

YOU CAN HAVE MY HALF OF SPECIAL WINNING NUMBER

January 13, 1998

There are several millionaires floating around out there who should be thankful I am not a gambling man. I lost my last \$15 in a crap game some 52 years ago in the Army. It was my second and last attempt to parlay a meager investment into big money.

The first was during Sunday school at the Congregational Church in Phoenix, New York. Me and half a dozen other miscreants were discovered during services gambling with our collection plate pennies. Deacon Candee summarily sent us home and you would have thought the consequent conclusion would have discouraged me from ever following the devil's way again.

As you have just learned, it did not and I lost what to me at the time was a great deal of money. I like to think that I learned my lesson and, for the most part, I have. I no longer gamble in the truest sense of the word. I would be less than honest, however, if I did not admit to purchasing a single lottery ticket on occasion. Reflecting on that, I am reminded of the time I left a \$25 Cross pen on the counter after purchasing a ticket in Lowville. Never did get the pen back or recover its cost either.

I received three voluminous envelopes this past week from three separate and distinct scam outfits with a single purpose – to relieve me of my money.

The one from Publishers Clearing House was liberally sprinkled with several ominous connotations; Rush Priority, Express Class, Confidential Documents Enclosed and Urgent were highlighted in large, bold, color coordinated print all over the back of a 6 x 11 ½ inch envelope. The front was splattered with some of the same messages in addition to the following: Dated Material, Confidential Documents Enclosed and Methods of Service, to wit: Express Delivery, Overnight Delivery, Dangerous Goods (extra charge) Dry Ice, Foam Packing, Extra Packing, 9 a.m. Delivery, Sunday Delivery, Holiday Delivery, and finally a box checked "Hand Delivery." "Open Immediately" "Instant Millionaire" and "Confidential Dossier" were prominently displayed across the front of the 9 x 12 Reader's Digest Millionaires Club envelope. The back also was appropriately labeled with eye-catching messages.

Ed McMahon and Dick Clark topped them both with their notice from American Family Publishers. They announced that it was down to me and one other person in New York in a race for \$11 million. We were both issued the winning number; whoever returns it first wins it all. I will not bore you further with the various and sundry enticements enclosed in all three envelopes. They all share one common thread, other than insulting your intelligence. Their only purpose is to get your money.

The several people over the years who have sent their half the the winning number back are welcome to my share. It's my way of being a nice guy. We are all victims of advertising in one form or another and at times it's impossible to avoid.

To make a long story short, I agree with George Orwell's description of advertising: "Advertising is the rattling of a stick inside a swill bucket."