

DEAR FRIENDS

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Greetings:

Four tiny white fluffy ducklings. Our neighbors brought them home to raise in their backyard. In a short while - a matter of weeks - the ducks were full grown and full bodied. Discreetly penned and screened from view, and from neighborhood dogs and cats, only the quacking let us know the ducks were there.

Came the day for the first duck to be slaughtered for the dinner table. Which one? The ducks were quite similar in size and appearance. Our neighbor had a ready answer. He would take the one which quacked most and loudest.

Therein lies a tale. Had that duck been less noisy, he might not have been selected as the victim. Quacking the loudest led to his doom. Was that a signal to me? I am a kind of quacker - making more noise than most folk about matters like tax inequities - inquackuities; or preferences to copper - quapper - mines; or about inadequately - inadequackly - regulated utilities; or mediocrities - mediquackrities - in high places - often at big salaries and shoddy performance.

In society, a quacker is called a dissenter. On the other side of the globe, one like Solzhenitsyn or Sakharov is lucky to escape incarceration in a Siberian labor camp. By sheer luck, he may be able to emigrate and address a Commencement at Harvard. At present, we don't have any outstanding quackers - dissenters - here. In the 60's, in LBJ's day, the highways and byways were full of them - even made LBJ figuratively climb the wall. It carried over into Tricky Dick's term. He schemed to get rid of dissenters even if it meant circumventing the Constitution he had sworn to uphold. We have no major league quackers today, unless we dub Jarvis-Gann so for the Proposition 13 victory in California.

There is plenty to quack about. Since we are slaughtering ducks, it brings up the matter of meat for the dinner table. Meat prices lead the soaring food prices in our zooming inflation. Why let ourselves be trimmed? Why do we swallow the pap about reduced size of herds with a 2-3-4 year cycle needed to breed animals for market? Why not turn to ducks - ready in a few weeks - or chickens, turkeys, rabbits until prices recede to affordable levels? Let's quack, loud and clear.

We must quack about swollen budgets at all government levels - taxes rising and no adequate safeguards to assure that the funds go where they should instead of to poverticians, poverty pimps and program predators.

Let us quack about a deadhead Dept of Energy which muddles along instead of spurring and speeding the production of domestic energy in the many different ways that are possible here. To increase our own supply and have less need for oil imports that drain \$45 billions a year - a disaster to our economy and the world economy. Even Richard Nixon saw the need to become speedily independent of oil imports. What is wrong with oh so deliberate, pipe smoking James Schlesinger?

We can't stand the high interest rates the banks exact from us. They offer an extra 1/4% to savers and take it back multifold from borrowers. It fires inflation and takes the very food off our tables. We have been lured into debt over our ears. Quack. In New York State, banks want to raise the mortgage interest ceiling from 8½ to 9½%. To attract mortgage funds, they say. In Arizona, the Legislature just raised the ceiling from 10 to 12%. And the Governor signed it without a whisper. Are we being taken? Why has there been no quacking - from borrowers and editorialists?

The Boston Tea Party was a form of quacking. So our nation was born. A free people has to quack and not be afraid its head will be cut off. Not if enough of us quack together. It is a responsibility we cannot duck.

----- Joseph Zashin

1963