

The Expert

By Jim Turner

As the scene unfolded, everything was white, mixed with faint, darker striations that fashioned a dense murky fog. Seconds later the fog began to recede and a form morphed into focus. I recognized a head, the profile of a man I guessed to be well into his 70s, wearing wire-rimmed glasses and appearing to be a studious person. He might have been a professor with much to share about just how smart he was. In a short time sound rose above the lessening fog, kettle drums pounding louder and louder and louder as they heralded *the expert*. The expert what? Maybe he is the Senior Advisor to the chief muckity-muck of all network facts, figures and such and all-round brilliant advice giver.

These experts seem to be everywhere these days. Every network news station has one or more. Local, state and national governments are proud owners of multiple experts. Court rooms welcome expert witnesses for the prosecution as well as for the defense, with taxpayers funding the state's smart people. They are all proud of their status and not at all reluctant to share their knowledge, their expertise. So where do they come from? Better yet, how do I earn this status? Where are my kettle drums?

I want some kettle drums! I know some things! I know lots of things. For example, I am a first class expert in laundry doing and in lawn care. Don't just take my word for it; ask Jean. And I am an expert dog walker; ask Oscar. Neither of these jobs commands the big bucks, but it is way past time for a pay review.

My success at managing the laundry chores is stuff of family lore. I have achieved the highest level of expertise with fabrics used in making men's underwear, pajamas, socks and some other expendable items. After conducting extensive research into the subject, I have determined the maximum acceptable load levels for these items as well as the appropriate number of cups of dishwasher liquid and Clorox required for ultimate cleanliness. The pre-packaged detergent pods appear to work well, but the key to their use is to simply double the recommended dosage. The next step is critical for producing perfect laundry results. You must select the extra hot water temperature setting with all loads as this greatly enhances the stain and grime removal. Remember, it is safe to mix colors with whites only if you reduce the water temperature to medium hot. Management has politely suggested that I refrain from laundering any of her clothing, which she insists is not worthy of my expert attention. That is very thoughtful of her.

I am also an expert-expert (that is to say I am more expert than the average expert) in the discipline of yard and lawn care. The main thing to remember with lawn maintenance is to always purchase property where there is zero grass and with no place to install rolls of sod. It is vital you select a building site with as many trees as possible on a quarter acre plot of land. This will facilitate maintaining a "natural" yard. The benefits are immediately obvious, and maintenance will be minimal and very simple—and your site research time will be well spent. Once your home is built and you are settled, simply wait for the leaves to drop and all the ugly branches and twigs that have been accumulating in the yard will disappear beneath a neat blanket of colorful leaves. It is really quite pretty. For things that refuse to hide, you must be willing to put in a little second-shift time after dark. When none of your neighbors can see you, head outside and pick up as many dead limbs and junk as you can handle at one time.

Quietly make your way to the side of your property that has the tallest retaining wall, lift the debris above the wall, and gently release on the other side of the barrier. The extra debris will look like nature just favored you and not your neighbor. This method of inexpensive yet effective care is available for anyone not worried about having friends.

We have been doing some short-term traveling recently that involves driving a few hundred miles, staying in a hotel room for a couple days, then repeating the activity until we become completely disoriented. That's when we need to return home so I can put my laundering skills to work, and it is usually about the same time I have exhausted my stash of cash needed for tipping. After multiple repetitions of the routine in the previous 30 days, I have achieved the status of expert traveler. Here is a description of the average urban hotel experience: On a recent visit to our nation's capital I found our hotel on a busy street with a minimum space for unloading. There I was initially greeted by a young lady who opened my car door and asked if I wanted valet parking or self-parking. Before I could answer, she quickly explained the benefits of avoiding losing my car to a chop shop, presented a ticket with numbers to call two days before I wanted my car returned and held both the car key and the tickets firmly until she had to release them to accept a gratuity. It was then that I noticed a tall gentleman dressed in top coat and smart cap removing my bags from the car trunk and loading them on a carrier. He then rolled them inside the revolving door and held on tightly while another tall man in topcoat and smart inside hat stood ready for the handoff, which would happen only after I paid for the release of my property. Somehow Jean managed to get our key without additional funds exchanging hands. We, along with the inside hat doorman, traveled up multiple levels to our room where topcoat number two gladly released the luggage to my care in exchange for some dollars. We asked where we could locate the ice machine and the nice man offered to get it for us. Guess how I recovered the ice bucket.

In retrospect I am happy to report that all ended well after the check-in process was reversed. It is unfortunate that by the time I had reached the end of the line of those to be rewarded and found myself in front of the valet I was completely out of cash. Instead I gifted her with a cute trinket I had purchased while standing in front of the White House. I smiled and she returned a confused glare. That's when I heard the kettle drums pounding louder and louder and louder.



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