

The Art Of Doing Nothing

By JONATHAN PHILLIPS
Mega-Columnist

We leaned against the tractor, sipping a cold beverage, as the boys (the term is used loosely, as some of these gentlemen could more accurately be called codgers) unloaded the bags of seed peanuts. We lifted not a finger to help them.

As the kids chased each other around the yard, we sat or leaned on the pickup truck, watching clouds begin to fill the April sky. Some of the boys poured shots of an unknown liquid (must've been ice tea, right?) from a half-gallon jug wrapped in a paper bag.

The talk was of planting and wet fields; of women and card games and local drunks seen snoring in back seats of cars; of what I was doing back from New Jersey and for how long and why I went in the first place and people to look up in New York or Perth Amboy.

We talked softball and fistfights and friends just out of jail, until darkness was so close upon us that the final pre-suppertime chores simply would not wait another moment.

The we left.

There are those who would view a bunch of guys sitting on a truck at the edge of a field, talking trash and guzzling unknown liquids from half-gallon jugs, as time-wasters.

I see it as therapy.

Everybody has a simple, one-shot solution for the problems of our nation. Wanna hear mine? I'm gonna tell you anyhow.

I firmly believe that not enough people take the time to take a seat, lean against a tree, plop down on the tailgate, or flop in the grass and simply talk about things that may or may not be important (probably not) and tell stories that may or may be lies (probably are).

Vanceboro folks, I've said more than once, have mastered the fine art of such visiting to the point that they sometimes can dispense with the talking altogether, and simply show up at a friend's house and fall asleep.

But one must not be that proficient to realize the benefits of aimless visiting.

The thought of a gang of folks lounging around lying to each other makes some people livid. They think: Waste of time. Inefficient. Stupid. Better things to do.

Admittedly, if that is all you do in life, you're gonna run into some problems. But for relaxing the brain, easing the tension of modern life, and in general getting mind and body back into balance with the real world, such activity is, I believe, necessary and beneficial.

It doesn't matter where you do it. You can be flopped in the den, discussing the fine points of dogsled racing in front of Wide World of Sports. You can be frying fish under the backyard shed, talking dirty while your wives make the slaw inside. You can be out in the yard, interrupting your therapy to yell at the kids every three minutes.

But some people don't know, or forgot, how to do this sort of thing.

Take folks up north. Sometime during the evolution of our species, some sort of mutation took place somewhere north of Richmond, and the specimens of Homo sapiens in that region lost the ability to sit back and talk trash.

They try sometimes, they really do. You can go talk to Jimmy B, for example, about the Nets and the Phillies and the USFL. The phone will ring 16 times in 15 minutes, however, and it just isn't the same.

Sometimes they go to bars and try to relax, but

"Work"

by Lela Barrow



When we were knee-high to grasshoppers we were taught: "What is worth doing at all is worth doing well". All else is nothing. "When you do your best that is all God requires of you". Jesus Christ was a working man — he was obedient to his parents, thinking of his mother's welfare as he hung on the cross. Work is honorable — all the Great Men in life are working men. Teach young children how to work.

I know a family who taught their young children to work from early childhood. They had their chores in the home just as their parents. They were never quarreling, "Make John do this" — when they were taken to visit, they were a pleasure. Today as grown men they visit their parents bringing well behaved grand ... "Bring a child up in the way he shall go" — teach them to behave while they are young. Let them know what yes and no mean. A lady told me yesterday she had visited in a home where the children are being taught obedience and work, she really enjoyed her visit.

Here shows the opposite: Little Bobby, scolded for being naughty, was asked by his mother, "How do you expect to get to Heaven?" He thought for a moment, then replied: "I'll just run in and out, and keep slamming doors until they say, "For goodness sake, come in or stay out". Then I'll go in. (Papara).

Four things in life: "One is manhood true and good; One is womanhood noble and true; One is childlike, clean and bright; and one an altar kept alight.

We are often spoken of as a generation gap, as to the difference in age or years that we live; how time changes the way we live. We live in a much faster age now than when I grew up. The Bible tells us there is nothing new that hasn't already been. The way people are now — wearing shirtwaists, all ruffled and tucked; and shirts

Artists Under the Dome

Pianist Vincent the visiting program Phillips continues the sponsored by the state "Artists Under The arts council and the Dome" series at the Department of Com-State Capitol Tuesday, munity Colleges. The May 10 at 8 p.m. He is "Artists Under The visiting artist at Dome" series continues Craven Community Tuesday evenings College in New Bern. through May 17 in the His performance is House Chamber of The part of a series State Capitol. Admis-featuring members of sion is free.

it just isn't like being under a shade tree or down at the store, and it doesn't work as well.

It is perfectly okay to go to work and sit around talking about parties, but these people go to parties and sit around talking about their jobs.

A possible solution to this evolutionary catastrophe above the Mason-Dixon line would be to ship Yankees down south to relearn the art of relaxation, the science of visiting, and the technique of easy living.

Getting the rascals down there is no problem. But getting them out again is well-nigh impossible. The only alternative, then, is for southerners stuck in the northern wastelands to attempt to lead by example.

With that in mind, I hereby pledge to spend a portion of every day engaged in "unproductive" activity, and to do this in such a way that at least one other person is forced to listen to me and also be "unproductive."

It's the least I can do for mankind.

with belts, go back to when I was a young girl, 75 years ago. The rag-a-muffin sleeves almost came back in style, had big pleates to make them stand out large from shoulder to elbow - my sisters wore them 85 years ago.

Lela Barrow

A Parent's Prayer

Abigail Van Buren

Oh, God, make me a better parent. Help me to understand my children, to listen patiently to what they have to say and to understand all their questions kindly. Keep me from interrupting them, talking back to them, and contradicting them. Make me as courteous to them as I would have them be to me. Give me the courage to confess my sins against my children and ask them forgiveness when I know I have done wrong.

May I not vainly hurt the feelings of my children. Forbid that I should laugh at their mistakes, or resort to shame and ridicule as punishment. Let me not tempt a child to lie and steal. So guide me hour by hour that I may demonstrate by all I say and do that honesty produces happiness.

Reduce, I pray, the meanness in me. May I cease to nag, and when I am out of sorts, help me. O Lord, to hold my tongue. Blind me to the little errors of my children as those of their own age, and let me not exact of them the judgements and conventions of adults. Allow me not to rob them of the opportunity to wait upon themselves, to think to choose, and to make their own decisions.

Forbid that I should ever punish them for my selfish satisfaction. May I grant them all their wishes that are reasonable and have the courage to withhold a privilege which I know will do them harm.

Make me so fair and just, so considerate and companionable to my children that they will have genuine esteem for me. Fit me to be loved and imitated by my children. Oh, God, do give me calm and poise and self-control.

Copied by Lela Barrow

This prayer should be every parent's prayer today.

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Deadline for Articles
Monday Noon !

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