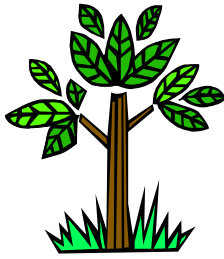


The Last Leaf

Number 10, Autumn 2004 Published for AAPA and NAPA by
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An Electronic Journal



POLITICS offer us a seemingly bottomless barrel of information, mis-information, facts, fallacies, truths, half-truths, outright lies, accusations, rebuttals, scandals, historical and mythical records and endless promises which are known to be pure speculation. Why do we tolerate months of this sort of claptrap? For one thing, it's traditional in America.

I know people who dearly love the hoopla of an election campaign; they are outgoing, outspoken and opinionated, for the most part, with a talent for twisting facts and melding truth with supposition. I count them as friends, however I know their tendencies and we remain friends because I make allowance for those aspects of their personalities.

Also among my friends are those who despise the thought of another political campaign. They are mostly introverts who like to surround themselves with conditions of unruffled calm. I fit nicely into that sort of group.

My personal feeling about politics at my current tender age is that like life (according to Shakespeare) politics is a play, a comedy consisting of players who fret and strut their time upon the stage and then are gone, and a new play begins. The winners of political campaigns will leave their mark on the office they held; a few good; some bad, and most unknown. In today's politics a holder of high office usually emerges from his tenure with a secure future, well provided for by law. Past years often saw a politician involve himself in shady activities in order to provide for a secure future. Fortunately, such less-than-honorable activities are no longer necessary since most political bodies have voted themselves quite adequate pensions. The wonder is that it took so long.

I will acknowledge that there are some good and decent and honorable people involved in politics, and thank heaven for them! My regret is that our most brilliant and capable people will not involve themselves in politics. When a truly great leader emerges from the political stew, we are fortunate indeed, and ought to honor him as we have honored those of such quality before—men such as Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln. This country does not have a monopoly on outstanding leaders, but we do have enough to have preserved democracy. Now we need to find those who will inspire the continued effort necessary to stabilize that democracy which is being eroded from within by elements of corruption. So I will fulfill my duty as a citizen by casting my vote whenever an election is held, even if it means choosing the lesser of two evils. Not to vote is the saddest of failures as a citizen. #

THE RELUCTANT VISITOR

By
Hugh Singleton

At noon the sky is darkling gray;
The sun too sad to show its face,
And I with mounting dread away
From such a drear, forbidding place
Did seek to turn my faltering feet,
But could not stop the plodding pace
That brought me ever nearer to
The graveyard huddled low beneath
An ancient grove of cedar trees;
Their ashen, lifeless limbs askew
Amid some scrawny greener boughs
Now bending in the frigid breeze
To bid me enter, stop and browse
Among the stones and rocks that
Mark so many's final resting place
Of fruitless ground where only
Stinging nettles grow—I want to go
But something bids me linger yet
And so I creep about although I know
The names I seek will only show
A spot deserted many years ago by
Loved ones long returned to dust.
And futile is my wish to now recall
Those long departed ones; I trust
That faith will conquer my despair
Each time I visit this abandoned
Field of finished dreams; or care
That someday soon no one will
Stand where I stand now and look
With sadness over all the graves
And feel the rush of love that fills
Me still, for time will have its way
And each will ultimately occupy
His own spot where his last goodbye
Is etched upon a stone to last until
That spot, too, falls into decay and
Vanishes at last to join his memory.



Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings.
--John Gillespie Magee, Jr.