

THE IDLE AMERICAN

Intersections of Life....

Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury

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Names of luminaries met at intersections along our pathway keep popping up as corner posts in life's fence row.

They are not remembered as being Republican or Democrat, rural or urban, liberal or conservative. Each, however, has two characteristics in common -- notable public service and unquestioned Christian commitment.

A friend of some half-century, the late Everett J. (Ebb) Grindstaff was known as "Mr. Lion." In 1982, he was elected to the presidency of Lions International, an organization spanning the globe in more than 200 countries with 46,000 clubs and some 1.5 million members. He and his late father were well-known attorneys in Ballinger, TX, for almost a century. Ebb's dad was District Attorney and Ebb later was City Attorney for more than 50 years. Now, the new Texas Lions' Museum in Kerrville is dedicated to his memory.

Ebb challenged his children as they entered high school: "The most important thing your mother and I can give you is a good name. Take good care of it." Ebb died in 2019 at age 88; his widow, Jay, 93, attended the museum dedication, along with other family and friends, mostly roaring Lions....

Coach Grant Teaff led Baylor University from the football wilderness during his 21 years there. A high school sports star in Snyder and college at McMurry University, Teaff has reached age 90. Recently, Snyder Public Schools named its football stadium in his honor. (It was a recent delight for me to have a two-hour visit with Grant and his wife Donnell in Waco. Their "get-alongs" have slowed, but they remain sprightly in spirit and outlook.)

Also this fall, Highland Park changed its stadium name to honor Randy Allen, their coach of 26 years who has won 23 district titles, more than 400 games and four state championships. This year, the former SMU football player won the coveted Tom Landry Award for excellence in high school football coaching.

Highlander Stadium now has three additional words--Randy Allen Field. Now 74, he failed at retirement six years ago. After a few months, he "unretired" and was reinstated, pledging to coach until he can't....

Still another shining star was the late James M. Hamilton, who lost a lengthy and valiant battle with cancer earlier this year. He was 60 years of age, making a strong Christian impact during his life, most of which was spent in education.

I met him in 1986 upon being named president of Howard Payne University. He was Student Body President, taking seriously the confidences with which he was entrusted.

A community leader, he was greatly admired by the masses in his hometown of Weatherford, TX, where his memorial service was held recently....

The service was unique in several ways. It was held on August 14 on what would have been his 61st birthday. The Weatherford City Council, which he had served as a member, declared it to be "James Hamilton Day." At the reception following the service, strawberry cake--his favorite--was served. Yes, James--like Grindstaff, Teaff and Allen--deserves "corner post" status.

Still another who sought no recognition, fame or fortune, was the late Cecil Holman, as good a friend and valued mentor as I have ever had, particularly during my student years in college. An African American grocer/undertaker in Brownwood, he was not privileged to attend high school. Yet, he was as wise as any person I've ever known.

It was "Uncle Cecil"--the name his many friends called him--who once offered me this valuable advice: "Mr. Berries (the name he always called me), try to remember that throughout life, you'll face far more 'hallelujahs' than 'doolalujahs'!" He got this right, as he did virtually everything else.

A tip of the hat to some of my corner posts! Most of us, in various shapes and sizes, are ordinary posts in life's fence rows. Corner posts, however, hold up far more than their share of the load. I salute them....

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 columns. Contact: 817-447-3872. Email: newbury@speakerdoc.com. Website: www.speakerdoc.com.