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**Happy New Year
by
Tom Holbrook**

Happy New Year! Welcome to my first column of this brand new, baby year of 2007... may all your days this year be filled with fun, good health and meaningful happenings, and isn't it exciting to know that all of us get to start it with a clean slate and we all get 363 more days to make this year the best we've ever had? For some of us that wouldn't take a lot of effort but for the rest of us we're really going to have to be creative to overcome some of the obstacles placed in our paths.

I know many of you guys will be out standing in the exchange lines of the local department stores trading in that gosh awful tie you got (do people still give ties for Christmas) for something more exciting... maybe a new belt? And you ladies will be standing in lines to ... well, ... just to be standing in lines I guess... it's something you do so well! Speaking of ties, when was the last time you guys wore a tie? There was a time, in the days of yore, I felt absolutely naked without a tie around my neck, but now I can't remember the last time I wore one. This Florida lifestyle is something else ... shorts every day, except for church or when the weather gets a little too nippy to expose our blood thinned flesh to the elements. A fantastic way to live.

Most of the guys I talk with are glad to be rid of wearing suits and ties, however, I'm the kind of guy that enjoys dressing to the nines every now and then. To me, putting on a suit and tie really turns the evening into a special event, rather than "Ho hum, just another day of retirement." Of course most of us here in The Villages eat out probably two or three times a week, or more if you don't like to cook, so it requires a really special event to demand a coat and tie... possibly a 60th wedding anniversary or a 85th birthday.

Well guys, did you get enough of football yesterday? Game after game after game of nothing but college football... wasn't it great? I know the majority of the ladies don't understand why we like to watch it so much but that's just the way we are. Aren't we blessed to have wives that will put up with our lack of courtesy when a ball game is on? Hopefully, you reward those wonderful wives with something nice for being so benevolent to our addiction to sports of all kinds. I never played football in school because I was a "band boy" (Judy's words for me,) but I was the team's biggest fan and could yell louder than anyone. I always played sand lot football and enjoyed it, even though I was only a flyweight of just over 100 pounds all through high school. I got my nose broken twice... being tackled one time and tackling another, much bigger guy and him falling on my head the second time. Hoorah!

Judy and I had a great time in the frigid north over Christmas with our families and received some great gifts, the greatest being seeing our kids and loving on our grandkids AND great-grandkids...((didn't think I was that old did you?) Nothing's more gratifying than family, unless it's more family. We got to see all 5 of our sons and their spouses, 10 of our 13 grandchildren and both of our great-grandchildren on our trip and that's a lot of loving to wallow around in. Our daughter plus spouse and three other grand children live in Orlando and we saw them the week before Christmas. All in all, a fantastic Christmas holiday was had by me and mine and the weather was really great as well. We hope yours was as happy as ours.

We are looking forward to a great New Year as well with an immediate trip, the 2nd week of January, to never visited Miami's South Beach and Key West with some friends. A great way to start the year soaking up some Hemingway mystique and gossip and just enjoying another part of this great state of Florida.

I'm also looking forward to finishing my first book in the year 2007, Lord willing and the creek's don't rise, and also singing more. I have "officially" become a member of a Barbershop Quartet that goes by the name of "Aged To Perfection." How fitting is that? Scott, Ken, and Bob are the three other members who have all sung in Barbershop Harmony Society's International Competitions and we are looking forward to making beautiful music together.

I am also going to be busy with the Villagers Performing Arts Alliance and their drive to make the new Performing Arts Center a reality. We will be getting our ducks in the row and begin, in earnest, raising the \$15 – \$17 Million it will take to build such a facility. Expect someone to be contacting you personally sometime in the near future asking you to become involved with this venture that will affect every Villages resident and members of the surrounding communities as well.

To start this New Year with a thought to chew on, please allow me to end today's column with two profound questions.

Question #1...We are all familiar with the truism "A cat always lands on its feet" but think on this.... What would happen if we were to tie a buttered piece of toast to the cat's back????

Intriguing isn't it?

Question #2... If you were to make a cow laugh would milk come out of her nose? Seems logical it should!

Have a great year and see you next week.

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