

We are dumber than Canadians

Bill Hall/Lewiston Tribune

Must we continue to leave the impression that most residents of the United States are dumber than a Canadian?

I bought some note cards at the store the other day and received two cents in change. I almost decided to yawn and walk away, leaving those two pennies on the counter. Technically, pennies are worth nothing.

I bought cards because, at my age, notes to myself are a handy way to record all the knowledge a person forgets at an age when some of his marbles are missing. Between smart phones and note cards, we older folk have two ways of keeping track of confusing things like how old we are, what our PIN number is at the bank and what our name is. Mind you, I'm not saying I have forgotten my own entire name, but there are moments when I forget my middle name.

It's not that I forget my middle name every day, but my middle name always has been socially useless and therefore forgettable. As I recall, my middle name is Duane (sometimes pronounced in deep Southern English as "DOO-Wayne."

Or maybe my middle name is "Alene." But that's my mother's middle name? So I say, if you can't remember your actual middle name, then choose a new one. Sometimes that's what I do. Granted, "Alene" is a ridiculous name for an aging man, but it's better than DOO-Wayne any day.

Sometimes a person my age has to fight back when it comes to annoying names. For instance, some of those charge card reading machines ask us to sign our names when buying something. Unfortunately, a few merchants provide us with exhausted devices that make our own signatures - our own names - a squiggly disaster.

When I sign with one of those devices, the signature is often so distorted by the whacked-out machine that it doesn't matter what my name is. It's not going to be legible no matter what I try.

Roy Rogers, for instance. I have used that actual name as a way of urging negligent merchants to come up with better equipment.

It was in that vein that I got to talking the other day with a friendly store clerk whose own mirth and mine were stimulated to laughter when he handed me two cents in change.

For what purpose? Both the clerk and I saw the silly side of useless pennies. Two cents is essentially nothing. And so are our American leaders who will never abandon the penny.

The clerk told me Canada is doing away with pennies. Canadians see no use for such a thing, except perhaps having another reason to laugh at something U.S politicians are afraid to do.

Of course, you don't have to be a Canadian to laugh at our alleged leaders. So laughing was what I did. When I got home, I told Sharon how much change I had left over from my card purchase. She was underwhelmed and joined in the giggling.

Contrast that with the Canadians whose lawmakers have decided to put pennies out of their misery.

Oh, there was once a time when a penny did have some worth and even a little respect. A penny in my childhood was worth something - back when Roy Rogers fought for justice and common sense.

Then there came a tough year for our family. But somehow, Beulah Alene Hall, our mother, would put a smile on our little kissers. My brother Bob and I were given a quarter to share. We went to the movies - 12 cents for Bob's ticket and 12 cents for mine.

That left the noble penny, which we used to buy a small package of candy with four pieces of taffy inside - two for Bob and two for me. That was the rough equivalent of a movie and a box of popcorn.

However, that was before the penny died. That was while there was still something sane about fussing over a penny.

That was also a time when we and the Canadians were both eager to be served by a coin that was still useful. That was before any of us on either side of the border scoffed at two cents.

But now we once again have U.S. leaders whose notions look silly next to Canadian reality.

Sure, the penny coin is worthless. But Canadians are still good as gold.

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