

THE IDLE AMERICAN

Lessons in Holding On....

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I'm not sure who the TV weather guy was, which city he served or exactly what he said, but if his observation passed down through the ages is even close to accurate, it still has wide application today.

The man must have had his news antenna aimed far beyond the weather. He was a philosopher as well.

This Ohioan not only predicted the weather, but also included an account of the colorful president of Ohio University. And, it was during flood conditions, for crying out loud....

President Roger Alden , unquestionably an icon in both education and business, called on his remarkable conciliatory skills when students went on a rampage about the university cafeteria. He calmed them; order was quickly restored.

But wait! Cafeteria personnel were miffed that students were critical of their food, so they threatened to strike. Again, President Alden quickly “charmed” them, and once again reigned supreme.

Hours later, the campus was crippled by flood waters that all but engulfed university buildings before subsiding....

Here's what the weather guy allegedly said: “Earlier this week, students protested the Ohio University food service, and President Alden quickly allayed their concerns. Then, cafeteria workers balked, but again, President Alden was equal to the situation.”

Then came his classic line about the flood, perhaps rubbing right up against verbatim.

“Today, God tried to close Ohio University, and President Alden is holding his own.”...

Stories abound about folks “holding their own,” and this holds true throughout the world. Fingernail prints are everywhere, left by folks trying to hang on.

To sharpen our focus, the community of Branson, MO, has dreamed big, even when staring straight into the squinty eyes of adversity. Case in point: Opening of its world-class, multi-million-dollar aquarium coincided with COVID's arrival. So much for a grand opening.

It held on, as have dozens of other venues in this vacation destination that is gradually regaining a foothold following the pandemic....

Thankfully, much about Branson is predictable. Folks at the more than 100 shows and attractions are as happy to see visitors as Minnie Pearl was in her weekly half-century comedy routine at The Grand Ole Opry: "I'm just so proud to be here."

Shows are top quality, clean, patriotic and generally "priced right."

We landed at the Pierce Arrow Theater on a recent visit. Three take-aways: Producer Dan Britton can really hit the low notes, now included in the Guinness Book of Records. Baritone Michael Cole is an absolute phenom, springboarding to fame 15 years ago with a high finish in network TV's America's Got Talent. And, comedian James Sibley remains one of the funniest guys on the planet....

It is noteworthy that Cole can't remember when he wasn't singing, having busted loose at age four in his church choir in rural New York State. A five-sport star in high school, he chose music, or maybe it was chosen for him.

"I don't remember ever going anywhere in the car without the radio blaring music, and I sang along with the artists." He, his brother and sister were "back seat harmonizers" later to be recognized on national TV.

He joined Pierce Arrow three years ago and loves life in Branson with his wife and two sons, ages 12 and 3. His mom and dad have moved their ministry to nearby Hollister, his brother is in marketing for Silver Dollar City and his sister is an area realtor....

Sibley, appearing in overalls that may have been custom-made by the Acme Tent and Awning Company, is a humor genius.

Most of his comic jabs are self-inflicted. One great story revealed a lie he told his grandchildren. He said that when the ice cream truck came by playing music, it meant they were out of ice cream. He admits to being one year younger, since his parents held him back one year!

Long live Branson! May it ever hold on!..

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