

MY CRIME SPREE WAS TASTY BUT SHORT LIVED

By J. B. Leftwich

Writer's Corner

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Every day the news media move stories of scams and crimes that cost the taxpayers millions, even billions, of dollars and thwart well-intended programs.

Just this week, I read of cheats and scoundrels who are bilking Medicare of huge amounts while authorities are unable to develop legal cases to prosecute.

The Internet provides users an abundance of data, thus offering a vehicle for sophisticated crooks to probe innermost information and defraud individuals, companies and governments of billion.

'Twas not always thus.

In days of yore, chicken theft was the most dreaded crime in our community. We developed counter moves, including double-barreled shotguns, but still our poultry disappeared at times.

Nonetheless, thieves managed to purloin a few pullets and heist a few hens.

My own personal crime spree was short-lived and the punishment was quick and effective.

My cousin, Nelson Maddux, rode a horse to Buffalo Valley School and brought apples in his saddlebags to eat during recess. I don't remember who in my gang came up with the idea of swiping Nelson's apples and eating them ourselves. Three of four names come to mind, but my memory is so fickle, I could unintentionally indict the innocent.

Anyway, it seemed a fun thing to do. We chuckled at the thought of old Nelson reaching in a saddlebag and finding nothing. To us it was nothing more than a prank. Apples in our neighborhood were plentiful and a neighbor or friend appropriating a few to eat did not trouble us.

Nelson took a different view. He went to the school principal who, it seemed, had little trouble identifying the guilt gang of thieves. Suddenly, a boyish prank became a crime.

The principal administered the punishment, but I think he too saw our crime as nothing more than a boyish prank. He never told our parents, our good names were left untarnished, and my admiration of the principal surged. I think our crime was expunged from the school records. Today, all of the other perps in this crime are gone. There may be no one else to remember our short-lived spree.

As for Nelson, he recognized a prank when he saw one, but he disliked being the victim of one. We gang members never resented his reporting our crime to the principal. He wasn't vindictive, just a bit angry.

Today a minuscule crime of this type attracts little attention. The world has moved on to crimes of such magnitude that all of us are affected. With a Robin Hood in the White House and with his gang of merry men bent on taking from the "rich" and giving to the poor, most productive Americans are vulnerable when extensive tax laws kick in Jan. 1.

If you are angry with Congress now for ignorantly passing a wealth distributing health bill, just wait until 2011 when you discover your federal government is more ingenious than just stealing your apples.

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*See more of J. B. Leftwich stories at : <http://www.ajlambert.co>,