challenged Branson, but it wasn't a knock-out blow. Branson faithful held on tight, with most attractions surviving and once again thriving. Maybe it tightened the bonds of family and faith on both sides of the stage lights.

It's an understatement to say there's "something for everybody" in Branson. While this is indeed true, even more is coming. Two years from now, they're opening a \$400 million, 320-room hotel with seven restaurants and an "immersive" water park.

We took careful notes of extremes during this visit. Specifically, we checked out places specializing in ice cream dishes. Two stood out among the dozen or so businesses offering dairy treats....

One place we'd never seen before is called "The Yard." It glistens. Also noticed in a tiny downtown location was "Boo Boo Baba's." It has a makeshift sign: "Root Beer Floats, \$1.99." We bought two.

"The Yard" is beyond upscale, capitalizing on all things bovine, including stuffed cows, calves and other animals, with milk shakes served in pint and quart jars for patrons with "hang-the-cost" attitudes.

“Hey, we’re on vacation,” someone said, ready to fork over a \$20 bill for a treat that’s both a culinary delight and a work of art....

A **unique** mood is established upon entry. A sign advises: “Live like somebody left the gate open.”

The humongous desserts are indeed artfully assembled. They made me think of a favorite tie which always is a landing spot for food that misses my mouth. I don’t know whether to frame it or eat it.

A fun scene at “The Yard” occurs when tykes, not yet kindergarten age, tug at their dads’ pant legs, begging for one of those “big-uns.” Several of the most exotic dishes would feed a scout troop....

I’ll be “in and out” with many observations and suggestions concerning our trip in upcoming weeks, never claiming to be an authority by any measure. You won’t notice any reference to the many recognized golf courses in the area, simply because I don’t know anything about the sport.

I agree with the guy who says too much time is spent on golf unless it is providing a livelihood, in which case, go for it.

A woman, as clueless about golf as I am, said it well. “I’m not even sure which end of the caddy to hold.”...

Alas, our recent trip ended too soon. We saw the blossoms appear on the Bradford pear and redbud trees, but wished for additional blooms to come later.

We can dream, however, of the many wildflowers that soon will cover the mountainsides until fall and winter take over.

And we can hope for other visits up the way....

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