GROWERTALKS

Acres & Acres

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You Can Quote Me

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I like a good quote.

You know, the kind you see on motivational posters and calendars. Such as: “We cannot solve problems with the kind of thinking we employed when we came up with them” (Albert Einstein). And “Learn as if you will live forever, live like you will die tomorrow” (Mahatma Gandhi). And “You don’t make money growing plants, you make money selling plants” (yours truly).

When I discover clever quotes, I’ll post them in my email signature. My current one is from marketer Roy Spence, co-founder of the ad agency GSD&M in Austin and a poor speller. Once, he misspelled eight words in a paper about Emerson, but still got an A- from the teacher. Said his mom (who’d spoken to the teacher and knew the story, “I don’t want you to spend another second of your life trying to be average at what you’re bad at. I want you to spend the rest of your life trying to be great at what you’re good at.”)

Here are some more quotes I’ve posted recently:

“Good judgment comes from experience and experience comes from bad judgment.” (Unknown)—Often credited to Mark Twain and Will Rogers, this sums up life to me, including life in the greenhouse business. Have you ever done anything stupid or foolish, but don’t regret it because of the lesson it taught? So have I. Said basketball coach John Wooden, “If you’re not making mistakes, you’re not doing anything.”

“In the factory, we make cosmetics. In the drugstore, we sell hope.” (Charles Revson, cosmetics business pioneer)—I put this one in my signature line because it reminded me of our products and how we could be selling them. In our “factories” we make flowers and plants. But at our garden centers, are we still selling flowers and plants? Instead, we could be selling cooling shade, gentle fragrances on evening breezes, lovely colors to which we can match our outdoor table settings, a home for birds and so on.

“Anytime you think you’re killing it, you’re really not.” (Tom Bukovac, Nashville studio guitarist)—This is a reminder to stay focused and stay humble. Don’t get cocky or think you have it all figured out. Because when you do, you’ll find yourself taken down a peg or two. And it can happen on stage or in a business meeting.

“There are no rules here—we’re trying to accomplish something.” (Thomas Edison, inventor)—The image Thomas Edison represents to me is this: rolling up the shirtsleeves and getting down to business. No chatter, no planning, just do it! He speaks to the maker in me. He’s also credited with these favorites of mine: “Genius is one

percent inspiration, 99% perspiration." And "We often miss opportunity because it's dressed in overalls and looks like work." And one I just learned today that I will definitely save for my email signature: "To invent, you need a good imagination and a pile of junk." How many growers have a pile of junk out back from which they've crafted a powered peat bale lifter? (See the October 2023 GrowerTalks.)

"You cannot replace humanity. Absolutely impossible. Inject humanity into what you are doing, be honest and real, and not only can the machine not replicate this, your work will resonate with the public even more." (Bob Lefsetz, music industry blogger)—Bob was writing to the musicians and songwriters in his audience about artificial intelligence and ChatGPT, and his words resonated with this writer. Yes, you can type some keywords into ChatGPT and ask it to write a 700-word magazine column on famous quotes, but it couldn't write this one, which is packed to the gunwales (pronounced "gunnels") with humanity and utterly oozing honesty. (I may even work in some barbecue*.)

"Success is not what old age is about; it's about having a good time." (Garrison Keillor, creator of Lake Wobegon)—Garrison Keillor, one of my favorite authors, is now 80, and he's been blogging about many of the mistakes he made earlier in life after he achieved fame and fortune and was trying to impress people with fancy parties and rare wine. Now, his favorite things are simple: the love of his wife, a good cup of coffee and people-watching in Manhattan. And he's learned not to take himself—or life—quite so seriously. Do that when young, yes, absolutely, but know when it's time to leave the stress to the younger generation.

"I just sit at a typewriter and curse a bit." (P.G. Wodehouse, British author)—An apt description of how I write this monthly column from another of my favorite writers. **GT**

**"Barbecue may not be the road to world peace, but it's a start." (Anthony Bourdain)*