

THE IDLE AMERICAN

A Holiday Afterglow....

Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury

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Afterglows are wonderful, but are waning of late. Many folks forfeit times of warm reflection, too busy in endless pursuits of whatever comes next.

Oh, afterglows are still around for important life events such as birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, promotions, holidays and such, but not like in yesteryear, when few roses went unsmelled.

Uncle Mort and his gang down in the thicket ignore the calendar, determined to enjoy afterglows after such trivial triumphs as finding quarters under sofa cushions, sometimes even dimes....

Yes, afterglows are alive and well in the thicket, and Mort says July 4th this year was perhaps the best one yet.

From the standpoint of noise and skies ablaze with brilliant colors, not much was different.

What was different was the raucous laughter heard throughout the swamp. Sometimes the squeals and howls competed with the booming sounds of heavy-duty "ka-boomers." During lulls, they were unmistakable, seeming to originate from an old house bought recently by a couple from the city. Appearance wise, they seemed to fit right in, what with their two-digit Social Security numbers, furrowed brows and hair that has seen the snow of many winters....

Ever bold, Mort decided to arise early on July 5th, steer his golf cart to the new neighbor's place, get the lowdown on the laughter and then proceed to his gang's afterglow at the general store.

Following introductions, Mort asked about the raucous laughter. The couple looked at each other and laughed again, clearly understanding why there'd be such an inquiry. After all, only hours earlier, they were on their porch swing sharing jokes, not knowing that their piercing laughter was wafting well beyond their picket fence. Instead, was racing across their little stretch of America, all the way to the fruited plain.

"We still find the old jokes to be funny," the newcomer said. His wife nodded in agreement. They also think that if they simply numbered their jokes, they could laugh just as heartily upon remembering what each number stands for! Mort asked them to repeat the joke that had elicited greatest laughter, sound of which exceeded that of cherry bombs exploding round about....

They told of another older couple; they, too, were on their porch swing, but on an ordinary evening.

“Honey, if I won the lottery, what would you do?” the hubby asked. “I’d take my half and leave you high and dry,” his wife answered. “You’re in luck,” he fired back. “I won \$20 yesterday. Here’s your \$10, and let’s stay in touch.”

Mort joined them in hearty laughter, then headed for the general store....

Upon arrival, Mort soon “ruled the conversational roost,” ready to share the story that had created so much laughter the night before. He requested silence, hopeful to keep his “train of thought on track.”

“Train of thought? You don’t even have a caboose of thought,” one of his cronies cackled.

Again, this gaggle of “yesteryear” holdovers yakked and “dominoed” until the sun drooped westward. A good time was had by all....

A funny thing happened to me last week as I walked down a church hallway.

I heard someone yell, “Hey, Shorty!” Since this was my nickname 75 years ago before my height shot upward, I naturally reacted. “How did you know my old nickname?”

“I didn’t know it was your old nickname,” my friend responded. “I was referencing shortness of breath.”....

Don’t we run short on laughter? Maybe it’s because we’re not looking for it much anymore. Still, it remains an important elixir for happy lives.

Recently, I heard a new response to the old “how-are-you-doing?” query. We smile, of course, even at responses we’ve heard thousands of times--such as, “not bad for an old man,” “on the top side of the grass” or “better’n I deserve.”

For the new response, my smile broadened, and I filed it away to plagiarize later: “I’m still vertical and ventilating.”...

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