



Life, Liberty and Library: Essays On Our Times - 1993 Thru 2015

Bert Nemcik

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The following selected articles appeared in the Forest Press in my column entitled, Life, Liberty, and Library. Alex Badenoch, who originated the column many years ago, died in 1993. Before Alex died, he and I corresponded frequently. Alex told me that he was retiring from the newspaper business and wanted me to take over the column. I told him that he could not retire yet. He said he was about to do so. What he and I both knew by that time was he was not going to live much longer. Alex had Lou Gehrig's disease. He suffered quietly, and when he died, many people missed his cheer, Scottish wit, and homespun knowledge. Though Alex never went to college, he was an exceptionally well-read man. His column was not just a misnomer, or some cutesy title. He read voraciously and encouraged others to do so. By trade, Alex was a lumber grader. He traveled all over the forests and worked for many people, but always with trees. Each and every week for nearly six years, he wrote his weekly column. As his illness destroyed his energy, he withdrew from life, and refused to write anymore. I chastised him in one letter saying that many of his loyal readers were upset that he was not contributing any articles to the paper. He wrote back to me and said that he was not well. However, he did write one more story before he died. I guess my words did affect him. I wrote and thanked him. I began my column with a tribute to Alex. It is the only reference to him, and yet, his work is still inside of me. Many times when I sit down to write, I sense his presence near me. I am not Alex. I don't possess his wit. Nor am I Scottish. However, I am who I am, and when he told me to take over for him, I believe he trusted me to do my very best. With that in mind, I proceeded. What I want you all to know is that these stories are just like Alex's - straight from the heart. Some are humorous and some serious. Each is an attempt to tie together the themes of life, liberty, and library. Sometimes I succeeded in accomplishing this. Other times I guess I fell short. Over the past nine months, many ideas for stories flowed through me. I was never sure when I sat down at the keyboard what might appear. Perhaps, that is what makes this type of writing so much fun. Some were spontaneous inspirations that flowed from mind to keyboard without much editing. Others were mulled over for many days, weeks, often months, before I was prepared to write them. Nothing pleases me more than the opportunity to create something that did not exist before. In the writing is the creation of a new point of view, a new perspective, and a new notion how things just might be. I hope that as you read them, you are encouraged to live a little more fully. I hope that you cherish your own measure of liberty. Most of all, I hope that references to the many works cited in the stories prompt you to make a trip to the library and read them. Peace and love, Bert

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