

## One Honest Man

Looking for more.

By Barry Perryman, Ph.D.

**C**arl Moulden was an all-conference guard and team captain for the 1931 Texas A&M football team. He was an oil-field man top to bottom, and it was my pleasure to admire and learn from him when I was a younger man. Carl was an entrepreneur, selling oil-field equipment out of Casper, Wyo. He was a hard ridin' old boy, but he stood at attention when his wife, Dorothy (the Secretary of War as he called her), laid down the law. He worked both the East Texas boom in Kilgore and the Panhandle boom in Borger, Texas.

Most folks have heard stories or read about the East Texas boom of the early 1930s, and how it was a madhouse. It was so bad that the governor sent in the legendary Texas Ranger El Lobo Solo, Manuel Gonzauillas, to clean the place up. It was a boomtown full of men who were making good money during the Great Depression and Prohibition era, so illegal alcohol was everywhere, as well as gamblers, swindlers, working ladies, and every sort looking to increase the economic turnover of the regular wages generated by the mostly young male populace.

Carl said the Borger boom of the late 1920s made the Kilgore boom look like a Sunday picnic. He explained it as a vivid picture of Dante's lowest level of hell. The governor sent in Texas Ranger Frank Hamer (who later killed Bonnie and Clyde) to clean the place up. He said the day the Rangers showed up, 1,200 working girls left town.

He said there wasn't a building around that could hold any prisoners let alone the burgeoning prison population, so the Rangers had a roustabout crew sink 15 or 20 posts in a line along the middle of the unpaved Main Street. They put I-bolts on the top of each post and ran a spinning chain the length of the span of posts. This served as the jail for a year, until they could get a structure built. If you got arrested, they chained you to the main chain. Rain or shine, chow was served in the street, and if a prisoner had to tap a kidney or something

else, they brought a chamber pot or a bucket. This is what Carl told me, and I believed him. I believed him because he was an honest man.

I have been thinking about honesty lately. Did you ever have somebody lie to you when you knew they were twisting the facts? They just kept up the charade even when they understood you knew of their falsehood? That chaps my backside as quick as anything. Be straight up with me and don't treat me like I'm stupid. I don't know about you, but I am getting doggone tired of people misrepresenting the truth. Something that has really gotten up my nose lately is all the talk about our national budget deficit. Frankly, I'm not that concerned about the amount (currently \$609 billion according to the National Debt Clock) because the deficit is the estimated amount we are short on this year after we collect our tax revenues. Yes, it's a cash-flow issue and it usually doesn't make sense to spend more than you have coming in. But we do it personally every time we have to borrow money to buy a house or car. However, it is a symptom of a larger financial problem I do care about.

Many of our elected representatives keep talking about the budget deficit, but they never clue us in on what we really owe in tax obligations. I want to know the TOTAL amount these guardians of our treasury have obligated us for, so I did a little research. According to the National Debt Clock, as of this writing in early summer, our total U.S. debt is about \$61.7 trillion. Additionally, federal government unfunded liabilities that include Social Security, Medicare Part D (prescription drugs), and Medicare is \$129,332,700,000,000. I didn't know how to say that one so I looked it up. It is one-hundred-twenty-nine-trillion-three-hundred-thirty-two-billion-seven-hundred-million dollars! That's 8,147,960 miles of stacked one-dollar bills. The liability per taxpayer is \$1,115,421.

Isn't it nice to know that if for some reason us taxpayers all had to ante up and kick in equally to relieve this obligation, each of us would have to come up with over a million bucks! There are millions of good folks

who are depending on the promise of these obligations, and they should be maintained somehow. But politicians continue to spend up our debt and we continue to see our personal and corporate income tax revenues increase in order to pay for their reckless habits. Folks, this has got to stop!

Not encouraging a national discussion about these obligations is how politicians are being dishonest. Instead, there is a misdirection, a sleight-of-hand, that focuses our attention on the budget deficit, and since it is only \$609 billion, that somehow doesn't

sound too bad. They're jumping over dimes to pick up pennies. The first step in solving a problem is to admit you have a problem. To do this, you have to be honest with yourself. Instead of being honest about the real story, our elected officials are telling only the part that helps them build a faithful constituency.

We have a big problem and we don't need folks hiding the real situation from us in order to feather their own nests. I still remember senators like Sam Ervin (D-N.C.) and Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.), both with

reputations for honesty. I'm sure there are still some men and women in Washington who are honest, forthright folks, but it seems to me they are in the minority. Maybe I'm just a modern-day Diogenes of Sinope looking for one honest man. I believe the solutions for many of our problems have little to do with ideology. If you're broke you don't have to worry about whether to buy a new Corvette or a Mustang. You buy a 1962 Studebaker that gets you down the road.

We need representatives who honor the Constitution and solve problems. We have a financial challenge now that I can't really fathom. Common sense requires honesty or it's not common sense. So let's get the word out to those who would ask for our votes this election season. Be an honest candidate and don't treat us like we're stupid! ■

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Carl Moulden, guard, Texas A&M football team, 1930.