

COMMENTARY

A tough nut to crack

My wisest mentor in the military once dressed down a major who was taking liberties with the truth while blaming everyone else. The sage warrior asked the quivering major ... "Son, why in God's name are you trying to hide a peanut from an elephant ... and this blaming everybody else, well son, that's as silly trying to balance the world on your index finger."



Kevin Ryan

This New Year, as we dissolve into what we resolve, let's abandon both "peanut" hiding and finger pointing.

Probably some measure of our troubles this past year was not because the well of talents, treasures or opportunities ran dry. Rather, a preventable portion of dark times may have stemmed from succumbing to a common human compulsion to hide our "peanuts" as well as an addiction to finger pointing.

"Peanuts" are fibs, tall tales, cover ups, playing fast and loose with facts, verbal tap dancing or lies to self or others. We all have done it some time in our lives. Indeed, all of us have been tempted to be politicians with agendas, tell fairy tales or behave insincerely by pandering or proselytizing in order to curry favor or for personal gain.

My mentor was right in calling it silly. The world, and most folk's consciences, are filled with elephants that will not rest until the "peanuts" of deception we desperately try to hide are eventually revealed.

"Peanuts" come in all sizes and seasonings. There is cheating at work, at play, with love or lust and

cheating ourselves out of a shot at the toughest but most nutritious nuts of all to crack: integrity and heart.

"Peanut" hiding is not worth the effort. Elephants never forget and believe me they'll find our "peanuts." So before we scheme and spin our next yarn or highly stylized version of the truth, perhaps we can remember that integrity and heart are the seeds of soul building and the nuts we should be sinking our teeth into.

Before wiggling an admonishing finger at the unfair world, we could point that wagging digit at a duty; the duty to remember that integrity and heart are everyday choices and not "when it's convenient" options. Perhaps Fairfield's next building boom could be comprised of "citizen contractors" using their talents and tools of cooperation, commitment and civility to build bridges. Perhaps that mirror of self-absorption we all gaze lovingly into a tad too often could be turned every so often to reflect a little more light on others.

So, when the urgings to exclude or ostracize someone we don't agree with strike us, how about choosing to exclude our own ego? The next time we scrounge up some nails to crucify the other guy in business, politics or life, how about nailing our greed and self-centeredness to a cross? When we have a hankering to serve ourselves first at others expense, how about remembering that one day we may depend on others to serve our basic needs? Before the word "stupid" rushes from our lips, maybe we could try "may I help you?"

When telling tales and hiding our "peanuts," we always have to remember everything we said out of fear that rumbling herds of elephants will charge us. Even the smallest of "peanuts" can sooner or later provoke such beasts.

So this year, let's pass on the "peanuts," not tease the pachyderms and point our fingers at a path of integrity and heart. Let's make it a new year, a Happy New Year.

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