

Columnist shares humble, happy life

MY EDITOR asked that I write a few words about myself so readers get a sense of my background and what the future portends for this monthly column that I signed up to write.

Easy enough, you would figure, right? But my professional instincts dictate differently, requiring me to examine and describe oneself. I guess it all depends on how you want to look at things.

On the essentials, I am the proud father of two Moraga students, a gracious daughter, 11, who thankfully is a duplicate of my better/smarter half, and a son, 9, who is, remarkably (and sometimes to the chagrin of many) a chip-off-the-old-block.

Also present in my life is one sensational mother-in-law, a snack-happy Australian cattle dog, Smokey, and his always skittish guinea pig buddy, Cinnamon.

Rounding out the immediate class is my better/smarter half, a veterinarian who is an absolutely fabulous woman. Blessed with beauty and brains, she must suffer through the various observations (aka complaints) that I impose on her while she is always about to sleep.

It took me a good six years after marriage to learn that she wasn't that good a listener, but was induced to slumber upon listening to my melodious tones.

Anyway, with the families of a niece and sister-in-law, we number 16 for dinner on any given evening.

So, as you can see, in agreeing to expose myself to public ridicule to many, including at least 15 of the folks described above, for opinions perhaps best left to oneself, I seek to share with you readers my "observations."

Such pronouncement necessitates a confession that reveals me as a recovering attorney-at-law. When I first told my mother that her youngest son of 10 children was going to law school, she did not jump for joy.

My saintly mother had, early in my development, expressed the now well-established view that most lawyers were money-oriented, profiting from others' misery. Alas, she just acknowledged that my aversion to blood nixed medical school and my physics knowledge was insufficient to be a scientist.

Thankfully, unlike the media's contrived stereotypical Asian, I could argue with the best of them in the king's English, speak rather loudly with authority and write really fast. Isn't that what lawyers do?

With sufficient motivation, I was driven to rise above my modest circumstances to the Fifth Avenue skyscrapers. So, I sped through my early years, graduating high school at 16, finishing my law and business degrees at 22, and slaving at a prestigious law firm with a Park Avenue address for far too long. To my thinking, I was well on my way outta poverty to posh.

As fortunes would have it, the opportunities of the profession took me out of the comfort zone of New York City's concrete and clay two decades ago, first to San Francisco, and now to Moraga.

Again, a confession is needed: I view life from a die-hard New Yorker's perspective. While I have managed to lose the accent, I am still trying not to look at life as half empty, but it's tough.

What does that mean? Well, I am not usually at all politically (nor always grammatically) correct in my opinions, and have been unable to shed the natural cynicism that is a survival trait to persevere in New York City.

Despite it all, I try not to take myself ever too seriously, enjoying nothing more than poking fun at myself and sometimes others. That said, I wake up each morning and thank the powers up above who blessed me with the life that my family and I now enjoy in the Lamorinda area.

I'd like to share some perspective from this purportedly happy fish out of water, living a life diametrically opposed to my own very urban upbringing.

Funny events, ironic thoughts and creative ideas that inevitably occur as one passes into the middle Boomer Segment of life will be recounted here. I hope you will enjoy this column with your coffee and bagel.

I mean, where else will you learn how I cope with the frustration of 40 plus years living with two first names?

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