

By now it seems unnecessary to warn folks burdened by the truth ethic to go other places. The truth is for grade school teachers, Sunday school lessons, and as the last resort in courthouse jurors and judges.

The last time in life that laymen can safely use the truth is in junior high school. Even then, you better be sure you haven't been humming "The Little Brown Church in the Wildwood" too long and lost contact with this cold ol' world. Storytellers better learn fast that the more times they use the truth, the sooner they will be out of material.

You think this is kidding? Then study an overview based on a long-ago college career. College beer drinking fests indoors and in gardens, moonlight boat rides and drives, campus protests and class elections, and coffee sessions and more beer drinking took up four years or eight semesters of time at the University of Texas, all concluded by a private meeting with the dean of Arts and Sciences. Spring finale was held below the Mexican border in lieu of holdover for graduation (details omitted).

All right, 62 years have passed without the truth coming out about those four years. Shoot by what kids and

grandkids been asked to swallow: Four years of college classes and research plus volunteer summer civic and mission church duty, part-time jobs to send money home to Mother and support charity, and an early return to the ranch to save family land before graduation.

Now decide whether that increases or decreases your respect for the truth. You like ol' granddad more for being a good sport, or having been a good student? See, it's hard to be honest. Easier to think about him the time that ol' dickens bailed us out in Eldorado in the middle of the night without telling anyone.

Perhaps you prefer the version he accepted (the myth): "Grandfather knows the logarithm tables well as he did in college and can quick-draw a slide rule from the case. The last visit he expounded on physics until after midnight."

Do follow another turn from back in the summer, the time the first political coverage began to mention the "undecided" and the "independent" vote out at Mertzon. These classifications brought a new outlook. Experts said these were the ones that'd elect the President.

At the same time that Obama came under attack for being accused of being a Moslem, Governor Romney took a hit for being Mormon with a grandpa that had five wives. Until that circulated, those qualifications or disqualifications

were never considered to pertain to a chief executive or a candidate in the shortgrass country.

On walks around Mertzon, it was apparent that a big majority of the campaign signs in yards supported local offices. Regardless of the campaign stickers on the bumpers, I waved or tipped my hat. One Saturday, I stopped to talk to an African American guy changing a tire, but we discussed how hard it was to get a flat fixed nowadays. It's doubtful either one of us was as steamed up about race or religion as we were over having four tires inflated on the ground.

Perhaps Mr. Romney was too used to his grandfather's five wives to comment. Seems what's been news out here was a story about five grandmothers at the same time. Sure would have been exciting to have five like mine. Remember? She taught kids how to roll Bull Durham cigarettes in sack paper before going to the first grade. With four more grandmothers like her, the post office would be overloaded in fruit cakes and white taffy at Christmas.

It came out right there that the bothersome part about being an independent was to be without a slate, or a party to predetermine your vote. Around a table of coffee drinkers, the word "independent" sounded smart. Alone in a pickup, parked at the courthouse to vote absentee, with the

flags flapping in high wind and the clerks going by talking on cell phones lost in their world, you felt like going to the ranch and staying until after the election. The thought came that you aren't voting absentee; you are absentee by about 50 years.

The lady in the clerk's office sensed the misalignment. She poked the ballots across the counter. Put more motion than voice in directions toward the booth. The longer I looked at those long columns, the farther away a decision.

Desperately, I wanted by the stroke of the pen to send every level of legislator out in the street to earn an honest living for a change. Passionately, I wanted to express what true independence stood for. "Show 'em" is a short way to say it.

Oh, sure, graybeards become more cranky every election year. But don't be delayed waiting for the truth to show up or be disappointed if you never find it.