

01/01/08

“Happy New Year”

by
Tom Holbrook

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!! Welcome to the year 2008! Hopefully everyone out there did not celebrate the New Year coming in so much last night that you are groggy and bleary eyed this morning. That’s not the way to begin another set of 365 opportunities for doing good and succeeding in areas in which you came up short this past year. I know that’s not how everyone will look at this New Year, and it’s not the way I always view the coming of a New Year, but we all should. If we could see each shortcoming as just one step closer to the goal that we’ve set before us our attitudes and daily demeanor might just improve.

As far as New Year’s Resolutions go I’ve stopped declaring mine because I’m so bad about staying faithful to them. Of course, not announcing them to someone, even if it’s only the family dog, is a sure-fire way to guarantee you won’t keep them because by not declaring a goal through the spoken or written word we fail to commit ourselves and our lack of commitment will lead to our undoing. So if there is some “thing” you want to accomplish or some bad habit of which you want to rid yourself then verbally promise yourself and at least two other people... forget the dog... that you will achieve your goal. Ask those two or more people to hold you accountable by reminding you of your commitment at least once each week for the first three months, which is the time frame when we usually lose our fire for succeeding and our commitment begins to wane. Success is not guaranteed by doing this but it will sure enhance your chances to believe in yourself long enough to make it happen.

Enough philosophical platitudes for now... let me share a word of wisdom recently spoken by one of my grandsons who is six. He approached his father and asked, “Where did my last name ‘Holbrook’ come from?” My son replied, “Holbrook is my last name and it was my dad’s last name and when you get married you’ll pass it on to your sons.” My six year old grandson, evidently all too wise in the workings of modern America, immediately came back with... “Not if my wife decides the last name.” So sad... so sad.

Judy and I had a good Christmas this year getting around and seeing some friends. Prior to visiting family we had a great pre-Christmas get together with friends and neighbors at the Drakes’ home, with approximately 21 other friends and neighbors bringing a covered dish for all to partake of. John and Sally are our un-official “official” neighborhood social coordinators to keep us out of trouble and off the streets and make our neighborhood one of the friendliest in The Villages.

Besides the great food consumed we met some new friends, Linda and Dave, and a special guest Lela, from Oklahoma. Lela is the mother of our neighbor Jean and has reached the delicious age of 94 years. What a lady she is... a lively conversationalist and interested in everything those around her happen to be talking about. I mentioned to her that Jean had shown us some beautiful china plates and cups she had painted and I commented on how beautiful and professionally done they were, to which she responded, "You know, I didn't take up painting until I was 65." She said she had lived on a 320 acre farm basically all her life years and never had time to paint, "...except for a bedroom wall every now and then..." but always wanted to try it. She has returned to Oklahoma but I appreciate the opportunity to have spent time with her and added her to my list of friends.

Three children, two lively boys and a beautiful 2 ½ year old girl, kept us busy and laughing while visiting our daughter's family in Orlando for Christmas Eve and Christmas day. We really enjoyed the visit and the looks of wonderment in the eyes of our grandchildren as they surveyed the gifts that Santa had deposited under their tree while they were asleep.

Being the oldest member of a family at holiday gatherings, the patriarch one might say, has its good points and its bad points I had never considered before. The good points are: You're not asked to do any of the cooking; you're not expected to help in cleaning the table or washing the dishes; and, you can sneak off and take a quick nap and no one notices you're gone.

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