

JUST THE FACTS, PLEASE, FALLING WHERE THEY MAY

March 9, 2004

I enjoy writing this column, partly because I like to provoke thought and not so much to promote a personal agenda; I am interested in learning if I may be wrong in some of my assertions.

On the other hand, I sometimes grow weary of exploring social issues and would rather reflect on the joys of everyday life not hinged on world events. It's hard for me to determine in which direction my whims will take me. I was at one of those junctures this morning before I started this column.

I thought about it all day yesterday and still had not resolved the quandary when I got up this morning. It's Sunday morning and another of a series of gorgeous days after a prolonged spell of depressing winter weather. It's a day one dreads to be cloistered indoors.

The subject of an earlier topic, our new pup Dutch, dictates an early rising. After attending to his needs I still had plenty of time to continue my ruminations. The first one that entered my mind was Dutch himself. He has been with us two and one half months and it suddenly dawned on me that he is the first hunting dog I've ever owned that's won itself over to my wife's side. His first duty after being let out of this sleeping enclosure is a wake-up call to his chief benefactor. Oddly enough, it is taken in the spirit it is given – something I have never been able to duplicate in over 46 years of wedded bliss! After the few moments it took for that to sink in, I found I was still faced with a dilemma.

I have found reading to be one of the best sources for inspiration and my attention soon turned in that direction. It was not until later, after the Sunday paper arrived and I was able to make a comparison between two columnists that I came to a conclusion. They were both black authors on the same topic: Facts.

The first was by one of my favorites, Thomas Sowell. It was a three-part series of articles entitled *Equality, Inequality, and Fate* in the February 25th issue of the *Conservative Chronicle* (subscriptions were given to both the Old Forge Library and the Town of Webb School by a personal friend of mine in the community. They should be available to anyone reading this who may be interested.)

Apparently some of Mr. Sowell's readers took him to task for statements he had made in one of his previous columns. It was that, "black students usually do not perform as well in school as white students or Asian American students." He went on to point out this is a verifiable fact, shown by innumerable studies over the years by many scholars of various races.

They were some of the most insightful and honest words I have ever read. What makes them so credible is that a nationally recognized black journalist writes them.

The second column was by Leonard Pitts, Jr., and was on the opinion page in the February 29th Sunday edition of the *Utica Observer-Dispatch*. Mr. Pitts is a regular columnist with the *Miami Herald*. In my opinion, his dissertation was not nearly as concise or broad as Mr. Sowell's, or nearly as convincing.

Thomas Sowell prefaces his opening article with an observation made over 200 years ago by John Adams: "Facts are stubborn things, and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts or evidence."

Mr. Sowell convinced me he understands what real facts are. Mr. Pitts does not. I hope I have provoked your thoughts enough to induce you to see if my analysis of their respective comments is right. In any event, they both made my day.

Want to check the articles for yourself? Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Mart Allen, P.O. Box 185, Thendara, New York 13472 – (before they close it!)