

DELIS NEGRÓN

A PRACTICAL POET

In his famous poem “Trees” the American poet Joyce Kilmer wrote: “poems are made by fools like me but only God can make a tree”. By this self-deprecating deduction one could conclude that not all poets are fools but some could be. I always grappled with this oxymoronic notion. I knew my father was a poet, but he was not a fool. Putting aside Kilmer’s metaphoric contrast I can anecdotally demonstrate that my father’s position in the world of poetry does not bear any resemblance to a “fool.” I can vouch for father’s practical attributes vis-à-vis his motivational skills, business acumen and vast knowledge.

He motivated others because he was a great listener. As he learned of your interests he would ask you to expatiate on your favorite topics.

I remember it got more interesting as he explained the mechanism of the gasoline engine. He explained that the energy was caused by internal explosions inside the cylinders. He bought a spark plug and explained how an explosion inside a cylinder would force a piston to produce a circular movement similar to the movement in a bicycle. That was very interesting to me and I proceeded to learn the total mechanical process. Because I got interested in building my own vehicle I relentlessly implored for the purchase of an old junked motorcycle engine and four scooter wheels. Instead of eschewing this frivolous expense he chose to satisfy my whim, just to keep me interested.

I remember the newspaper he founded sold for 15 cents a copy. Fifteen cents was a hefty sum for a newspaper, but he made it very interesting to read and to the readers it was worth it. One of the headers in the back page read “All intelligent people read this newspaper”. As a consequence of this headline a lot of his loyal subscribers would sit in the local plaza displaying the quote and posing as intelligent readers.

All Saints’ Day is considered a Holiday, “El Día de la Calavera”, when people celebrate and venerate their loved ones who have departed. They spent entire days at the cemeteries by their relatives’ tombs. This was an opportune time to make money. For every living person he knew, he would write a short verse that humorously depicted and memorialized that person’s idiosyncratic behavior as a soul in heaven or hell. A special edition of his newspaper was a great success, for everyone wanted to read what had been written about him or her. That was a form of social media, in that

epoch, via my dad's newspaper at least for All Saints' Day. A very special edition indeed!

Years before, he had been a playwright for a local theater owner. He was charged with the writing of two plays every week. The owner charged 25 cents per person and the place was always packed. He bargained with the owner to have a salary commensurate with the number of attendees. He was no fool!

His vast knowledge was exemplified when my one of my brothers was enrolled in a Spanish language class at a local university and became friendly with the professor. Both my father and the professor were invited to some festivity sponsored by the local community to give a talk on Latin culture. My father gave his talk first, then the professor. Contrary to my brother's expectations the professor applauded my father profusely for the excellent presentation and emphasized he could not add much more to "Mr. Negrón's excellent disquisition of Latin culture".

The recollection of these anecdotes is testament of the truism that "only God can make a tree" and that Delis Negrón, the poet, was no fool!

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present you with a brief glimpse of the practical side of Delis Negrón.

César D. Negrón
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