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A Columnist's Life

by  
Tom Holbrook

Writing a regular column for a newspaper is fun and opens doors to meeting all kinds of interesting individuals, usually on the golf course. In one of my latest outings my partner Don and I played with two guys from Wisconsin... which leads me to ask what do you call someone from Wisconsin... a Wisconsiner? ...Wisconsinan... Wisconsinite... Cheesehead??? Anyhow, these guys were great, if not a little out of it... mentally that is. One, a retired cop... or was it a school crossing guard... I forget, kept saying, "Remember it's L-A-T-U-S... just like lettuce but not as green." I told him I would never forget him. The fourth member's name was... and I'm not making this up... Whacko! Can you imagine giving your kid a name like Whacko... even if it did fit him to a tee. I remember running home and telling Judy I had just played golf with a guy named Whacko. She thought I was lying. Actually, his first name is Dennis but his last name is one of those Wisconsin Irish or Polish names that no one can pronounce so they shortened it to Whacko. Go figure. Seriously, these guys were fantastic golfers and fun to play with. They said the home lets them out once a week to play and then they've got to go back in. Hopefully we'll be able to play with them again even though they were way above my level of expertise.

Others who confront me seem to think just because I write for a newspaper I have an answer to all the problems facing the world and am nothing short of a mixture of Confucius and Svengali... all wise and able to control others with my words of wisdom. Admitting that I am somewhat unique in literary circles I must make a statement here that many of the stories I write should not be tried at home because... I am a trained professional.

Last week I ran into a guy who thought he recognized my face and said, "Are you the guy who writes for the Daily Sun?" I smiled at him, lowered my head in humble fashion, and did my usual "Aw, shucks... yes it's me... do you enjoy the column?" He said, "No... I just wondered why they hired you," and then he turned around and walked off. Does wonders for one's confidence and self-esteem.

Another gentleman stopped me on the street and said, "Tom, I really enjoy your columns. You always sound so wise and insightful I'm sure you can help me with a situation I'm in right now with my girlfriend." I told him I wasn't sure about that but I'd be happy to listen and let him get it off his chest. He went on to say, "We've been going together for several years and I thought things were going pretty good but her attitude seems to be changing and I'm not sure if I'm reading all the signs right." I asked him to explain what he meant about signs and he said, "Well, she recently told

me she wanted to go on a two week trip with a friend from work. She said not to worry because she would be sure and keep in touch with me to let me know how she was doing, and she's already sent me four cards and each one seemed to be pretty positive. In one she said she was miserable away from me... in another she said that having me in her life was like a religious experience, and another says she thinks about me every single day. ”

I said, “Well, it sounds like she really adores you what's the big problem?” He said, “It's that fourth card that got me to thinking everything wasn't gone so well.” “What did she say in it?” I queried. “She said that she and Bob had thought about staying another few days and she'd like to leave her things in the house until they got settled and hoped it would be alright.”

I asked to read the first three cards so he handed them to me. On the outside of the 1<sup>st</sup> card it said, *“I'm so miserable without you... (inside) It's almost like you're still here.”* The 2<sup>nd</sup> card said, *“I must admit being with you has been a religious experience... (inside) I never really knew what Hell was like until I met you.”* And the 3<sup>rd</sup> card said, *“As each day goes by I think of you more and more, (inside) and how glad I am that you're not here to ruin it for me.”* I looked at the gentleman and said, “Don't worry friend, very soon she's gonna tell you she can't be too far away from you.” “Do you really think so,” he asked. “I guarantee it,” I replied. He thanked me for my input and walked away with a smile on his face and a bounce in his step. Mission accomplished.

Speaking of guarantees, a reader asked me yesterday if the story I wrote about the golfer trying to drink from the ball washer on the course was true or not. I looked him in the eye and told him that the hot temperature in the story was true, the need for water was absolutely true, the reference to the great job the Villages Golf Staff does to keep all the golfers hydrated was true and the bit about a deranged golfer seeing camels over the sand dunes was an exercise of artistic embellishment afforded to all serious writers who choose to use it, as thought necessary.

Folks unless I tell you otherwise, and I will from time to time, don't take anything I tell you in this column too seriously... just read and enjoy the moment.

See you next week.

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