

Pastor Justin Jeter.

C. R. Hutcheson.

Captain Don Wilson

...In 34th year with American Airlines

THE IDLE AMERICAN

Close Enough for Government Work....

Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury

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In the growing-up years of long ago, close enough was usually good enough. Precision rules now, though, and “guesstimates” that were acceptable then don’t pass muster now.

We commonly helped befuddled motorists, suggesting they turn on the county road after crossing three cattle guards, right after spotting a big red barn, or upon seeing a lone chimney, its house burned down by a lightning strike.

Kids think we were deprived, not having GPS gadgets to provide precise directions to our destinations. (I still can’t remember what “GPS” stands for.) Sometimes friendships begin when old-fashioned methods of yesteryear are employed....

All this to say that at least one person in Granbury, TX, recently turned the tables on “old-fashioned way” directions. FYI, the First Christian Church, now in its 151st year, traces its beginnings to 1873, when a minister named Joseph Clark--with sons Addison and Randolph, both also preachers--arrived in Granbury from Fort Worth to found what was initially called AddRan College. Thinking there were too many “temptations” for their students in both Fort Worth and in Granbury, they decided on Thorp Spring, since it was “seven miles from any known sin.” (After a few years, the college moved to Waco, then to Fort Worth, where the name was changed to Texas Christian University.)

I digress. In 1986, First Christian left its small wooden structure near downtown to West Hwy. 377, a few miles “out in the country” at the time. That’s when they dedicated their beautiful Austin stone structure.

When asked downtown for directions to the church, locals suggested heading west on 377, keeping eyes peeled for the hilltop church on the left....

Within a few years, however, Tractor Supply opened a store next to the church, at which time inquirers would be advised to watch for the church right next door to Tractor Supply. This was the easy way out, and for the past 20 years or so, FCC has been known as “the church right next door to Tractor Supply.”

Pastor Justin Jeter was in Tractor Supply recently, and an employee was eager to tell him about a new customer who said he learned the store is right next door to First Christian Church.

Nope, no GPS needed for these directions....

The late Choc Hutcheson, the most interesting person I've ever known, grew up when Lubbock was "more like a town."

He'd hear his folks giving telephone directions to their home, zigging here and zagging there, proceeding through two traffic lights, watching for a prairie dog town and finally, for an Onyx gasoline station located only a few feet from the Hutcheson residence. He said giving such directions often required several minutes, perhaps wearing down a pencil or two.

"Better directions would have suggested that visitors aim for a Lubbock water tower--perhaps 150 feet tall and visible for miles in every direction--located right behind our house."....

My friend Don Wilson borders on genius status in "horse sense" and beyond. I mean that by comparison, his "elevator" zooms to the top of most any skyscraper, while mine struggles to reach the third floor. An Air Force veteran, he has distinguished himself since becoming a pilot in 1971. He is now in his 34th year with American Airlines and an instructor in its flight academy for several years. Earlier, he was a captain--flying Boeing 767s--often with 225 or so passengers on board. Usually, his destinations were major European cities.

He recently made an admission at his wife Jajuan's memorial service. "Unless I'm outdoors in the sunshine, I have no sense of direction," he said. (Luckily, he had two other pilots with him and computers churning out stuff about north, south, east and west as well as up and down.)

On the road he needed only Jajuan--his wife of almost 53 years whom he met when they were 7th graders at Hawley, TX--to provide navigational skills along the way....

Dr. Newbury is a longtime public speaker and former university president who is Texas' longest-running syndicated columnist, now in his 23rd year.