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Gatekeeper of Democracy

by
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Those of you who care... which I'm sure are 95% of you who read this column... will be happy to know that Judy and I are almost among the ranks of those deemed "Gatekeepers of Democracy." I say almost because we haven't been called to perform our duties as official bona fide "Gatekeepers," but have been told that it is a good chance we will because of the continual need for our services. What is, or are, "Gatekeepers of Democracy" you ask? They are individuals who participate in the election processes that take place around the country... and specifically here in Sumter County, FL. I would say they volunteer their services but that wouldn't be true... those who participate are recompensed not too shabbily.

As I stated, Judy and I are not official yet but we have attended the training the Supervisor of Elections requires for all who would want to be a "Gatekeeper." One just doesn't show up on Election Day and be given a hat, vest, badge, or other official identification without proper training... no-sir-eee! One must go through the paces and be certified. Seriously speaking, the training was well organized and covered potential areas of conflict with voters and other election workers. They had videos, lectures and slide shows making sure we knew how to respond to irate voters; those coming to the wrong precinct; those with changed addresses or names; those without proper identification; and those who are belligerent like me.

One of the biggest challenges election workers encounter is the individual who shows up to vote without a photo I.D. and signature verification... without which one cannot vote so be sure and carry both of them with you on the upcoming election to be held November 2nd. Judy and I both were surprised and pleased at the in-depth training we got and the number of problems that can arise on Election Day. We were also impressed with the work that the staff of Sumter County's elections office does, both in volume and complexity.

Florida was the center of National attention following the 2000 election more than anyone could have ever imagined... most of it was bad press. But, those adversities encountered at that time brought many changes to the system... most of them good... including the acquisition of top of the line voting machines throughout the state. Sumter County's staff has adapted beautifully, and sincerely tries to anticipate future mishaps and scenarios that could occur, hoping to ward off any serious problems. No one wants to be in the National spotlight anymore.

Seeing how thorough these people are in their preparation to make the elections fair and accurate truly made me appreciate this right we hold as citizens of the United States. The number

one goal for each precinct worker is to make sure the correct person votes legally and that his or her vote will be counted properly. Knowing that snafus happen from time to time it would be hoped that all potential voters will come to the polls with an attitude of patience and the knowledge that everyone there is working hard to make your vote count. And keep in mind... those workers have to be there at 6 am to get things ready so that you may get in and out as quickly as possible. If Judy and I do get the official call to come out to work we will be looking forward to seeing you folk as you come through... please be gentle with us.

I'd like to close by sharing a few private ruminations with you if you don't mind...

- Has anyone but me wondered why irons have a setting on them for "Permanent Press?"
- When you're vacuuming your floor and the vacuum cleaner doesn't pick up something as it should... do you reach down, pick it up and immediately throw it back on the floor again? I do.
- Have you ever thought that people around you think of themselves as the entire sentence and think of you as just a parenthetical phrase?
- When I hear people say their house is in walking distance to the pool I want to say, "Big deal, everywhere is in walking distance if a person has the time." But I don't!
- Judy once asked me, "Did you ever wonder why the Queen of England carries a purse... does she need identification or what?" I had no answer but you see why I am how I am.

Well, time to call it a day. Have a great week and keep smiling even though you've got that little piece of broccoli stuck in your teeth.

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