



Uncle Sid Says Elections Gone The Way Of The Lead Pencil

It was the day after the presidential election when I pulled in the long gravel driveway of Uncle Sid and Aunt Sadie's farm. The day had been an "Indian Summer" type of day with lots of sun as well as being unseasonably warm.

Underneath an American flag attached to a post on the front porch, a few large pumpkins were sitting on the steps of their white clapboard farmhouse. They were framed by the orange and red colors of the maple trees in the front yard and gave the image of a fall scene painted by Norman Rockwell. Aunt Sadie al-

ways has pumpkins out for the fall season and their presence on the steps of the porch gave you the warm and fuzzy feeling that everything was right in the world on this fall afternoon.

The election was over and we were now venturing on to other things. However, I just didn't know how the election went to suit Uncle Sid.

In fact, that was the reason I was also dropping by. Uncle Sid comes from a long line of politically active farm folks and he lives from issue to issue of the US News and World Reports magazine. He was really disappointed when they did away with the benches at the county courthouse causing the political

discussion professionals and whittlers to have to move. But, that's what they call progress and it makes the area more aesthetically pleasing to the eye.

Aunt Sadie met me at the front door and as soon as she opened back the gingerbread trimmed screen door, I could smell the aromas of homemade creations from her kitchen. She led me to the back portion of their house where the kitchen is located and there, sitting at the round kitchen table, was Uncle Sid. He already had a plate of teacakes and was sipping on a cup of hot cider made with red-hot candies. He also had the local newspaper sprawled out all over the table in front of him with the latest election returns.

"Did the election go your way Uncle Sid?" I asked while taking my cup of cider and a plate of cookies

from Aunt Sadie. I could tell I had asked the right question by the wide-eyed look on Uncle Sid's face. "Just as well to say it did," he answered. "Don't matter now if it didn't."

With my mouth full of teacakes and unable to talk, the old man saw a chance to take control of the discussion. Leaning back in his kitchen chair and looking straight at me he waxed eloquent by saying, "Elections are not as much fun as they use to be. When the old tin

boxes and paper ballots went the way of the lead pencil, elections became nothing but a computer circus. No more counting the ballots and read'n back the tallies at late hours of the night. Instead of cantankerous precinct officials, you now have cantankerous computers causing late nights. Those machines took out all the fun."

I could see now all I needed to do was sit back and listen. And that is exactly what I did.

"Now you got this bunch calling themselves Independents," he said shaking his head. "Back in the good old days you were a Democrat or a Republican. I remember in one election around these parts, everybody around here was a member of just one party. You didn't see anyone supporting the other bunch, at least out in the open. Well, one election, a fellow



moved in here and ran for office on the ticket of the party that no one supported around here. The election came around and everyone gathered down at the store where the voting was going on. That afternoon, the final paper ballot was cast, the last number 2 lead pencil licked, and the galvanized tin ballot box was unlocked by the precinct judge. Ballots were pulled out one at a time and the results counted out loud for everyone to hear.

"After most of the votes counted so far had gone to the prevailing party in these parts, one ballot was drawn out of the box marked for the candidate from the other party. Of course, everyone concluded the newcomer had cast the vote for himself.

"The counting continued for another thirty minutes or so and as the last ballot was pulled from the box,

the precinct judged unfolded the ballot and just stared at it with the look of a possum about ready to become road kill," Uncle Sid said now getting up from the table.

"What happened then?" I asked waiting for the punch line.

Uncle Sid stopped, looked me in the eye and announced, "The precinct judge just made a non-partisan ruling and said, 'I'm throwing this vote out! There's not another member of that party who lives around here and I declare the sorry joker has voted for himself twice.'"

Now that's what I call non-partisan politics.

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