

A GOOD DEED DESERVES AN EVENING IN A MOTEL

9/23/97

Many of you have often heard me quote Claire Booth Luce's famous, "No good deed ever goes unpunished." It has been an invariable constant as I stumble through life each day. I thought this was just another in a long string of many.

It began as many of them have with an innocent phone call from an old friend. Tim and Maxine Roberson were our neighbors for three of the happiest years of our lives. Our friendship was the most compelling reason it was so. It started in 1967 when we left Old Forge to live in the Cortland area.

We had not seen each other for at least 20 years. His inquiry as to whether we would be home on the morrow was countered with an affirmative response. They accepted our invitation for supper and stated their intentions to spend the night at a motel.

After I hung up, it occurred to me that the next day was the start of the annual Fire School. Certain they had little chance of finding a vacancy, I took the liberty of securing one for them. It caused me no undo concern or surprise to learn they already had reservations as it was par for the course. Although I am sure with the demand it would have been acceptable to cancel, I had already paid and typically was not about to admit I had done it again.

Most of the talk was of our children and after we had both got over the hard part of informing each other of the details of the child we had lost, settled on the grandchildren.

The women then embarked on discussing every last detail of every indiscretion neither of the men indulged in. When it was over I was pleased to learn the worst thing I was guilty of was sampling some hard cider when we went to a neighbor's to buy potatoes.

The farmer was famous for and proud of his cider and since Tim drank nothing stronger than milk, I hated to disappoint him. I do not recall its quality, but was informed from my reaction that it was at least potent.

Another of our neighbors was good for many laughs. He was an engineer with Ithaca Gun Company, and he and his wife were starting a gentleman farm. His wife directed the operation, much to the joy of the local veterinarian. Her stock was selected from local auctions and her heart led her to the scrawniest, runny-eyed calves in the bunch.

Her husband fastened nametags around their necks with parachute cord in spite of my admonishments that it was dangerous for the animals.

Driving by shortly after, I spotted one in the pasture, feet up, bloated, with the cord twisted in a power pole guide wire. As I appraised him of the situation, he moaned, "Oh no, not Agnes." As I cut the cord and the pressure was released out her throat, she involuntarily mooed plaintively and he exclaimed, "Thank God she's alive." And so it went.

To make a long story short, the whole episode of the motel turned out to be not such a bad deal. Although we felt a little guilty about possibly depriving someone of a room, I assure you my wife and I made good use of it and it was worth every cent. To be honest, I am sure in the back of my mind I figured it might turn out that way.