

Pastries began her journey toward a safe and fulfilled life.

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“Goofus and Gallant”

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It was in the mailbox along with the usual bills, donation solicitations, and advertisements for oil changes and hearing aids. It was a letter from ‘Highlights Magazine’ wanting me to subscribe. I couldn’t remember the last time I enjoyed flipping through a ‘Highlights Magazine.’ Likely decades ago in Doc Nelson’s office. Find the hidden picture. Stories and puzzles. Jokes and riddles. The Timbertoes.

I loved ‘Highlights,’ except for one recurring cartoon series: Goofus and Gallant. Two boys, one misbehaving, the other insufferably courteous, kind, and good. Immature Goofus and mature and responsible Gallant. My brothers and I wanted to beat up Gallant. Our parents persevered nevertheless, dreaming that their brood might be less Goofus, more Gallant. They had high hopes for civilizing their three little barbarians. So, mom and dad kept interfering in us. Fact: we are a work in progress.

Question: do people really change or do they adjust and modify their behavior? Can a leopard really change his spots? Maybe not a leopard, but where would we be if we fools never learnt to repent, to say we are sorry, to say we need forgiveness. What motivates a person to change their mind or what they care for? How many times has a son said to their dad, “No, I won’t,” only to change his mind. Why? Did son feel ashamed for having disrespected father? Yes, son, we expected more of you. Cutting words. Thank you for a guilty conscience, for those who still have a guilty conscience.

What motivates persons to change their mind, their behavior, what they care for?

Does change happen from a sense of duty, from being reminded of an oath you took? Soldiers may grumble at their orders – I don’t want to go – but he or she does go for the sake of their squad, because they raised their hand and pledged themselves to a higher cause. I know fellows who got kicked out of Boy Scouts who have kept the scout law better than those who wear the uniform.

How about from a sense of gratitude? Considering all that our parents did for us, why did we still act like Goofus? A dear friend shared with me how she was in an abusive relationship. Abusive husbands are controlling and he controlled her, denying her friendships and outside contacts. Abusive people (or laws) demean, dehumanize, dominate. Abusive predators, for their own ego, want to decide what’s right for us. I guess if a rich daddy’s daughter gets raped and impregnated, he can afford not to require that she gives birth. Golly, daddy, I’m betting you’re glad you weren’t raped. My friend received weekly little boxes at her kitchen door containing baked goods from someone unknown. Someone understood, she realized. Someone cared. Her appreciation for that anonymous life-line helped her change her mind about her situation. Pastries began her journey toward a safe and fulfilled life.

It’s one thing to deal with us Goofuses. It’s another thing to deal with nutsy and syphilitic Rasputins waging abusive culture wars. Forward to the lie that was my good old days!

Can a change of mind and behavior be motivated by facts? By information? Do you realize how without newspapers the American Revolution would never have happened? Facts, information. How often

nowadays do we see people smoking cigarettes? Some might remember when science finally convinced Congress that lead in gasoline (paint and water too) destroys brains. Congress finally was pushed by facts to buck the greedy abusers and enact legislation placing people over profit.

Facts. We hope they are mighty motivators. Even my born-in-the-bone Republican father eventually had to concede the fact that Nixon was guilty as sin. Facts. One of his sons even had to admit Goofus President Nixon achieved some good during his presidency: EPA, China.

Perhaps a main reason most people finally change their minds and behaviors is because they get fed up with the way things are. It's got to get better, says the drunk to the gutter, says the employee sick of a dead-end job. There's got to be something better, says the fed up husband and wife when they admit that their marriage is unsatisfying, so, in the best of situations, they decide how they each need to change to create a new marriage. It can be better, says the abused wife (or citizen) fed up with accepting the abuse. Fed up too is when we demand for and vote for fairness, for facts, for equal justice under the law.