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Dear David,

 Ara Norwood

I hope you are well, wherever you are. Although we seem to be experiencing an Indian Summer here in SoCal, it is getting darker earlier.

Let me tell you what we have in store for you with this issue of *Uncommon Sense*:

In this issue's **Self-Development** column, we explore the importance of enhancing your skills on a continual basis.

In the **Elephant in the Room** column, we peek at the inability (or unwillingness) of Leftist Democrats to answer straightforward but uncomfortable questions put to them.

In the **From Ara's Journal** column, I share a dream I had just last night. Perhaps it's instructive in some way.

And in the **World of Words** column, we enhance your power of expression with a fine word that will elevate the regard people have for you when you use it correctly.

OK, let's get started.


Ara Norwood

Self-Development

Skill Acquisition

I once had a martial arts instructor tell me that the term Kung Fu meant "skilled one." This man, highly accomplished in a number of different martial arts systems, and a 7th Degree Black Belt in Okinawan Kenpo, said that the term Kung Fu can apply to a skilled plumber as much as it can apply to a skilled fighter. That has got me thinking about skills.

Skills are those things we can do well. Skills are the outcome of where knowledge and experience become practical.

Most working professionals, artists, athletes, and craftsmen have developed their skills to a point that they are  Goal Setting quite functional. Yet the specifics of the skill in question is very different from one discipline to another. The skills required to be an accomplished nurse, are vastly different from those required to be an accomplished harpist. The skills required to be a first-rate teacher are worlds apart from those required to work with artificial intelligence. A skilled archer is completely different from a skilled comedian.

Skills are not permanent. If allowed to languish, skills can dissipate. We can get rusty. There has to be upkeep. That is why musicians practice daily, ballet dancers stretch daily, and radio talk show hosts prep daily. If too much down time takes place, one's skills can become compromised, deficient, and impaired. If we are not sharp with respect to our skills, we lose confidence, and we get bad results. If we keep our skills highly honed, we are prepared and capable. We would all do ourselves a favor by taking an inventory of where our skills lie. A quick jotting down of where we currently brandish skills can be instructive.

But even more important is the recognition that skills do not necessarily represent interests. Therefore, it is just as important to ask ourselves where our interests lie. If we find we have an interest in something, but not a skill in that thing, then we need to set aside time, consistently, to begin to develop that skill, through practice, study, and a long-term commitment. Whether it involves typing on a keyboard, or learning to code, or being a background vocalist in a band, or doing research, or listening, or speed-reading, or playing the game of chess, we can increase the level of skill we have in almost anything through practice. However, the quality of the practice itself really matters. The well-worn adage "practice makes perfect" is a myth. Practice by itself does not make perfect. Perfect practice makes perfect.

And that is why it is often necessary and advisable to get a good coach to assist you. A coach can help ensure that your practice utilizes the proper technique. A good coach can spot subtle deficiencies in your approach, and can help you iron out your flaws, so that you can emerge a highly skilled typist, coder, background vocalist, researcher, listener, speed-reader, or chess player.

The Elephant in the Room

The Great Pretenders

For many months now, the losers of the 2016 election have been gripped by an inability to accept defeat and begin the rebuilding process. Instead of regrouping and preparing for the next election, they have been obsessed with the outcome of the last election, and cannot seem to let it go.

Given that they were so certain of a Hillary Clinton victory over Donald Trump, (some polls predicted that Mrs. Clinton had a 93% chance of winning) they took the defeat very hard.  Clinton Trump Poll

Actually, they didn't accept defeat. To this day, the Leftist Party (AKA the Democratic Party) has claimed that the reason they lost the election is because the Russian Government colluded with the Trump campaign and this resulted in Hillary losing the election. Thus, the Left has demanded that Mr. Trump be impeached, and they have enthusiastically applauded a Special Council lead by Robert Mueller to dig up whatever dirt he can possibly find on the Trump campaign. The Democrats, in their salivating, wished for Mr. Mueller to dig up whatever wrongdoing he could find.


Ever hear the phrase "Be careful what you wish for?"

According to Tucker Carlson, one of the most powerful left-wing lobbying firms in DC, The Podesta Group (led by Tony and John Podesta -- both of whom are close personal friends with Hillary Clinton, and the latter was Mrs. Clinton's campaign chairman) were themselves colluding with the Russian government in trying to shape U.S. political outcomes. The Podesta Group actually took money from Russian interests with ties to the Kremlin, not only to influence policy within the Obama Administration, but specifically to influence policy with Hillary Clinton's State Department. In other words, while it's true that there were Russian agents in Washington, it turns out that those agents were working with Democrats, not Republicans.

Furthermore, during the 2016 Primaries, a totally salacious and almost totally false dossier involving Donald Trump was crafted by a British agent by the name of Christopher Steele. This bogus collection of documents which were designed solely to undermine Mr. Trump's candidacy was originally funded by a Republican opponent of Mr. Trump but was subsequently funded by both the DNC and the Hillary Clinton campaign. In other words, following the primaries, the Democratic National Committee and the Hillary Clinton Presidential Campaign were both colluding by funding a fabricated dossier whose sole purpose was to undermine Donald Trump, both the DNC and the Hillary campaign denied they were ever involved in funding the lies against Trump (i.e., the dossier), and now it turns out

they were lying the entire time they claimed they were not funding the lies against Trump.

And how have the Leftists responded to such damning revelations?

Easy. Just pretend they never happened. Deny, deny, deny. In fact, don't even answer the questions you are asked. Call the allegations "nonsense" and then change the subject. Even when pressed, just roll your eyes as if the question is a stupid question, and try to make the questioner  I can't hear you embarrassed for having asked it, then change the subject again. Or better yet, just plug your ears and pretend you never heard the question, so that you can answer a question that was never asked in the first place. Perhaps even attack the interviewer who dared to ask such a damaging question. But in no uncertain terms are you to actually face the implications of the question or give an honest answer. Take the position that your side was merely doing opposition research -- the very thing you labeled "collusion" when Trump allegedly did it.

Here are some delicious examples from last week's opinion television show ***Tucker Carlson Tonight***, which appears on Fox:

Brad Sherman, a Democratic Congressman, [appeared on Thursday](#). This was instructive:

Tucker Carlson: So let's say you were looking for a smoking gun in this Russia story. Many are looking for that smoking gun. We now have evidence that Democrats literally paid money for Russian intelligence, as well as proof that the top Democratic lobbying firm in Washington was getting rich by advancing Russian interests. Collusion? If that's not collusion, what is collusion? We put a lot of calls out today, and very few Democratic lawmakers were interested in talking about this at all. The rare exception was Brad Sherman of California, . . . and he joins us tonight. Congressman, thanks a lot for coming on.

Brad Sherman: Thank you. I'm here to talk about the tax bill. This is a job-killing, deficit-exploding tax bill which is the real story, the real vote in congress. I know you can't defend it.

Tucker Carlson: We don't have a tax bill. We have no idea what the details are. We have literally nothing. And then it will get to the Senate, and it will become something completely different. So I would love to debate that because I think it is really interesting, and we may not even disagree on parts of it, but I want to ask you about the story that we spent the last year talking about. . .

Brad Sherman: You can't defend the Trump Tax proposal.

Tucker Carlson: This is clever and I will have you on any day to talk about an actual tax bill.

Brad Sherman: No you won't. I've been trying to get on your show to talk about economics again, and again, and again, and you only have me on to talk about nonsense.

Tucker Carlson: I think you've jumped off the rails a little bit. Let me ask you some factual questions and see how you do with those. You can put the bumper stickers away. What do you make of the fact that the Podesta Group, with whom I know you are personally familiar, was taking money from Russian interests to advance those interests in Washington?

Brad Sherman: I'd like to take a look at it, but it's irrelevant to whether we should impeach Donald Trump. He is guilty of obstruction of justice. You're trying to. . .

Tucker Carlson: So you're not even going to engage on that question?

Brad Sherman: [Silence; deer in the headlights look].

David Tafuri, a former State Department official [appeared on the show](#) Friday night. Take a look:

Tucker Carlson: I'm glad you're here because we've had many conversations about Russia over the past year (you and I) and you've expressed outrage at the collusion between the Trump people and Russia. Now that we know that the Hilary campaign colluded with Russia (took information from Russia), to affect the outcome of the campaign, are you as outraged?

David Tafuri: First of all, I never expressed outrage that there was collusion. I expressed outrage that this, that Russia interfered in our election, which all of our intelligence agencies agree to, and I said that needs to be investigated, and if there is collusion, that's a very serious crime by the Trump campaign.

Tucker Carlson: This is a really simple question: Does it bother you that a campaign document (opposition research) wound up circulating through the Obama Administration, through law enforcement and intelligence agencies -- how the hell did that happen?

David Tafuri: Tucker, you are trying to argue that all roads lead back to the Steele Dossier and that is not correct.

So the Leftist Dems are simply not wired to answer questions in a straight-forward manner when those questions shine a white-hot spotlight on the very collusion they have been guilty of, all the while screaming loudly that their opponents were the colluders.

But justice and truth has a way of eventually making their way to the surface, and becoming very public, and justice will eventually reach the most evasive career politician, be they in the Republican Party or the Democratic Party. But what will the Leftist icons (Podesta, Hilary Clinton, Debbie Wasserman-Schultz, etc) do when it is proven, unequivocally, that they were guilty of the very crimes they accused President Trump of being guilty of? Will they continue to ignore reality from behind bars while wearing their orange jump suits? Perhaps. But mark my words:

it won't have any effect on the remaining die-hard Leftists. They will simply regroup and prepare their next attack on America.

And that, my friends, is the latest elephant in the room.

Check out [my website](#) for tools to help you with your career, your presentations, and other matters.

From Ara's Journal

Bad Dream

The dream started out like many dreams. A situation. I'm there. I'm seeing the dream unfold through my own eyes as I take my place in the scenario.



Journal
Writing

The situation has myself and a number of other men trying to achieve a goal. We are travelers, with the objective of moving from where we are now, Point A, to where we need to end up, Point B. Yet this is one of those "man vs. nature" episodes, for a large, cavernous mountain stands in our way.

Not to worry. My memory flickers a bit, and I remember that I've traveled through this mountain before, several times, and so have the men that are with me. I seem to recall that previous journeys through this mountain were not easy, but were doable, though the details are fuzzy.

So we begin. The opening of the mountain before us resembles a cave, but we know that this cave leads us all the way through the mountain, provided we don't get off the main path. We know that once we make it to the other end of the mountain, we will emerge as free men, and will have arrived safely at our final destination. We will be successful.

Onward! The paths we trod are wide and spacious. We are able to move, one behind the other, with relative ease. The twists and the turns seem familiar. We've done this before, and we are making good time.

But, alas, the further we go into the belly of the mountain, the narrower the path. Walls seem to almost close in on us, taunting us, giving us a portent of things to come. A foreboding, ominous feeling starts to settle in, as the walls come ever closer, eventually making it impossible to continue. But wait! Up above our heads, we see a new path, and we recall that in previous attempts through this channel, we did have to abandon our original course, and shimmy up the crevice to resume our journey about 12 feet above where we had been. We continue. But it's tighter, and slower. We have to be careful and deliberate, for the crawlspace we now find ourselves in is not spacious. It is ever tighter.

Fortunately, the narrow opening ahead is in sight. My traveling companions who are ahead of me reach the end, and one by one, they force themselves through the narrow opening, plopping down to freedom. My turn comes. But I can't seem to move. Things slow down to a point that I feel stuck. The opening is a mere six feet in front of me, yet I can't seem to make any more progress.

Of course, it is always instructive to try to find the symbolism of a dream, and understand if there is a message, a life lesson that one should take away. For instance, perhaps the message is to count the cost before every undertaking, to make sure that I have the necessary tools, and a Plan B, to not pain myself into a corner. Perhaps the message nothing more complex than to get in shape. But I digress. . .

Don't panic, I tell myself. What are my options? The narrowness of the path before me seems, to my memory, to be of smaller width than in previous journeys I had undertaken. Could it be that the earth itself had, through natural processes, simply shrunk the size of the opening over time? Or is it me? Perhaps my natural girth has expanded in recent years, making me larger in size, and no longer able to fit through the narrow opening that is so close. . . How to resolve this problem? Should I just use physical force, and burrow my way forward? Can my traveling companions who have made it through ahead of me, show some mercy and reach back in, giving me a hand, and help pull me through? Can those behind me push me through? Should I accept the futility of the endeavor, and slowly crawl backwards, and force those behind me to do the same, retracing our steps in what will be a very slow, methodical retreat? Is that even possible? Or am I destined to remain where I am, unable to move either forward or backward, but resigned to being dammed, an eternal obstruction to a path that many have depended upon, the human cork that closes up what had been a functional path? Is there where it all ends for me?

As these thoughts, with their many options, flash through my mind, and my anxiety level starts to rise, something happened that I was not expecting, something that resolved the entire quandary.

I woke up.

The World of Words

Presaged

Building Your Power of Expression



Dictionary

Presaged, v.

Pronunciation: prə'sāj'd

Meaning: Used as a verb (and it can be a noun if used in the present tense) this word is the act of rendering an omen, or the act of foretelling -- often something unfortunate. Think of it as a sign or a warning, a forecast, akin to the proverbial

"writing on the wall."

Usage:

- *The outcome of the game presaged the coming season.*
- *His frequent outbursts at inappropriate occasions presaged his downfall.*
- *The master told him of a dream of the previous night, which, he thought, presaged his death.*

New subscribers, the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds" should have been sent out to you already. If you have not received it, please communicate that to me via email (ara@aranorwood.com).

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