

Our City

The email string, with over 30 responses, I read the other night began with, "Does anyone else feel a little depressed right now?" I didn't and don't, but the string concerns me. My students say it's hard to tell my mood sometimes. Maybe that is because, like Senator Guthrie commented at National Convention, it can be hard to tell whether or not "I have a pulse" even when things go exceedingly well. Sally commented the other day about a husband of one of her friends being "sour." I asked her if others viewed me that way too, because I know I can appear to be. She said, "Not always." Great, I said to myself. I attended a National FFA Alumni meeting with Patty Porath and Lucy Murillo yesterday that was very good, but the disturbing thing for me was the facilitator's report that recently three Ag teachers had committed suicide leaving notes about the pressure of the job. Last night Sally, Leona, Reggie, Leila and I attended the American Falls Christmas Festival; which was bigger and better than last year's inaugural, but honestly seemed flat to me. Flat, not because of anything the Chamber of Commerce did or didn't do, their efforts were awesome. Flat, because of those of us who attended. It was hard to tell that folks were truly in the Christmas spirit despite the efforts of so many to help get us there. At the Christmas Concert again despite the wonderful efforts of five choirs, those in attendance seemed deflated. Last year during the Templo Emmanuel's version of Feliz Navidad the entire church stood, clapped and sang and the singing continued through the culmination with Silent Night and We Wish You a Merry Christmas. This year no one stood or clapped. Silent Night and We Wish You a Merry Christmas were sung but no one stood, me included. Tears welled in my eyes like they always do during Silent Night but for a different reason as I wondered how many were missing the Spirit of the season and feeling a little depressed. I worry about things like that.

Recently I have written about respect, the Golden Rule and honoring our veterans. Recently too, I have had to console, help and work with family members of folks who sought any early out like three of my fellow Ag teachers. As my heart breaks for these families, I know it will likely get worse. Chief Wilkinson and Patty Porath, our Court Appointed Special Advocate, tell me Thanksgiving through Valentine's Day are brutal for them; and especially the Christmas season. My experiences as Mayor these past few years would bear that out. Perhaps beyond respect and the Golden Rule it would be simpler to just "love thy neighbor."

Simple, but vastly harder. Too hard for most of us, me included. But, ya know what? For some each day is a struggle. For some the promise of tomorrow is a curse not a blessing. For some the thought of one more Christmas is not an option, for at that point all love has escaped and eluded them. The parent(s) of the hungry child who cries not because he has no gift or tree to put it under but because all he knows is hunger and abuse. He without question needs love. The parent too needshelp. True, they have to want or accept the help but if it is never given there is little cause for them to change. Yes, it could be beyond hard for some of us; it may well be beyond most of us. I am no saint, but I can do better than I have been.

During last week's City Council meeting we became a Purple Heart City after my reading of the Purple Heart Proclamation and being given a beautiful plaque by Commander Miguel Dominic. It was a very nice ceremony, one I wish more of you could have experienced. Once the weather warms a bit we will be placing our four Purple Heart City signs at the four

entrances to our community. That event will be better publicized and hopefully you will be able to attend and pay your respects to our veterans.

This past week also saw several City employees achieve various personal successes. Successes that will allow them to better serve you. Like Kurtis Workman, the Christmas Festival Master of Ceremonies, I must thank our street crew along with our Police and Fire Departments for helping to make the Festival such a success. While I hope my perceptions of the atmosphere were completely wrong those same perceptions should in no way diminish the efforts of our fellow citizens to usher in the Christmas Spirit, they did an exceptional job!

I know there are others of you doing your very best to help bring a loving spirit of the season to our community as you decorate your homes and yards. I admire and appreciate your efforts. My helpers and I will be making our annual rounds on the evening of December 13th to view your efforts to bring light and love to our community. I will publish our findings on the 23rd.

This year I would like to include a new category for recognition. That category would be the gift of love; as in love thy neighbor. If you receive the gift of love from someone you would not normally expect to, please bring a description of the gift by City Hall. Not many things in this life are free for the giving or taking, yet love and kindness are. Please give just one gift in the Spirit of this Christmas season. Raise hopes and happiness; that the least fortunate among us might know the true meaning of the Season of giving.

While St. John's filled with the sounds of Christmas, I heard the many voices blend into one as Silent Night filled the church. As I glanced at the bottom of the concert program through tear welled eyes I appreciated the author's sentiments and smiled as I sang, my heart lifting a bit as I read: "American Falls, A Unified Community." Indeed! This season, share the one true gift we are each capable of giving, the gift we can each give the other, the gift of love.

Until next week...