

August 11, 2014

MISSISSIPPI

Ten years ago, we only had two grandchildren in Mississippi - we have five now. I realized that if I wanted to share a bed with their grandma, on a regular basis, I would have to do it in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. We bought a little house, one block off the Gulf, and set about remodeling it.

I didn't know much about Mississippi, except the state was last in about all the lists of everything. In education; only 64.3% graduate high school, and poverty, the poorest state. 20.1% of families are officially below the poverty line. A strange thing happened while we were remodeling: we fell in love with Mississippi, and moved our official residence here.

We kept our condo in Atlanta, and it was a good thing, because three months after we moved into the remodeled house, Katrina flooded it. Our younger daughter and two grandchildren moved in with us in Atlanta, and she presented us with another grandchild in the year that it took us to rebuild in Ocean Springs.

Through the years, some of my friends made little jokes about Mississippi being last in everything, but now we are first in at least two categories. In 2012 we overtook Louisiana on the Wall Street Journal's most crooked state's list. A new Fortune Magazine list came out this year, and we are maintaining our position on top. Fortune published a study by Indiana University, but I think it is flawed. They used the percentage per capita of how many public officials have been convicted and gone to jail. Illinois is number four on the list, and although a lot of high-profile politicians are serving time there, most don't get charged and instead become Mayor of Chicago or President of the U.S. They probably are number one, by a wide margin, if the truth was known.

Indiana U estimates that corruption costs each citizen in the top ten most crooked states \$1308 annually. I have nine citizens in my immediate family living in Mississippi. Oh well, it's probably worth it to help the elect have better lives.

In 2013 we dethroned another state. West Virginia had held the obesity crown for three years, and we wrested it from them. 35.4% of Mississippians are overweight, compared to Montana, the last on the list, where just 19.6% are overweight. I didn't know we had starvation in the U.S. We ought to send some fried chicken, collard greens, banana pudding, and other southern fried cooking to fatten Montanans up.

I am making fun of myself, because I don't know whether Mississippi has adopted me, but I know I have adopted Mississippi. I call our town "Mayberry on the Gulf", and I love it here. It's a small town, but surprisingly sophisticated. (If you have read up to here, you know that my sophistication bar is not very high.) Our house is surrounded by retired military officers, and a group of retired airline pilots get together most mornings in the best donut shop in the world. There are plenty of people to hangar fly with. The city

has restaurants with the best hamburgers, pork barbecue, and fried chicken that I have ever had. So they are more than likely the best in the world also.

But, I much as I love the state, our recent U.S. Senate runoff opened my eyes to the fact that the Republican Party is just as corrupt as the Democrats. And I'm starting to see just how corrupt our state is. The GOP has a propensity to "snatch defeat from the jaws of victory." I am going to hold my nose and vote for Thad Cochran, but many Republicans are angry, and some of them will stay home. Mitch McConnell, John McCain, Haley Barbour, et al. showed how slimy they are when they panicked at the prospect of an outsider unseating Senator Cochran.

The U.S. evangelical Christians are a shrinking breed, but if the GOP doesn't get them out to vote, they can't win a national election. If the evangelicals would have turned out in numbers for Mitt Romney as they did for George W. Bush, Obama wouldn't be President.

Bush is a professing Christian - so is Jimmy Carter - but that is not enough to make a person a good President. I would like to ask the evangelicals who stayed home, rather than vote for Romney, if they would like a Mormon or Muslim to be President. I don't know whether Obama is a Muslim or not, but I know he is not a Christian.

Our President is in semi-retirement. He is spending his time on Air Force One, going on golf trips, and attending fund raising dinners. Some think he has checked out, because his poll numbers are so low that he cannot be effective. Quite the contrary; Saul Alinsky would be proud that his devotee has accomplished most of what he set out to do. He has proven Alinsky's theories.

He has taken over health care, has opened the southern borders to take in hundreds of thousands of future democratic voters, and he is destroying the economy. Is it any wonder that he is vacationing most of the time.

We are a failing country, and kicking the Democrats out will slow the fall, but it won't stop it.

Only a spiritual revival will.