

"Writing the truth
as I see it;
trying not to
offend
those who will
disagree."

The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



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Values and common sense

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Do you ever wonder about our lost values, our disappearing common sense? Where is our foundation, our cornerstone, showing us the values that are America? Our foundation is crumbling and a cornerstone is hard to find. And we have fewer anchors to look to for help understanding what we are, and what we should aspire to be.

Nearly 30 years ago, I met such a man, such an anchor, although I did not realize it at the time. Our first meeting was in the emergency department of Bannock Memorial Hospital. He was a bit confused when I very kindly, but firmly, asked him to please read, and sign, about 500 pages of consents. With a boisterous voice, he suggested that might be excessive; I suggested it made a great deal of sense.

Through these years of our friendship, we have developed a heartfelt respect for one another. I found myself admiring this man who could approach his work with the values of justice, mercy and grace. Justice—getting what you deserve; mercy—not getting what you deserve; and grace—getting what you do not deserve.

Moreover, he handed these out with wisdom and common sense, knowing when each of these values applied. I saw the true greatness of this man when I tried to help a young person who was in trouble. I watched my friend work. I was in awe. He did not need to know

all that he did about this person. He did not have to care as he did.

He had well-defined rules he could opt to follow. Why was my friend devoting this much time and attention to one person? Why was he wasting his time listening to my arguments; why was he even tolerating my arguments? He knew I was wrong. He knew he was right. But, nonetheless he listened and thought and worried about what was best for this person.

His job was justice, but he saw it as more. He saw an even greater duty. I watched all that is good about this country's values as he diligently decided justice, mercy or grace. Mercy was out. This young person had committed too many wrongs. Justice would be the safest bet. No risk of second-guessing. No risk of embarrassment. No angst of interjecting a human being into the decision.

His answer to this young person? "I have known and respected this man for nearly 20 years and for reasons I cannot understand, he has decided to lay his reputation on my desk for you. You will be allowed to do what Dr. Bosley requests." The young person changed her life. My friend took a chance. He changed a life. He saved a life. That day I witnessed grace.

Many years later, working with another person in trouble, my friend gave a wonderful lesson on common sense; common sense

applied in a fashion that caused me to smile with admiration. My friend repeatedly asked this person to sit quietly and listen. He even offered this person the opportunity of a very clear verbal education. Lacking in judgment, this person decided not to listen, instead erroneously assuming challenge was the best approach. He could not have been more wrong.

This person still learned the value of sitting quietly and listening, which he did for the remainder of his time working with my friend; although it took a novel, common sense use of duct tape over his mouth to finish the important lesson of sitting quietly and listening when told to do so.

Values and common sense.

My friend? Retired Judge Peter D. McDermott. We need more Peter McDermott's in this world, more values, more common sense.

When most of us retire, we will not have excelled as the judge did. But he is a model, a goal, a reminder of what we can do. Thankfully, we occasionally have the privilege of knowing a Peter McDermott who reminds us. Thank you Your Honor.