

THE IDLE AMERICAN

Breathe, Mort, Breathe!...

Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury

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Jiminy Cricket! I never dreamed I'd be writing about an insect popularized by Pinocchio, or that this week's piece may warrant bottom-of-the-barrel placement.

I may have reached a new low, what with insects in the spotlight.

Late author Carlo Lorenzini got by with it with his ever-popular fairy tale novel involving a wooden-figured boy whose nose lengthened with each telling of a falsehood....

Okay, so I've opened the box made famous by Pandora, because there'll be quick links tying the length of my nose--as well as my Uncle Mort's--to spinning stories that are less than factual.

Most, however, could have happened.

Anyway, Mort was breathless when he called. "They are going to start charging for crickets and the pesky little creatures are headed our way by the millions!"....

My curiosity aroused, I asked Mort if he might be experiencing a medication side effect--maybe the kind they garble at ends of TV ads or appear in smallest print in newspaper ads.

He's accustomed to my chiding that brings him up short, and he shot back that his claims must be true, since the "cricket stuff" appeared in a recent issue of the Dallas Morning News.

Trouble is, the newspapers he sees are left behind at the general store, including some that are missing their coupons and others torn or with missing sections, thus ready for bird cage lining. "Wasn't it Will Rogers who claimed that all he knew was what he read in the newspapers?" my uncle often brags. Reading newspapers was about all they had in common....

Anyways, Mort was aghast at the thought of millions of invading crickets and the "pros and cons" of enduring them.

While they emit unpleasant odors, they're critical to the ecosystem, etc., etc., etc.

We are advised to avoid chemical treatment for the infestations, but instead to turn out the lights, he said....

The critters we get In Texas are largely black crickets, part of the Gryllus Assimilis complex.

I'm on dangerous ground providing more details than one might want to know, but the claim is that the crickets are "understudied," and largely misunderstood.

Conditions were such that after Labor Day, the crickets swarmed to new heights, according to Wizzie Brown, a Texas A&M University AgriLife Extension entomologist....

Assuring that crickets break down organic matter and recycle dead plant material is the National Library of Medicine.

Further, we are advised that treating the invaders with essential oils is the way to go.

And, we learn that crickets are dead set against certain scents, including peppermint, lavender, citronella and vinegar....

Mort's misunderstanding resulted when he saw an ad concerning professional cricket in Dallas, details about tickets, schedules, etc., and how this is the world's second most popular sport. It has 2.5 billion fans worldwide. Anyhow, he got all mixed up about the bug crickets and the sport of cricket.

Understandably, the world today provides much to be processed, and some of our "processors" are not what they used to be, or perhaps never were!

Perhaps the "timing was right" for 40 senior adults, largely from our church, to get away from it all for a few days, so we retreated to Branson, MO.

Things didn't go according to script in the beginning, though, for what is usually a seven-hour trip. We left in something of a "convoy of cars," not knowing that scarcely an hour along our way, a chemical spill on Interstate Highway 35-W near Gainesville closed traffic in both directions. There were additional traffic mitigations, and the travel time ballooned to 10 hours.

At one point, segments of our "convoy" were in three states. To be continued....

Dr. Newbury, longtime university president, continues to speak and write. The Idle American, begun in 2003, is one of the nation's longest-running syndicated humor columns. Contact: 817-447-3872. Email: newbury@speakerdoc.com.

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