



Tall Tales from the Editor

Apple cider or D.C. lap dancers

While sitting in the nook of our living room at the old round oak pedestal table, I was admiring this table's century worth of party stains, and worn finish. Our border collies, Tuesday and Utah, were both sacked out. Tuesday had a tough morning biting at all the flying insects in the garden, and Utah was worn out from marking trees around the house. Me, I was sipping a large glass of apple cider from last fall's pressing. With each swallow, I was thinking, mmm, mmm, this tastes better than old Jim Beam. Is that a sign of age?

From the window in the nook I can look out over a large portion of our fragrant and hearty flower garden in bloom. A little farther out is the vegetable garden with the newly rebuilt cedar raised beds and irrigation system. Our tomatoes may cost around a hundred dollars a pound, but, oh my, the flavor. Besides, if I prorate the new raised beds and irrigation system over the next five decades or so, the cost of our tomatoes might drop down to—well, if I dream hard enough or drink more cider—a few cents a pound.

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On past the vegetable garden is our heritage apple orchard—the source of apples for the cider I'm drinking. This particular cider blend consists of Arkansas Black, Yates, and Golden Russet apples. I do believe it's time to refill my glass.

Outside the nook windows and to the left are two bird feeders that supply a never-ending smorgasbord show of many feathered visitors such as black-headed grosbeaks, purple finches, dark-eyed junco, Chipping Sparrows, white-breasted nut hatches, Rufus-sided towhee (they feed on morsels that fall to the ground) and a pair of Steller's jays.

For 13 or 14 years now Steller's jays have been nesting on our rain gutter downspout. This nest is conveniently located a dozen feet from the bird feeders. I don't know if it's the same jays using this nesting site year after year for I do not know how long a Steller's jay lives. I do know the jays never paste a remodeling permit from the county when they make their yearly repairs or completely rebuild their home. In

most neighborhoods the Steller's jay is classified under homeland security as a terrorist. Ask any robin that's been run out of their home by these thugs and they will tell you. Our jays, however, seem to be quite mellow. Maybe that's because like most critters around here, two in particular, they have trained me to keep the food bowls, or in this case, bird feeders, filled at all costs. No matter the price of feed, rain or shine, day or night, they are full.

Lucky for me it is jays and not an acorn woodpecker that has taken a liking to our rain gutter downspout. Over at Bill Dunlap's place is an acorn woodpecker that hammers out his calls for love on his rain gutter downspout. Bill's new buddy starts his routine at 5:00 am—an alarm clock without a snooze button or an "off" switch. As the days turned to weeks and then a month, Mr. W. Pecker's call for feather-tickling love had gone unanswered, much to poor Bill's chagrin.

One morning over coffee (Bill needed several cups), I suggested he post an online ad with the Lonely Hearts Club to find a lover for Mr. W. Pecker. You could write something up like "Hey, I'm a single acorn woodpecker. I'm looking for someone with whom to share my nuts. I have a passion for hammering downspouts at the crack of dawn." After thinking about it, you might want to scratch that last sentence. You don't want two woodpeckers pecking on your downspout every morning. So let's go with "I'm told I have a handsome red topknot and that I drill the nicest holes around. If you're looking for a family bird, then I'm the woodpecker for you!"

But, like with so many of my great ideas that I share with folks, Bill just looked at me with a "What are you drinking in your coffee, Rogers?" and changed the topic. He asked me if I've seen any good movies lately. I said, "Yep, I recently rented a B-grade movie called 'Pecker.' But before I got into my critique of this offbeat film, Bill asked, 'JD, who do you think will win the election this fall?' I said, 'Well, I can't rightly say. I do know I'm tired of the regurgitated sound bites from Laurel and Hardy. They all say 'vote for me - I'll take care of you!' I just find that one gets into your wallet from the left side and the other one picks it from the right.'"

Do I think there will be any earth-shattering changes? No. Look at the legislation our Washington, D.C. lap dancers recently passed. They're going to spend \$165 billion to finance next year's leg of the Iraq war. If history is any indication, they will spend that plus a lot more. We're being told we

are going to be replacing some stuck-in-the-12th-century tribal system with a 22nd-century democracy. I'm not holding my breath, but right here in the good old northwest, where we already have 22nd-century democracy, we are told by these same D.C. lap dancers that we are not worth spending \$23 million annually for Jackson County or \$17 million a year for Josephine County to keep our timber-dependent counties solvent. A hundred years ago, the federal government made a pact with all of Oregon's timber-dependent counties. That pact stated that 25% of the government's revenues from timber sales would go to the county to offset county expenses like schools, libraries, law enforcement, etc. The federal government isn't in the timber business anymore. Depending on your point of view that may be a good or a bad thing, but one thing that hasn't changed is the expense of running our county governments. Maybe if we placed larger tips in the G-strings of those D.C. lap dancers, we, too, might cash in on some of those government handouts called aid, or as I call it, welfare.

There was another huge spending bill passed by the House and Senate to the tune of \$290 billion called farm "welfare" aid. There is cake for almost every conceivable idea (that has nothing to do with farming) that you can think of, but not even a crumb for us lowly northwest timber-dependent counties.

Hey, not to fret if you are a large industrial factory agribusiness. You will be able to grow more subsidized genetically modified corn (Monsanto is loving that) that can be made into high fructose corn syrup. Can you say "obesity?" All that corn syrup will need a new home and it will be yours. Just try to find many canned or processed foods in your larder without this welfare product being listed in the ingredients.

Being that this is an election year, just about every hand that is stuck out begging for your tax dollars has been kissed by Congress with a big welfare smile. There is even a foreign "welfare" aid. Do you think any of those folks pay even a dime in to the U.S. Treasury?

Since we peasants here in the northwest don't qualify for county "welfare" aid, I believe it's time to have our elected county tax assessors prepare a property bill for federal lands within the counties and send it to the House of Representatives.

Here in the colony lands known as the northwest, we can't even get a bag of welfare instant rice handed out to our counties. That all got sent out under something titled Humanitarian "Welfare" Aid. One could fill pages with the redistribution of American's middle-class wealth that the government calls "aid" versus its true meaning: welfare.

Since we peasants here in the northwest don't qualify for county "welfare" aid, I believe it's time to have our elected county tax assessors prepare a property bill for federal lands within the counties and send it to the House of Representatives. If the county assessor so desired, I could help with the congressional address information.

Some of you folks probably think I'm just whining or need to cut back on my apple cider consumption. The problem for me is that I'm troubled by the plague of complacency that seems to have swept through America. For the price of a big-screen TV to watch the never-ending seasonal sporting events or the latest in canned-laughter sitcoms from a vibrating recliner with a six pack of one's favorite brew or corn syrup drink in hand, we still let the D.C. lap dancers spend and balloon the American peso on whatever aid program they choose, most of which don't do one damn thing for the taxpayer.

Well, now that that's off my chest, the dogs and I are going to go out to the orchard and check the apple crop for this year's apple cider production. I'll be needing some.



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