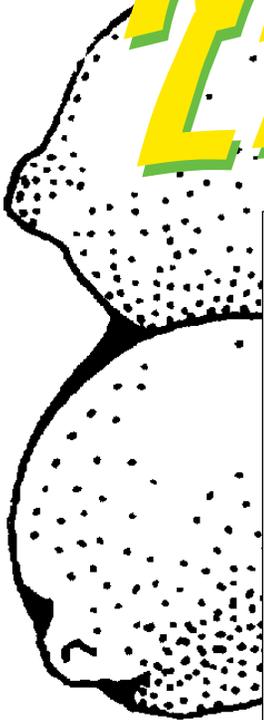


MAKING LEMONADE



WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT just about every spring around these parts is windy, this spring has been particularly so. It did little good to make my annual after-winter sojourn around the property to pick up the branches torn away by winter ice and snow. It seems like every day of gusty winds brings even more down upon the lawn—and more branches to get chewed up by my mower and dull its blades.

Perched atop a valley, the wind gets a good cut at us straight out of the northwest, the direction from which most of our weather comes. City-dwelling visitors customarily remark at how much more windy it is out here, compared to what it is within their town.

My good wife and I have differing opinions on the wind. The harsh, persistent wind bothers Linda's ears, and its relentless onslaught shortens her temper and makes her just a little crazy. In contrast, while I may have to struggle to keep the hat atop my head when the wind blows, I welcome it as a friend—primarily because it keeps the flies and gnats away from my face and neck. Those little guys can *really* make you crazy.

Perspective is all. To this writer frogs and toads are rubbery nuisances that leap out and startle, but Linda delights in them for their consumption of bad bugs in the garden. Finding one in the drive, or out in the yard, she will lovingly transfer it to a new home in one of her gardens. And one time as I was about to pull an imposing weed, Linda stopped me by explaining that it should remain in place because it attracted *beneficial* bugs to the garden.

Go figure.

Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you *to do* what is proper, yet for love's sake I rather appeal *to you*—since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my

imprisonment, who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me.

Philemon 1:8-11

To Philemon, his master, Onesimus was little more than a runaway slave, but to the apostle Paul he was a friend and brother in Christ. Same person, two perspectives.

After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, *and see how they are.*" Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.

Acts 15:36-39

To Paul, John Mark was a disappointment, someone who had let them down during a previous mission by bailing out when things got tough. But Barnabas ("son of encouragement") saw the potential in the young disciple, and chose to encourage him.

And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage. When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.

Acts 28:15-16

His friends and comrades bemoaned his imprisonment in Rome, chained to a soldier under house arrest. But the apostle Paul saw the jailing as an opportunity to spread the gospel to the gentiles of Rome—even into the emperor's palace. What would have been to many intolerable company, was to Paul a captive audience for the Good News.

It is up to us, really. Perspective is all.

