

TEXAS LIARS CLUB

CEDAR CROSSING CHAPTER

I met Pastor Fred in his office on Friday night. This was the first chance that he and I have had to attend one of these meetings together. When we go, which is not very often, I attend the meeting in Cedar Crossing, and he attends the meeting in Profitville. Tonight, however, because of the big-name guest, Cedar Crossing had to have a much larger hall, and St. Peter's large room fit the bill. Our aim is always to offer our spiritual guidance to anyone needing it, keep abreast of our members attending, and occasionally pick up some new material for sermons.

Neither the Cedar Crossing Chapter nor the Profitville Chapter are major players in the movement, and usually the subject matter leans toward the amateurish, but tonight we have a true professional, Senator Randolph Clivewell, with us. Naturally, we do not wear any clerical attire to these meetings as we do not want to influence the participants unduly or make them feel uneasy. Sitting mid row and about halfway down to the stage, we

could feel the excitement in the air. As the appointed hour neared, it looked like it was going to be a standing-room-only crowd. President Billings rapped his gavel for the meeting to start.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to call this meeting of the Texas Liars Club, Cedar Crossing Chapter, to order,” said President Billings. “I would like to thank Pastor Fred Anderson and St. Peter Church for allowing us to use their fine hall on this momentous occasion. Since we have so many guests with us tonight, we are going to dispense with attendance and move straight into old business. Mr. Secretary, would you read the minutes from our last meeting, please?”

The secretary spent a couple of minutes with the legalities and then moved to the featured story for the last meeting, which went like this:

Pastor Schmidt recently spent a couple of vacation weeks visiting relatives at various locations around the country. He always tried to stop at the local church that his relatives attended and introduce himself. The first church he stopped at was in Denver, Colorado. He met the pastor, introduced himself, and asked the local pastor a question.

“I noticed that gold phone on the wall in the narthex with the sign saying ‘\$10,000 per minute’. What is that exactly?”

“It’s a direct line to God up in heaven,” answered the pastor.

Pastor Schmidt just kind of nodded and later said to himself, “Amusing.”

The next relative Pastor Schmidt visited lived in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Oddly, he noticed the same gold phone with the same sign saying \$10,000 per minute at the local church. The same scene occurred at Enid, Oklahoma and Kansas City, Kansas. Pastor Schmidt wondered if they were really that far behind in Cedar Crossing that they didn’t have one of those at St. John.

The last stop on his vacation was in Dallas, Texas, where his sister lived. As usual, he went to the local church and saw the same gold phone, but this time the sign was different. He immediately sought out the pastor and asked him a question.

“I’ve been seeing these gold phones in churches all across this country and they all say \$10,000 per minute for a direct call to God in

heaven, but your sign says 25 cents per minute. Why is it only 25 cents per minute here?”

“Oh, that’s easy,” said the minister. “You’re in Texas now and it’s a local call from here.”

A rousing round of applause followed, and the secretary concluded by saying, “I’d like to say Pastor Arnold Schmidt of St. John wrote this ...”

A voice about mid row, halfway down from the stage yelled out, “I object.”

“As I was trying to say before someone interrupted me,” replied the secretary. “I’d like to say Pastor Arnold Schmidt of St. John wrote this, or I could say we don’t know who the author was, but this is a liars club, so it probably doesn’t matter who I say wrote it.”

Disclaimer addendum:

My objection is not rooted in any dishonor at an association with this excellent fabrication. I lay no claim to the originality of the lie. It is, in fact, a well-known lie that has been around for a while. A good lie must be widely disseminated and repeated regularly to maintain the title of well-known. The

membership of the Texas Liars Club – Cedar Crossing Chapter is happy to be a part of this process. The truth as to the original author is rather murky, and the truth is seldom covered in this setting. So, kudos to the author for a lie that has withstood the test of time.

Rev. Arnold Schmidt

The president then asked for a motion to accept the minutes as read. Receiving a prompt second and approval, the president moved on.

“And now, ladies and gentlemen,” said President Billings. “For our new business tonight, we are blessed to have a true professional among us, the Honorable Senator Randolph Clivewell.” The walls of the hall literally shook from the thunderous applause. “It’s all yours, Senator.”

“Thank you, President Billings,” said the legislator. “My dear constituents, it is with all humility that I stand before you tonight.”

Somewhere in the back of the hall, someone yelled out, “Liar.” And the house roared.

“Why else would I be here?” countered the senator. “My colleagues in the Senate send their greetings, many wishing they could be here with me tonight, were it not for the heavy burden of having to read legislation to know what’s in it before passing it. Just last week, I sponsored a bill that gained rare bipartisan support. The ‘Wind Conservation Bill’ is now established law.”

“What’s in it?” yelled out someone.

“My dear friend, I’m glad you asked. Except for some funds for a snowboarding school in Florida and a research project on why some Major League baseball players hit more home runs than others, we felt that we needed to monitor the amount of wind being consumed by small family farms across this great land. This legislation gives much needed authority to the Department of the Interior to monitor farms with six or more windmills on their property. During periods of low wind activity, the Department can require that the owner of said windmills turn off a maximum of half of their windmills during such calmer days in order to conserve our precious natural resource of wind.”

A smattering of applause came at first, followed by a slight pause—as if the crowd needed time to contemplate what the senator said—but then ended with a heartier response.

“Furthermore, last week, the Honorable Senator Barron asked me if I would co-sponsor a fiduciary bill to increase the funding for and expand the scope of the ‘Cognitive Charities Fund of the Senate’. I told him his request greatly moved me and that I would certainly co-sponsor it.”

“What’s in it?” yelled out someone.

“My dear friend, I’m glad you asked. The terrible plight of an extremely poor and downtrodden family inspired this bill in Senator Barron’s home district. There were eight children and two invalid grandparents in the family. Sadly, the father had just passed away, and the mother had just contracted a rare and usually fatal disease. While they barely got enough food from the local church pantries, there was no money to pay the rent. They were in danger of being turned out into the streets in frigid weather unless someone could come up with the \$600 to pay the rent due. Fortunately, this legislation passed, closing a loophole in the law,

and allowing the Senate to use your precious tax dollars to pay the rent and save this family. We owe a great debt to Senator Barron for getting this through. And to show how miracles do indeed happen, if Senator Barron hadn't been the landlord of their property, we would have never known about this family.”

That last one was probably true, but in a liar's club even the truth can sound like a lie.

“My friends, the great Milton Friedman once said, ‘If you put the federal government in charge of the Sahara Desert, in five years there'd be a shortage of sand.’ Well, I am sponsoring legislation to fund a special task force within the State Department to address that issue.”

“How much is that going to cost?” yelled someone from the back of the room.

“My estimate is only eighty billion, give or take a few billion, depending on some additional input from some select constituents in this fair district.”

“Boondoggle!” yelled numerous people.

“Yes, I am confident that with the Saharan Sand Depletion and Boondoggle Act, we can accomplish Mr. Friedman’s assessment in three years instead of five.”

On and on it went. Senator Clivewell has great speaking endurance, as he is a veteran at the filibuster. And, of course, his position supplies him with great material. When it was over, I said good-night to Fred, and we agreed to share notes at another time.

On the way back to my car, I laughed frequently to myself when I thought about some of the things said. I have to admit, in one way, it is pure fun. Nobody goes to one of those meetings expecting to believe anything, for they are clear-cut in the handling of truth and are “As Advertised”. In real life, they often advertise the truth as being clear-cut, yet it proves to be more of a tragicomedy version of what I heard tonight. It seems I am always saying to myself after watching the news, “If it wasn’t so pathetic, it would be funny.”

As I approached the car, Ronnie Carter caught my attention.

“How would you like to have that big a crowd every Sunday morning, Pastor?” asked Ronnie. “I think we should have a church service at our next Texas Liars Club – Cedar Crossing Chapter meeting.”

I refrained from endorsing any part of Ronnie’s suggestion ... There was too much truth in the thought.