

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, February 23, 2009

Let's Turn It Around! It went something like this: "Europe had been locked in the Dark Ages for hundreds of years, and there seemed no hope. Since the Fall of the Roman Empire just after 400 A.D., no enlightened society or progress had emerged to take its place. People were largely ignorant and illiterate. A drunken beggar emerged from an underground bar in Vienna, moved into the street, and started belting at the top of his lungs, 'Ach, du lieber Augustine.' Soon a chorus of others joined in, the merriment became contagious, and from this Europeans embraced hope. In the 15th century, things started to get better and the Renaissance began."

Our mass media seems compelled to tell us the multitude of negative things that are happening daily. We know things are bad and times are hard. Can't they seize on a smidgen of good news somewhere in the world and give us one bright headline? This process might cause other good things to follow.

How many have heard of the Panic of 1837? Or the devastating rate cutting of 1873 that soon forced most railroads (including the Wilmington & Western) into bankruptcy and the loss of many jobs? Present-day journalists did not experience the Depression of the 1930s, but they write about it and refer to it. Only by the present generation has it been called the *Great* Depression. I believe the unemployment rate reached 25%. President Roosevelt, in one of his "Fireside Chats," told the American people, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

One of World War I's popular marching songs went something like this:

"Smile, smile, smile,
Where there's a lucifer to light your fag
Smile, boys, that's the style.
What's the use of worryin'?
It never was worth-while,
So, pack up your troubles in your old kit bag
And smile, SMILE, S M I L E !

During World War II, this was one of the popular songs of the day:

"You must accentuate the Positive,
Eliminate the Negative,
Latch on to the Affirmative,
Don't mess with mister in between."

About 1950, MGM's annual Christmas musical appearing at first-run theaters during the holidays was called "Good News," starring June Allyson and Peter Lawford. It didn't have a particular message but was happy and uplifting. We know today's economic news is bad, but let's not dwell on it and exploit it. Positive psychology can help turn things around.