

# Voices: Celebrating the simple life

January 8, 2025

It's seasonal for most of us, of course. Our memories kick into overdrive, dredging up details of long-ago holidays.

In my case, Christmas Days of yore were as predictable as the sunrise. After "Santa gifts" were opened, we'd scurry across the county to Granny's house—Pawpaw's, too—for lunch and more gift openings with our extended family.

There, we'd typically exchange simple items, such as socks, hankies, neckties and cheap perfume. We all thought the "tree" fashioned from a mesquite tree limb, adorned with strings of popcorn and construction paper ornaments was plenty good. Most memorable, though, was a menu side dish, thoughts of which today cause immediate salivation.

Grandmother Newbury had a way with fried pies—peach, apricot, mincemeat and apple—cooked on a wood stove during my early years. Never have I tasted their equal, and the aroma wafting from the kitchen around 11 a.m. beckoned us to move closer, if only to get "stronger sniffs."

As these words are typed, a miniature flood is forming 'tween my teeth and tonsils.

## Turn your radio on

Back then, radio provided home entertainment. On cold winter evenings, we'd gather around to listen while scarfing down frozen radio dinners.

Commercials were simple and easily memorized. Buster Brown Shoes, for

example, opened its weekly shows with a youngster saying: “My name’s Buster Brown. I live in a shoe. That’s my dog, Tige. He lives in there, too.”

Shredded Ralston Cereal sponsored cowboy Tom Mix, urging listeners to “take a tip from Tom. Go and tell your mom, ‘Shredded Ralston can’t be beat.’”

TV didn’t show up until the mid-1950s, with most ads still simple, but often more instructive.

One keenly remembered was an instant hit, particularly during the holidays. Alka-Seltzer came up with, “I can’t believe I ate the whole thing.” Heeding such advice was—and still is—helpful.

## **Selling a feeling**

Many current TV ads induce groans and make my hair hurt. They insult, demean and offend, often defying the limits of innuendo. A few are, uh, stupid, even if clever and smile-inducing.

I’ll point out a couple—Charmin and General Motors. The former features happy bears who “enjoy the go,” dipping their toes into questionable dialog swirling in the tricky waters of bathroom humor.

For the third straight year, we’ve endured the snowy scene with dialog beginning, “I have a gift for you,” followed by, “I have a gift for you, too.” The handsome guy hands a puppy to a beautiful girl, whose whistle signals the arrival of a shiny new GM pick-up truck from atop a snow-capped hill.

He is in awe, collapsing with a lingering kiss on the front fender. In weather like this, maybe they had a tea kettle of hot water nearby to loosen his tongue frozen to the metal.

Some men might know which breed of puppy to select for their true loves,

but I doubt it.

Further, I can't imagine a woman with enough courage to purchase the "right" pick-up truck her guy'd give a "fender-kiss." Don't tell me this is "real life America" for Christmas gifting.

## **Not in my house**

The foregoing may add evidence to my being both old and eccentric. I admit to eccentricity decades before bales of AARP materials choked my mailbox.

Odds are, I'll remain resolute on some ads, perhaps as "dead certain" as Todd Still's late mother-in-law. Late in life, she posed a serious question to Still, dean of Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary.

"Did Jesus, in fact, drink real wine?" she asked.

Without hesitation, Still said it was likely Jesus did.

"He wouldn't in my house," she countered.

Closing seriously, may God's peace and grace abide with you and those you love. May you live with the undergirding assurance that the same God who has intervened in the affairs of humankind throughout history is still in charge. And may you and yours enjoy good health, good fortune and much happiness in 2025.

*Don Newbury, retired president of Howard Payne University, writes weekly and speaks regularly. This article is adapted from his regular column, 'The Idle American.'* Newbury can be contacted via email: [newbury@speakerdoc.com](mailto:newbury@speakerdoc.com); phone: (817) 447-3872; Twitter: @donnewbury and Facebook: Don Newbury. The views expressed are those solely of the author. Published by permission.