

## COMMENTARY

## The concupiscence bullet



Is concupiscence really the problem, and is this county just saddled with a bunch of go-along prudes, or is it more complicated than that?

I've been wrestling with that question for more than a month now, ever since Don Stilwell's titled changed from Lee County Manager (LCM) to Former County Manager (FCM) — apparently because of concupiscence.

I say apparently because some county commissioners seemed to have it in for him for years, no matter what he did. They tried to shoot him out of the saddle a number of times for a number of perceived sins, and failed — at least until they finally discovered the concupiscence bullet.

In case you're wondering, concupiscence is a fancy term for lust. And lust, at least in part, helped bring every one of us into the world. In many cases, it probably helps keep many of us going through the world. Especially in American culture, we burn with it but we disdain it. Why? If you know, fill me in.

In Mr. Stilwell's case, his concupiscence, in the form of pictures of nude women on his computer, never would have come to light if it hadn't been for the F.B.I., which was looking for something else.

So it took the FBI to end Don Stilwell's

16-year run as county manager, but not for committing a crime. And having found nude pictures, the FBI clearly relished the opportunity to celebrate the fact, probably after studying them at great length, and analyzing them in concupiscent detail.

Usually, the word concupiscence means sexual lust, but it could mean a lust for just about anything: high cool mountains, or barbecued ribs or Georgia peaches.

Say the FBI had found images of Georgia peaches hanging in pairs on Mr. Stilwell's computer — luscious looking fruits swollen and blushing in the full ripeness of summer, pictured with high-resolution digital detail. In that event, would Mr. Stilwell still be at the helm of county government?

Probably, which would be hypocrisy.

And would people like Pete Winton — the talented assistant county manager and a man of sterling integrity who was nicked by the concupiscence bullet — find themselves reprimanded?

Probably not, not unless sexual metaphor has been banned by county rule makers. But I'm not sure they know what a sexual metaphor is.

Mr. Winton, meanwhile, will not now have a chance to become county manager anytime soon, which probably won't hurt him in the least. But it will hurt 630,000 other residents who could benefit from his brains and his integrity.

Which brings me to recommendation number one, designed to appear in the forthcoming, "Field Manual of Opera-

tions for Concupiscent Officials Living in Prudesville."

1. Always use the following metaphors when discussing sex in the workplace:

Peaches (breasts).

Grapes (nipples).

Cured hams (butto).

Bananas or cucumbers (northern male organs).

Walnuts (southern male organs).

Brass balls (southern male organs, while flattering the male ego).

Mangoes or pears, halved (female organs).

Passion fruit (the act of sex).

By using these terms, a lusty discussion between workers would be culinarily explicit or even culinarily pornographic, but not sexually explicit or pornographic, which county rules prohibit in the workplace.

After all, it's hard to argue that e-mailing a picture from Gourmet Magazine is the same thing as e-mailing a picture from a calendar of naked women or men. Even when it might be a result of concupiscence.

If officials spend a bunch of time exchanging pictures of fruit, or of mountain meadows, or boats, or big fish, or family vacations, and lusting after all of it — well, they may not be working, but nobody's going to pop them with the concupiscence bullet.

So I wonder why the that bullet is so effective, when laziness, irresponsibility, manipulative or abusive exercise of authority, lying, and a range of other bad-behavior bullets so often bounce off the parapets of public life like so

many spit pebbles.

Who are these people who so quickly furrow their brows and call for career-ending consequences when they discover that — not even sex — but just the urge for sex, or a celebration of it in pictures, is demonstrably present in a leader?

And if that's their business, then why don't they also go after people who waste work time lusting after recipes, or second homes, or retirement, or movies, or books?

Lust is everywhere, and frequently either accepted or simply overlooked, even on work time — but not when it's sexual lust.

Which brings me to a final question: Was Michelangelo guilty of concupiscence when he painted all those nude figures on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, or sculpted the David now standing magisterially in Florence?

That marble big boy was admired in such unabashed and sensual detail by our own concupiscence columnist, Ms. Artis Henderson, that she not only ignored the opportunity to sneak an e-mail about David's body to somebody, but she came right out and described it explicitly on the printed page, for everybody.

She got paid for admiring it, too, just like Mr. Stilwell. And like Mr. Stilwell, she was even paid by taxpayers, the two or three of them who happen to be her bosses.

I didn't find that a bad thing at all. On the contrary, it seemed pretty natural. ■

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