

# Searching for ideal topic leaves writer wondering

Words wouldn't come when I sat down to write this essay. Somewhere through life some of you may have had a similar experience. If you didn't face anything as compelling as a deadline, you may have been lucky enough to put the assignment aside for a day or two while waiting for inspiration to strike. I didn't have that luxury.

I looked over my list of column ideas. Why not do a piece on Bill Rucks and his daily problems as top man in the administration of Detroit House of Correction? Why not write about the golf outing with Fat Bob, the Singing Plumber?

There was appeal in the thought of delving into the background of why the sainted knight of Ann Arbor, my good friend Athletic Director Don Canham, has had his wrist slapped by U-M President Robben W. Fleming and the Board of Regents.

Another idea was to suggest a class action suit on the part of night shift workers against saloonkeepers who don't give these guys the same 7-to-9 "double bubble" break on booze in the morning that the allegedly more genteel crowd gets 4-to-6 in the afternoon.

Or should I haul Guy Fawkes out again? Maybe metric conversion would be a timely subject; or how to beat the odds at Northville Downs and the Detroit Race Course. The wrestle went on for hours.

IF YOU'RE AS devoted to reading O. Henry as I am, you know of Andy Tucker from "The Gentle Gaffer" series. You may even remember Andy saying at the Blue Snake saloon:

"I'm all aflame and crammed inside with an assortment of words and phrases that have got to have an exodus. I can feel millions of synonyms and parts of speech rising in me."

At times, writers feel the same flame. Putting a harness on those synonyms and parts of speech crying for exodus, and keeping them aimed at a single target, is mind-splitting. Often there is a tendency to ride off in all directions at once.

For instance, when Andy Tucker's traveling companion in the world of bunco, Jeff Peters, replied: "On what special subject of the theorems and topics does your desire for vocabulary seem to be connected with?" it brought a worldly answer of:

through  
bifocals

Fred  
DeLano



"I ain't particular. I am equally good and varicose on all subjects." Obviously, Andy Tucker should have been an editorial page columnist.

SOMEHOW, THAT LEADS to the thought that he might have made a good athletic director. As it was, the best his creator ever did for him academically was to install him a spell as proprietor of the chair of mathematics at "The World's University," which Tucker and Peters founded.

As O. Henry put it, neither of them had enough money to be implicated in plain charity, nor did they have enough to make restitution. That's when they looked into retail philanthropy.

"Philanthropy when practiced in a business way is an art that blesses him who gives as well as him who receives," remarked Andy late in the yarn when they divided the financial spoils from the faro game which the chair of mathematics really represented.

Last week, many, many, many years later, University of Michigan regents were told by their auditors that nearly \$1 million for repairs to the stadium had been spent in the past year without seeking competitive bids. Regents also were reminded that the athletic department is financially independent from the rest of the university.

If this," cautioned Regent Gerald R. Dunn. Regent Deane Baker warned against bringing the athletic department under the same administrative framework as the rest of the university lest it "compromise the athletic program."

"We could start the whole thing sliding downhill," said Baker.

Canham was unavailable for comment. I hope he was dealing a faro game somewhere.

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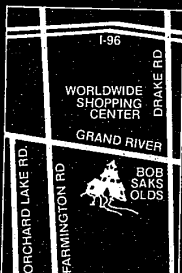


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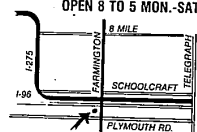
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