

# Live long and be happy

by Andrew Festa

A good friend of mine, on many occasions, pointed out that too many people complain about wrongs and injustices, and that not enough people suggest ways to alleviate the complaints. Too few people talk about the good they see.

We've all heard, or been a part of, conversations in which complaints fly free like hundreds of angry bees. When was the last time you heard someone propose a solution? Why, that would be like tossing a butterfly into a bee-hive.

We spend entirely too much time bitterly exposing the world's ills, a task that does need to be done. However, we spend little or no time talking about the positive things, or proposing cures or corrections for the negative.

As young children, the world is a fine and beautiful place to be. Even in the worst conditions, young children have nothing to compare against; they don't yet know something better waits for them.

Their idealistic, youthful attitudes find them delighting in the season's first major

snowstorm, or burying themselves in a mountain of leaves, or building true forts, or aimlessly playing in the neighborhood playground or the old abandoned wreck at the end of the road.

Somehow and sometime during that transitional stage between child and adult, we lose the youthful innocence and our delights are replaced by grumblings.

Does life somehow lose many of the positive things we once smiled at or in ignorance of, or do we simply, and for reasons I can't explain, lose the ability to see the good?

The media, in its ever increasing role as teacher and mentor, does not, as has been suggested to me by a communication teacher, merely reflect society, it also instructs, shapes and molds society. (For the sake of argument, I see 'the media' as a collection of mass communication channels such as radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and all sorts of advertisements; those things which reach into the minds of the multitudes.)

The most powerful of these mediums (or channels) is television. With parents fading farther into the

background, children search for other role models. This search takes them, for lack of better sources, to the media and all its negative messages. One could no doubt count the number of positive messages



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in one year of news reporting on television stations on one hand, and maybe as many as two hands of positive or morally adequate movies.

Children are taught, through the various media channels, and/or at school, and/or at home, to be careful of this cruel world, to be ever alert for the negatives within it.

Children learn at an increasingly younger age to be concerned and to be wary because there's a lot of 'bad things' and 'bad people' in the world. They learn at too early an age to complain. It's all they hear. What they don't learn or hear, or don't learn or hear well, is what to do about complaints and problems.

It's a shame so few people retain their childhood values and idealistic ways. If they did, snowstorms would bring out the smiles, a pile of leaves would be inviting, tree forts would still be built (though fancier), and there would always be time to play aimlessly in a playground.

Life is too short, (far different from anything we might have supposed,) and too full of The Living to allow ourselves to lose completely that which brought about the greatest feelings and the largest smiles: a positive outlook on life.

In keeping with my own words, let me suggest this: after you've finished reading this column, check your calendar for some free time. Set aside at least one hour per week, or more if you can, and play in the snow or the

leaves, or walk among the trees without worrying about a destination. You might want to just sit and watch the world go by from your bedroom window. Or, you could make your plans as if you were still young.

We are all still children, but most of us lock the child away at an early point in our lives and never let him or her out again.

Let the child come out; look for the positive. Live, and have fun. If you have a complaint, don't hesitate to be vocal. Once you're done speaking your mind, however, look for and be vocal with answers and ways to correct the situation.

Have a beautiful holiday.  
Have a child's holiday.  
Live and have fun.

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# Pocketbook politics a credit to nation

by Mike Royko

With a presidential election coming up, Americans have an unusual civic opportunity. Just about anyone can be a political activist.

And you can do it without sending in a campaign contribution, volunteering to stuff envelopes, making partisan phone calls, ringing doorbells or handing out campaign propoganda.

In fact, you can make an impact without leaving the comfort or discomfort of your own home.

It works this way:

Most political experts agree that the key to this election will be the economy. If times don't get much worse, or if they improve, President Bush has a good chance of being re-elected.

If the slump gets worse, and more people lose their jobs, a Democrat will have an excellent chance of beating Bush. Especially if the pink slips keep going to well-educated white collar types, who aren't accustomed to such rude treatment.

(Of course, the political experts weren't saying this six months ago. Then they agreed that bold warrior-chieftain Bush was unbeatable and wondered which Democrat

would be suicidal enough to run. That's why so many political experts are yo-yos.)

But now what's-his-name, Saddam Hussein, is old news. And when was the last time you heard anything about "Stormin' Norman," unless you are the booking agent for a speakers bureau?

The welcome-home parades are over. The yellow ribbons are gone. And if anyone in Washington is thinking about the troops, it's in terms of how to persuade them to accept a bonus to retire early and cut the the military payroll. (The smart GIs will ask: "Uh-huh. And what kind of job you figure I can get out there?")

Now it is bottom-line time. One of the oldest truths in American politics is that people vote their pocketbooks. When their 'pocketbooks runneth over, they hail the president's vision, wisdom, statesmanship and erect posture. But if they look in the pocketbook and see only lint and Kleenex, they ask how a boob like that ever stumbled into public office.

And that is how you can help shape the outcome of next year's election even before you vote.

You still don't see? It's so simple.

The polls show that even though his popularity has

slipped, Bush is still admired by many people. Not as much as when he was blowing up Iraq and making the world safe for the emir with the hound-dog face. But there are still a lot of people, Republicans and others, who believe that Bush



is the best man for the job.

Then what they should do to support Bush is spend. That's right, buy something right now. And tomorrow. And the day after. Whip out that checkbook. If you don't have enough in the account, use the credit card and par later. Your car is wheezing? Don't put more money into that clunker. Get down to the showroom and drive home in something new. As the ads say, you owe it to yourself. You deserve it.

Big-ticket items are the best. Wouldn't you like a big-screen TV? Or new furniture? Or maybe a personal computer, even though you don't need it and it will just

Then do it and help keep Bush in office. Go Christmas shopping immediately. Or order from a catalog if the weather is lousy. And don't be a cheapo -- let your loved ones know that you care enough to blow a wad.

By spending, you will stimulate the economy and create jobs. The retailer, the wholesaler, the shipper, the manufacturer -- you'll make them all happy. (Unfortunately, many of them are 5,000 miles away and speak no English, but some of it will trickle down here.)

And don't worry about getting in over your head. Debt is good. If it wasn't, why would Bush have talked about lowering credit card interest rates so people would buy, buy, buy? Remember, we don't have debtors' prisons. And if you can't handle the payments, let them repossess. You can get a new piece of plastic and start over again later.

That should be the Republican strategy. But for hard-core Democrats, it is just the opposite. Think poor.

Think cheap. Think hot dogs and beans. Think resale shops. Think putting your money under the mattress or burying it in the back yard. Well, that might be a bit extreme, so put it into something that pays interest. Then don't touch it.

But don't spend. Or spend as little as possible. Believe me, your wife will be thrilled when she removes the gift wrapping and finds a darned needle. And you will beam when you get that Christmas bar of non-scented shaving soap you always wanted.

When you see Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" on TV, cheer for Scrooge -- at least until he turns into a money-squandering fool.

If enough Democrats do that, every time one of those economic indicators is announced, it will go down by two-tenths of one percent and Wall Street will have another nervous breakdown and the pundits will shriek: "What is Bush going to do?"

And he'll say: "Indexes, not reliable. Future, bright."

And off-camera: "Barbara, doo-doo, deep."

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